CHAPTER IV

MYSTICAL ELEMENTS

Introduction

In the last chapter our discussion is focused on the issues that can be brought under the realm of what can be shown. The present chapter, in a way, is an extension of the same realm. In its extended version it is the issues concerning religion, morality and culture that dominate our discussion. Of the above three it is in religion we come across the significance of mystic elements. Mysticism is often viewed as a kind of spiritual experience which aims at the communion with the supreme or divine reality. What is mystical need not be always located in the sphere of religion, but can also be seen in other realms of social life. It is also held that mystic’s experiences are often conditioned by mystic’s language and culture. For instance, in the Indian context a realized soul is often termed as jivanmukta in the advaita tradition. Such a state is often characterized as Brhmasiddhi. A mystic in this sense is completely detached from the day-to-day world, yet he lives along with other social beings until his karma is exhausted. As a matter of fact, religion, morality and culture are intertwined. When you deal with one invariably you are caught up with another. Therefore, an exclusive study of each of them separately becomes a difficult proposition. However, the purpose of this chapter is to highlight the nature of mysticism in Wittgenstein’s philosophy.
In the preceding chapter we have highlighted the significance of the concepts such as ‘language-games’ ‘family resemblance’, and ‘form of life’. These concepts represent novelty in Wittgenstein’s later philosophy. In this chapter, Wittgenstein’s conception of the nature of religion in his earlier and later works is highlighted. In the process mysticism, transcendentalism, religious language, nature of religious belief, religious pictures, superstition are also dealt with.

Religion and Mysticism

Somehow religion and mysticism go other although a mystic need not be a believer any form of religious faith such as Sufi saints, Jivanmuktas, and so on. Normally we say that mysticism and spirituality go other. But hardly we notice any conceivable identity between religion and mysticism. Religion as such is a doctrinaire and denominational and survives as a social institution affecting the behavior patterns of the individuals in any society. According to MacGregor: “Religion is a commitment to a kind or quality of that purports to recognize a source beyond itself (usually but not necessarily called God), and that issues in recognizable fruits in human conduct (e.g. law, morality), culture (e.g. art, poetry), and thought (e.g. philosophy).”\textsuperscript{210} On the contrary, spiritualism as a form of mysticism is not limited to any religious practice. In fact, the manifest forms of religious worship and participation in religious activities must be disassociated with mysticism. However one finds the elements of transcendentalism both in religion and mysticism. For example, the God is transcendental. And mystic experiences are also transcendental.

One can approach religion from a philosophical, psychological, phenomenological, social, and cultural standpoint. But Wittgenstein adopted none of these approaches. He made a sincere attempt to understand religion as an autonomous source that generates and sustains the interest of an individual towards religious beliefs and practices. As a philosopher, Wittgenstein was trying to point out the limitations in understanding religion from any of the above stated standpoints. Let us examine the way in which Wittgenstein tries to understand religion. Wittgenstein’s work, which was published posthumously, on religion is too fragmentary, yet it has tremendous philosophical significance. As aptly remarked by Donald Hudson:

All one can do is take the fragments as they are; see how they are grounded in Wittgenstein’s wider philosophical thinking at their appropriate time; and consider what light, if any, they shed upon the philosophical problems generated by religion.211

There are two important aspects to be observed in Wittgenstein’s writings on religion. One is his theoretical understanding of the concept of religion, and the other is the way in which he practiced religion in his day to day life. One of the ideal students of Wittgenstein, Norman Malcolm commented on Wittgenstein’s understanding of religion and religious practices in the following way. According to him, Wittgenstein “looked upon religion as a ‘form of life’ (to use an expression from

the *Investigations*) in which he did not participate but which greatly interested him."

One does not find significant change in Wittgenstein’s attitude to religion in his earlier and later periods. In his earlier work Wittgenstein could not afford to have any detailed discussion on the subjects such as religions, ethics and aesthetics as he was concerned with what can be said. What can be shown remains secondary for him although a curious reader finds in *Tractatus* some cryptic remarks on ethics, religion and values. The aphoristic style in which the *Tractatus* is written is disadvantageous in many respects. One of the disadvantages is that there are no examples to substantiate his statements. Therefore, *Tractatus* has been subjected to many an interpretation. Wittgenstein’s remarks on ‘God’, ‘mysticism’ and ‘the will’ have been interpreted in many ways by the commentators of his work. According to Erik Steinius, Wittgenstein’s remarks on these concepts are like the Kantian pronouncements of the ineffable nature of God."

They are ineffable, for the ‘ideal or logically perfect’ language is inadequate to grasp their essence. On the contrary, logical positivists held that his remarks on these concepts are philosophical aberrations. They are philosophical aberrations in the sense that any amount of discussion on these concepts does not throw any further light on the nature of these concepts. Thus, they are opaque and blurred. The fundamental difference between Wittgenstein and logical positivists is that the

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former does not dispense with religion, ethics and aesthetics, but the latter stood for their blanket rejection.

Logical positivists believed that the *Tractatus* is one of the most important sources of their programme, namely, elimination of metaphysics from the sphere of philosophy. The principle of verification is introduced to eliminate all the meaningless statements as nonsensical like those of ethics and aesthetics, for they are not “literally meaningful.”

Although the statements of religion are not meaningful unlike the statements of natural science, Wittgenstein accorded due status to religion, ethics, and aesthetics by calling them transcendental. Their transcendental can only be shown. Since the statements of religion, ethics and aesthetics are not the statements about facts, their status is reduced to pseudo-statements. As mentioned earlier, both Wittgenstein and logical positivists acknowledged the nonsensical nature of religion, but differed very strongly in the treatment of this nonsensical. Perhaps for Wittgenstein the statements of religion, ethics and aesthetics constitute important nonsense as held by Schlick. Rudolf Carnap, one of the prominent representatives of logical positivist position holds that: “Wittgenstein rejected Schlick’s view that religion belonged to the childhood phases of humanity and would slowly disappear in the course of cultural development.”

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214 The term ‘literally meaningful’ is generally associated with the verifiability principle, according to which a statement is meaningful if and only if it is in principle testable. Verificationist theories of meaning hold that theoretical claims about unobservable cannot be regarded as literally meaningful. The verification principle was a main tenet of the original logical positivists, inspired by remarks of Wittgenstein.

Schlick would not accept religion to be part of our cultural development. He thought that religion plays a dominant role only in the inchoate phases of cultural development. As a matter of fact, according to Schlick, development is identical with the development of science alone. On the contrary, Wittgenstein viewed that the real cultural development is not merely restricted to scientific development alone. There are many factors that contribute to the development of culture. Science is only a part in the whole called culture. Science cannot be the only paradigm of human life. It cannot explain everything. It has its own limitations. Just because science belongs to the realm of what is affable does not mean what is ineffable is inferior or nonsensical. According to Wittgenstein, there are many things which cannot be explained with the help of science or scientific tools. Such an understanding of religion, ethics, and aesthetics might have prompted Wittgenstein to make following remark about his *Tractatus*. He wrote: “my work consists of two parts: of the one which is here, and of everything which I have not written. And precisely this second part is the important one.”\(^{216}\)

This is a significant statement that might have disillusioned logical positivists. The first phase of Wittgenstein’s philosophy, particularly *Tractatus*, is, by and large, dedicated to say what can be said about the physical world of facts. In that context Wittgenstein asserted that religion and ethics transcend the realm of language (ideal or logically perfect language). They belong to the realm of mystical. In the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein maintains a distinction between “saying” and “showing”. He allows language to show what it cannot say. By “presenting clearly

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what can be said” philosophy and logic signify “what cannot be said.” The peculiarity of religion is that it transcends both saying and showing. In other words, religion does not deal with any facts on the propositional level. According to Max Black, any effort to express the mystical, either by the process of saying or by the process of showing, would only result in absurdity. According to Wittgenstein, religion is such that anything that is said about it must necessarily result in nonsense. If this were so, then there are two reasons for keeping silent about it. One reason is simply that one does not want to talk nonsense. If one indulges in saying something about the mystical, then he will be talking only nonsense. The other reason is more complicated and important. One does not wish to trivialize the mystical by talking some nonsense about it. Therefore, one remains silent about it. Now, it is to be understood under what grounds Wittgenstein maintained silence. Wittgenstein stuck to the latter view, for he thought that any talk about them would trivialize the whole issue. As Hudson puts it, “the mystical is trivialized when it is talked about and we must preserve it from such trivialization by refusing to participate…. Which brings ethics and religion into contempt.” Any discussion about these issues leads us nowhere. “If you and I are to live religious lives, it mustn’t be that we talk a lot about religion’, he had earlier told Drury, ‘but that our manner of life is different.”

Religion, for Wittgenstein, is an important aspect in one’s life. In fact, his concern for religion is revealed from the contents of his letter addressed to Russell in 1912. Some of the contents of his letter are as follows; Whenever I have time I now read James’s “Varieties of religious Exp(eri)ence’. This book does me a lot of good. I don’t mean to say that I Will be saint soon, but I am not sure that it does not improve me a little. In a way in which I would like to improve very much.”

The above statement of Wittgenstein reveals he believed that religion and religious experience help him to reform his life in a way he wished. That is, they matter more to him than ordinary concerns. Engelmann observes in this regards: Wittgenstein, “passionately believes that all that really matters in human life is precisely what, in his view, we must be silent about.”

It appears that Wittgenstein had an inclination towards religion about which he could not have any description in this earlier work Tractatus and he even termed it nonsensical. In the later phase of his philosophical development, he started to talk about religious beliefs, religious practices, rituals, etc. Does this mean that Wittgenstein had two different conceptions of religion? There are some thinkers who feel that Wittgenstein had changed his conception. But, what I would like to establish is that Wittgenstein had only one conception of religion throughout his life. Wittgenstein’s attitude towards religion is a direct outcome of his personal religious conviction. His religious conviction did not undergo any change rather it always remained mystical. As a matter of fact, more than philosophy it is religion that gave

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force and character to his life. As he said at a later stage, "religion is, as it were, the calm bottom of the sea at its deepest point, which remains calm however high the waves on the surface may be."

According to Wittgenstein, religion is not a shallow experience, which can be unfixed as and when one wants it. His conception of religion remained dormant in his *Tractatus*. But in his *Investigations* he tried to explain the nature of religion through language-games and forms of life. Thus, what was hidden in his earlier work became conspicuous in his later work. It may appear that Wittgenstein had different notions about religion and ethics in his earlier and later works. This is due to the fact that he had two different methods of philosophizing. The later philosophy of Wittgenstein is simply a re-look at the same philosophical problems, which he discussed in his *Tractatus*. Wittgenstein’s later works are more explicit about the nature of religious statements and understanding religious practices. As stated earlier, in his later works Wittgenstein accommodated religious practices and beliefs in his conception of language. His silence about religion in his *Tractatus*, although it does not serve as a concrete answer for his silence, is due to the fact that *a religious tenet is not a factual hypothesis, but something which affects our thoughts and actions in a different way. This sort of view of religion fits very naturally into his later philosophy: “the meaning of a religious proposition is not a function of what would have to be the case if it were true, but a function of the difference that it makes to the lives of those who maintain it.”*

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Wittgenstein, without deviating from his central theme, tried to establish his original contention that religion as a value exists outside the empirical world. With the help of the tools like language-games, forms of life, religious pictures etc., he tried to give scope for rational understanding of religious beliefs and practices. Like any other language-game which we play in our day-to-day life, religion is also a language-game. Wittgenstein, As Searle puts it:

Wants to insist that to understand religious discourse we need to see the role it plays in people’s lives. And this is surely right. But, of course, you would not understand the role that it plays in their lives unless you see that religious discourse refers beyond itself. To put it bluntly, when ordinary people pray it is because they think there is God up listening.226

Language-game of religion is a set, which contains several individuals. They are none other than the language-games of religions. For instance, the language-game of Christianity is different from the language-games of various religions that share something in common. This goes against the spirit with which Wittgenstein introduced this notion. All that one can say is that they have family resemblance. However, Wittgenstein did not talk of language-games of religions rather he is chiefly concerned with the language-game of religion as such. Similarly, when he talks about the language-game of science, he is not concerned with the language-games of particular sciences. His objective is to show the radical differences between

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the religious and the scientific forms of life in general. The illustrations given by Wittgenstein while explaining the nature of religious and scientific forms of life only help us in understanding his concept of language-game in a better way. If we stretch this analogy beyond a limit it loses its elasticity. Let us examine the concepts employed in the language-game of religion.

The language-game of religion does operate with concepts like ‘God’, ‘grace’, ‘resurrection’, ‘faith’, ‘heaven’, etc. For instance, the religious language of Hinduism employs the concepts such as ‘avatar’, ‘karma’, ‘bhakti’, ‘moksa’, etc., apart from the concepts like ‘prayer’, ‘salvation’, ‘redemption’, ‘grace’, ‘benevolence’ and ‘creation’. However, the concepts like ‘faith’, ‘salvation’, ‘creation’, ’judgment’ can also be used in non-religious contexts. They have different connotations in different contexts. For example, same word may be used in different contexts. Nevertheless, its use in different contexts reveals the sense in which it is used. For instance, consideration of the doctrines of Creation and Providence must involve consideration of the concepts of ‘making’, ‘causing’ and ‘dependence’. Similar is the case with the terms such as ‘good’, ‘wise’, ‘loving’ and so on. They are used in non-religious contexts too. One has to properly identify under what context that particular term is used so that the term is not misused.

One can say that the third phase of Wittgenstein is largely associated with his notion of world-picture which we covered in the preceding chapter. In fact, Wittgenstein further developed the notion of language-game into a world-picture. This is a central concept in his On Certainty. Wittgenstein talked about the world-picture in a sense, which is similar, if not the same, to that of language-game. In his
work on Wittgenstein, Von Wright compares Wittgenstein’s world-picture with Kuhn’s paradigm. According to him, Kuhn’s paradigm is a “good illustration for Wittgenstein’s idea about the role of world-picture.”

In the context of religion, religious picture can be said to be an extension of the concept of religious language-game. Wittgenstein did not think of religious pictures as analogies. He said: “when I say he’s using a picture I am merely making a grammatical remark; (what I say) can only be verified by consequences he does or does not draw.” Allan rightly makes the following observation in this regard:

Is in no way concerned with the sense of corresponding to an object, whether this be a visual image before one’s eyes or a mental image in the head. Rather it is framework, the space, or logical space in which sense and non-sense can be spoken, the limits with which sense and non-sense have their reference.

The above passage states that sense or non-sense of a religious-picture can be determined only within the framework of its reference. Further, a ‘religious-picture’ can be visualized as a framework containing a set of all possibilities, some of which may be explicit and other implicit. The ‘picture’ would determine what implications could be drawn and what implications could not be drawn. For example, to believe in the ‘Last Judgment’ would not be to think of future event of a particular kind. The language of future happening is a ‘possibility’ excluded from that particular

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‘picture’. It will only lead us to encroaching upon future or another ‘space’ and be guilty of bad grammar. For it to be a religious belief, it would have to have a ‘possibility’ that is not excluded from this ‘picture’. The ‘last’ in ‘Last Judgment’, from the point of view of Wittgenstein’s grammar of belief, is ‘not to mean the final event in a life long series of events, but a final, permanent, eternal scrutiny that is always present in the midst of contingent judgments. It is the framework that envelops all of believer’s thought and actions, and is not an evaluation at the end of his earthly life.\textsuperscript{230}

The function of a religious picture is different from that of an ordinary one. Unlike an ordinary picture, it has to cater to a special demand. For example, what conclusion does a believer draw from a picture such as ‘God’s eye sees everything’? It means the omniscient God sees everything that goes on not only in the world, but also in to our hearts. But, what about ‘His eyebrows’? Believers in general do not bother about the shape or size or colour of His eyebrows. There are no theological dogmas or controversies concerning the shape or shagginess of the eyebrows of the Divine. The believers use the picture in a totally different way. Their intention is to show that God being ubiquitous knows everything. Therefore, to learn what conclusions the believers draw, and what they do not, is to understand their “technique of usage.”\textsuperscript{231}

In other words, a religious picture does not have any literal substitute. For instance, the picture of an aunt has a literal substitute for an aunt in the flesh. To put

\textsuperscript{230} Ibid., pp. 78-79.
it in the words of Wittgenstein: "We learnt that pictures of God are not used like pictures of aunts."\textsuperscript{232}

Therefore, as maintained by Wittgenstein, one’s commitment to a religious form of life comes from within. It has no external source whatsoever. Similarly, the proof of a religious belief lies in the commitment with which a religious believer alters his life. To quote Wittgenstein in this context:

Suppose somebody made this guidance for this life: believing in the Last Judgment. Whenever he does anything, this is before his mind. In a way, how are we to know whether to say he believes this will happen or not. Asking him is not enough. He will probably say he has proof. But he has what you might call an unshakable belief. It will show, not by reasoning or by appeal to ordinary grounds for belief, but rather by regulating for all in his life.\textsuperscript{233}

Thus, Wittgenstein’s arguments provide us with a novel and distinctive approach to understand religious beliefs, practices and language. Though Wittgenstein is primarily regarded as an analytic philosopher, his views on religious beliefs, practices and language vindicate his commitment to a religious form of life. Treating religious language as a language-game of a sort and religious beliefs as one form of life may appear to keep religion away from the normal set of activities.

\textsuperscript{233} Ibid., pp.53-4.
But, this is not so. On the contrary, Wittgenstein viewed that the very essence of religion is exhibited in the religious form of life that one leads. In other words, the essence of religion cannot exist independent of any religious form of life. One can see the pragmatic purport of religion, according to Wittgenstein. Wittgenstein’s personal life and his remarks on religion suggest us that religion will be far beyond our ordinary conception, unless we partake in such a form of life. As far as understanding part of religious beliefs is concerned, one can admit that Wittgenstein’s perception has strong defense mechanism to counter others claims. For Wittgenstein, one’s commitment to religion springs from within. It amounts to saying that one does not require any religious doctrines to lead a religious form of life. Wittgenstein claimed that he can very well imagine a religion in which there are no doctrinal propositions. The absence of doctrinal propositions makes no talking possible. Therefore, the real essence of religion is part and parcel of a religious act or activity but not of a theory. And there is no need of any external agency to justify one’s religious utterances. In fact, there is a world of difference between religion and science in the sense that the former does not entertain any theories unlike the latter. Thus it does not matter at all if the words used in religion are true or false or even nonsense. Therefore, for Wittgenstein, to practice religion or to be in a religious form of life is like eating food to satiate one’s hunger or drinking water to quench one’s thirst. Similarly, one does not practice religion for the sake of others. If one does it, the he is not a religious person at all. He is a hypocrite of the first order. The reason being that religious practice is based on a personal conviction rather than on any rational justification. And if one tries to rationally explain religious belief then he is
bound to fail miserably in his attempt. Thus, Wittgenstein was not prepared to accept any external agency or cause to justify religious form of life.

**Autonomy of Religious Form of Life**

The implications of the autonomy of religious form of life are worth consideration. First of all, let us analyze Wittgenstein’s philosophical position with regard to religious beliefs. As already shown Wittgenstein did not support the scientific, the historical and even the philosophical approaches to understand religious beliefs. A religious belief is something different from that of a scientific one. In the case of the former, one has a commitment, and in the case of the latter one does not. The most basic and fundamental difference between a religious belief and a scientific one is that a religious sanction does not have any exception, while a scientific one may have an exception. But, then, Wittgenstein’s notion of religion appears to be very rigid in the sense that it does not pave the way for any inter-subjective relations. Therefore, any meaningful articulation and social interaction between the members belonging to two different religious forms of life becomes impossible. But this is not so. When Wittgenstein talked of religious form of life, his conception of religion is something akin to the view of an Indian saint. Religion has two important dimensions, namely, external and internal. When religion is viewed from its external dimension, it is nothing but an ideology. The followers or adherents of a particular religion indulge in propaganda. A religion that is meant for propaganda is not religion at all. Such propaganda leads to religious identity of one sort or another. This is immaterial for Wittgenstein. Religion as a social institution is merely performing this sociological role. In modern societies, we come across many
religions and religious sects. The religious forms of life that are lead by the adherents of such religions provide them with communal identity, which is purely external. They do not have any commitment to the religion that they follow. If at all there is any commitment it is only to enhance the popularity of that particular form of religious faith. The followers also believe that their God will not take care of others who do not worship their God. Then we have several Gods ruling over one religion or another. Consequently, they indulge in converting the followers of other religions into their own fold for certain ulterior motives. Such an exercise often resulted in violence and bloodshed in the history of humankind. In other words, in the name of religion the followers of particular religion or a religious sect directly or indirectly propagate an ideology of their taste. For instance, the major religions in the world such as Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism have their own followers. Within these religions, there are a number of sects and sub-sects. The kind of religious conflicts that we witness on the globe are due to the sectarian attitude adopted by the followers of the various religions.

Like any saint, Wittgenstein was not interested in the external form of all religion. He would be the last person to approve of any such institutionalized form of religion. According to him, a person is truly committed to religion insofar as his commitment is rooted in his conscience. Like Kierkegaard, Wittgenstein was of the opinion that one’s religious commitment is for one’s own sake, but not for the sake of others. He remarked that he is not a religious person, but he could not help seeing everything from a religious point of view. Therefore, Wittgenstein’s religion was always oriented towards the internal dimension of religion, which represents the
true spirit of religion. The so-called religious conflicts that we witness in our day-to-day world are the conflicts of identity in the name of religion. These conflicts are the outcome of treating “religion” as “madness”. It is this madness or obsession that is responsible for religious conflicts. True religion is beyond such conflicts. One has to internalize religion. Wittgenstein in his Culture and Value remarked that religion as madness is a madness springing from irreligiousness. In this context one can say that the attitude of Wittgenstein towards religion is akin to that of the Hindu saints. The great saints such as Kabir, Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, and Ramana Maharshi did not identify themselves with any particular religious sects. It’s a mistake to call them Hindu saints, but we often label them as Hindu saints. Just as we say the teachings of Jesus or the Buddha or Moses are not meant for their followers alone but to every sensible human being. Similarly, the spiritual teachings of these great saints resulting from their mystical experiences are meant for humanity. As true spiritual aspirants, they internalized the very essence of religion without giving any scope for sectarian tendencies. They believed in universal brotherhood. It is in this regard one can say that Wittgenstein is like a Hindu saint emphasizing on the internal dimension of religion.

**The Tacit Dimensions of Culture**

Like religion, culture is also a complicated phenomenon which we come across in our social life. Culture represents our practices, customs, habits, and many such things. Culture, by and large, is conditioned by geographical, historical, and religious considerations. Thus, there exist multiple cultures. To-day we talk about cultural relativism because there are cultures of different sorts. In most of the cases,
our cultural identity determines our form of life. We have seen how Wittgenstein’s method can be applied to study other people’s culture on normative basis. Wittgenstein’s reaction to Frazer’s Golden Bough and his rejection of the then existing European culture is something interesting. The dominance of scientism and the technological growth in the name of cultural progress made him cynical about the then existing European culture. Wittgenstein always held that the bygone days are far happier than the present day life. Such an attitude towards European culture earned him the label of being ‘conservative’ and ‘pessimistic’. Wittgenstein’s views on European culture are purely his personal observations. His rejection of the then European culture may be attributed to the two world wars that he experienced. Virtually human life has been reduced to the level of dust. Some men are used as means to achieve the ends of some other men. Virtually every European witnessed Hobbes’ state of nature. His pessimistic attitude towards the then European culture, in all probability, is the result of these two wars.

Let us examine how far his views on the then European culture hold good. To start with, as we did in the earlier analysis, we shall first of all evaluate his arguments. Wittgenstein argued against Frazer’s conception of rituals and practices. His central idea was that rituals are a sort of emotional feelings and gestures, which have their own significance. They need no rational justification in support of them. Wittgenstein was averse to the idea that everything has to be theorized in order to judge their significance. Now, let us concentrate on the issue of the role of the members of the society. Wittgenstein maintained that every member of the society should feel as a part of the great cultural setup. The individuals must possess a sense
of belongingness. And based on that their actions should be weighed. Individuals should not act to promote their 'purely private ends'. Somehow Wittgenstein was disillusioned by the then European culture in which individuals were acting to fulfill their personal ends. Such a situation made him to be such a strong critic of the then European culture. In a sense, they are his personal opinions based on his life experiences, but not arguments at all. In other words, Wittgenstein had a preconceived notion about culture. Since the then existing European culture did not fit into his preconceived notion of culture, he simply rejected it. What sort of justification can he give for such an attitude towards that culture? One can say that his bitter experiences of two world wars, his own family misfortunes and his personal expectations, which were not realized, might have made him pessimistic towards the then existing European culture. Now the question arises: How did Wittgenstein understand culture? An incisive analysis of his views on culture reveal that culture, like religion, has two important dimensions, namely, external and internal. The then European culture in all its aspects represents only the external form of culture wherein science and technology dominated the scene. The technological revolution has become hand in glove to those who exploited the social circumstances for their own benefits. Such a culture provided humans with all material comforts, which resulted in the gratification of senses. Consequently, in the name of culture the individual completely ignored basic human values, which represent the internal dimension of any culture. The internal dimension of culture is where the members feel that they are part of the whole. And their process of progress is not in a haphazard way, but oriented towards a goal. And hence, they
should act in such a way to realize that goal. This means that they are not supposed to act according to their own whims and fancies in order to fulfill their wants and desires. Contrary to these ideas envisaged by Wittgenstein, during his lifetime, there were two world wars, which resulted in the destruction of human life, and the deterioration in the quality of human life. Wittgenstein branded such a culture as a decadent form of culture. It is a culture sans human values. As a responsible citizen, more than a philosopher, Wittgenstein reflected upon the internal dimension of culture in general. Unlike sociologists and anthropologists, his concern for culture is not limited to the external dimension. The great Indian Emperor Asoka fought the Kalinga war and won it at the cost of thousands of lives of soldiers at both ends; but he realized that human life and values are far more important than winning a war and expanding one’s Empire. After this realization, he became one of the most benevolent Kings India ever had and acquired the title Asoka the great. It is not only kings, but every cultured human being has to realize the importance of human life and values. Hence, any culture that does not account for human life and values is not real culture, but only passes under the name of culture.

Did Wittgenstein ever think of justifying his belief on culture and cultural progress? It is an important question. Of course, Wittgenstein did not advance any rational arguments to justify his belief on culture and cultural progress for he was not interested in the external dimension of culture. Cultural progress explained in terms of material standards of living represents the external dimension of culture. Such a progress can be rationally justified. Cultural progress explained in terms of quality of human life that includes mutual respect for human values represents the
internal dimension of culture. This can only be felt by the individuals living in any cultured society. Wittgenstein, time and again, held that he is not interested in making any value judgments about this form of culture, which itself shows that he is not trying to justify. On the other hand, it can be considered only as a refined lamentation on his part when he talked about culture.

Regarding values, Wittgenstein paid more attention to what we generally call value. He made it explicit in his Tractatus that values do not exist in this world. If at all there are values they exist outside the world. For him, facts alone exist in this world. A fact does not have value. Throughout his writings Wittgenstein maintained a watertight distinction between ‘is’ and ‘ought’. Unlike the prescriptivists, he never held that ‘ought’ can be derived from ‘is’. If anything that has value cannot be part of this world of facts. Wittgenstein obviously changed his views regarding the nature and role of language from his earlier conception of language to the later. There is a clear distinction between a fact and value. One can describe a fact by means of language, but one cannot do so with regard to a value. Wittgenstein held that this world consist of facts and values are transcendental. And the function of language is to express the facts, and then in that case values cannot be talked about, for language has its limitations. They are mystical. Whereas in his later approach, it seems that there is nothing beyond any form of life. Values are very much part and parcel of form of life itself. And there is no question of what is the essence of good, beauty etc. in his approach, as he was against the concept of essentialism. The concepts of value derive their sense from the context (form of life) in which they are used.
As we maintained earlier, we shall first of all see, how far Wittgenstein justifies his claim. In his earlier approach he made it explicit that values are beyond facts, for which he was able to do justice through his conception of language as that which mirrors reality. If we consider that as true, then we can defend Wittgenstein’s position that values are beyond the limits of language. Therefore, they are transcendental. He himself rejected his earlier position because his ‘ideal or logically perfect’ language could not capture every aspect of human life under its fold. But the question arises: Does ordinary language accommodate the values, which are transcendental in their nature? Wittgenstein’s answer to this question may be in the positive, for the ordinary language can at least descriptively analyze the concepts of value, which is not possible for ideal or logically perfect language. Moreover, one can see that there is radical shift in Wittgenstein’s position as regards the status of values. Values are no more transcendental. They are part and parcel of social life of individuals. Therefore, they are represented by forms of life

A descriptive analysis of values is possible for Wittgenstein. Does it mean that values no more belong to the realm of transcendental? This is subject to interpretation. For later Wittgenstein, there is nothing beyond a form of life and the forms of life are expressed through their respective language-games. However, a close examination of Wittgenstein’s views on values reveals that values like culture have both external and internal dimensions. The external dimension of values represents the relative good that is conducive for the harmonious relations among the members of any society. Such values find their expression in the ordinary language. In that sense, we can say that values in their relative sense no more belong
to the realm of mystical and they are not transcendental too. Yes, Wittgenstein did not deny this. In other words, if one partakes in a form of life, then that value system is relevant to him, and if one does not, then it has no relevance at all. Does it mean that values do not have universal validity? If values have universal validity, then they transcend the respective forms of life. It is true that values in their relative sense do not have universal validity. Therefore, we have to take recourse to Wittgenstein’s idea of the internal dimension of values. These values represent the absolute good that is universal. But, it is not obligatory on the part of the individuals to pursue the absolute values. One may lead a form of life that involves these absolute values, which are non-obligatory, but they cannot be expressed even through ordinary language. Whether they are transcendental or not they have intrinsic worth. Although Wittgenstein accommodated values within the forms of life, yet he did not equate values with facts. He did not reduce values to facts. His philosophy may lead us to have the better view that there is nothing beyond the form of life, subsequently language-game. But his life-style did not lead so. Let us take the instance of moral values. Wittgenstein throughout his life had a strong inclination towards leading a moral life and wished others to be bothered by that too. His entire life, by itself was a struggle towards this moral perfection. And for him, to be moral by itself is a reward and there is no end, which is ought through this means. It is not at all a means. It is an end in itself. Wittgenstein’s idea on values, particularly moral values may seem to come close to Kant’s idea. Even Kant mentioned those values as ‘categorical imperative’, trying to give a universal colour, which Wittgenstein did not, for he did not wish to propose any universal theory of values. Such an attitude, believed
Wittgenstein, robs philosophy of its spirit. At the same time, Wittgenstein led a life of a sophisticated saint trying to attain moral perfection, which is beyond articulation. He was so strongly committed to such an attitude, yet he was not able to pronounce a value judgment on the nature of moral values, as he always thought it couldn’t be done at all.

On Ethics

Wittgenstein had a lifelong interest in religion and claimed to see every problem from a religious point of view, but never committed himself to any formal religion. His various remarks on ethics also suggest a particular point of view, and Wittgenstein often spoke of ethics and religion together. This point of view or attitude can be seen in the four main themes that run through Wittgenstein’s writings on ethics and religion: goodness, value or meaning are not to be found in the world; living the right way involves acceptance of or agreement with the world, or life, or God’s will, or fate; one who lives this way will see the world as a miracle; there is no answer to the problem of life—the solution is the disappearance of the problem.

Wittgenstein was worried about being morally good or even perfect, and he had great respect for sincere religious conviction, but he also said, in his 1929 lecture on ethics, that “the tendency of all men who ever tried to write or talk ethics or religion was to run against the boundaries of language,” i.e. to talk or write nonsense. This gives support to the view that Wittgenstein believed in mystical truths that somehow cannot be expressed meaningfully but that are of the utmost
importance. It is hard to conceive, though, what these ‘truths’ might be. An alternative view is that Wittgenstein believed that there is really nothing to say about ethics. This would explain why he wrote less and less about ethics as his life wore on. His “accept and endure” attitude and belief in going “the bloody hard way” are evident in all his work, especially after the Tractatus. Wittgenstein advised his reader not to think (too much) but to look at the “language-games” (any practices that involve language) that give rise to philosophical (personal, existential, spiritual) problems. His approach to such problems is painstaking, genuine and receptive. His ethical attitude is an integral part of his method and shows itself as such. But there is little to say about such an attitude short of recommending it. In Culture and Value Wittgenstein writes:

Rules of life are dressed up in pictures. And these pictures can only serve to describe what we are to do, not justify it. Because they could provide a justification only if they held good in other respects as well. I can say: “Thank these bees for their honey as though they were kind people who have prepared it for you”; that is intelligible and describes how I should like you to conduct yourself. But I cannot say: Thank them because, look, how kind they are!”—since the next moment they may sting you.234

In a world of contingencies one cannot prove that a particular attitude is the right one. If this suggests relativism, it should be remembered that it too is just one more

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attitude or point of view, and one without the rich tradition and accumulated wisdom, philosophical reasoning and personal experience of, say, orthodox Christianity or Judaism. Indeed crude relativism, the universal judgment that one cannot make universal judgments, is self-contradictory. Whether Wittgenstein’s views suggest a more sophisticated form of relativism is altogether a different matter, but the spirit of relativism seems far from Wittgenstein’s conservatism and absolute intolerance of his own moral shortcomings. Compare the tolerance that motivates relativism with Wittgenstein’s assertion to Russell that he would prefer “by far” an organization dedicated to war and slavery to one dedicated to peace and freedom. This assertion, however, should not be taken literally. Wittgenstein was no war-monger and even recommended letting oneself be massacred rather than taking part in hand-to-hand combat.

Regarding religion, Wittgenstein is often considered a kind of anti-realist. He opposed interpretations of religion that emphasize doctrine or philosophical arguments intended to prove God’s existence, but was greatly drawn to religious rituals and symbols, and considered becoming a priest. He likened the ritual of religion to a great gesture, as when one kisses a photograph. This is not based on the false belief that the person in the photograph will feel the kiss or return it, nor is it based on any other belief. Neither is the kiss just a substitute for a particular phrase, like “I love you.” Like the kiss, religious activity does express an attitude, but it is not just the expression of an attitude in the sense that several other forms of expression might do just as well. There might be no substitute that would do. The same might be said of the whole language-game (or games) of religion, but this is a
controversial point. If religious utterances, such as “God exists,” are treated as gestures of a certain kind then this seems not to be treating them as literal statements. Many religious believers, including the followers of Wittgenstein, would object strongly to this. There is room, though, for a good deal of sophisticated disagreement about what it means to take a statement literally. For instance, Charles Taylor’s view, roughly, is that the real is whatever will not go away. If we cannot reduce talk about God to anything else, or replace it, or prove it false, then perhaps God is as real as anything else.

Wittgenstein’s place in the debate between philosophical realism and anti-realism is an interesting one. His emphasis on language and human behavior, practices, etc. makes him a prime candidate for anti-realism in many people’s eyes. He has even been accused of linguistic idealism, the idea that language is the ultimate reality. The laws of physics, say, would by this theory just be laws of language, the rules of the language game of physics. Anti-realist skepticism of this kind has proved quite popular in the philosophy of science and in theology, as well as more generally in metaphysics and ethics. On the other hand, there is a school of Wittgensteinian brand of realism, which is not well-known. Wittgenstein’s views on religion, for instance, are often compared with those of Simone Weil, who was a staunch Platonist. Sabina Lovibond argues for a kind of Wittgensteinian realism in ethics in her Realism and Imagination in Ethics and the influence of Wittgenstein is clear in Raimond Gaita’s Good and Evil: An Absolute Conception. However, one should not go too far with the idea of Wittgensteinian realism. Lovibond, for instance, equates objectivity with intersubjectivity (universal agreement), so her realism is of a
controversial kind. Both realism and anti-realism, though, are theories, or schools of theories, and Wittgenstein explicitly rejects the advocacy of theories in philosophy. This does not prove that he practiced what he preached, but it should give us pause. It is also worth noting that supporters of Wittgenstein often claim that he was neither a realist nor an anti-realist, at least with regard to metaphysics. There is something straightforwardly un-Wittgensteinian about the realist’s belief that language/thought can be compared with reality and found to ‘agree’ with it. The anti-realist claims that we could not get outside our thought or language (or form of life or language-games) to compare the two. But Wittgenstein was concerned not with what we can or cannot do, but with what makes sense. If metaphysical realism is incoherent then so is its opposite. The nonsensical utterance “laubgefraub” is not to be contradicted by saying, “No, it is not the case that laubgefraub,” or “Laubgefraub is a logical impossibility.” If Realism is truly incoherent, as Wittgenstein would say, then so is Anti-Realism.

Wittgenstein wrote in his Notebooks, prior to writing Tractatus, that his “work had broadened out from the foundations of mathematics to the essence of the world.”235 That saying and showing was the cardinal problem of philosophy was not only clear to Wittgenstein from its application to logic and the philosophy of mathematics, but also from the clarity it brought to the question of ethics and values. In the Tractatus, the world is presented as a totality of states of affairs or facts, which are a series of related atomic objects. Language describes the world by modeling the states of affairs; names correspond to the atomic objects and sentences to the facts.

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The arrangement of names in a sentence mirrors some possible arrangement of objects that makes up a state of affairs, so that the sentence has the same logical form, becoming a picture of how things could stand in the world. Since all facts in the world obtain accidentally, so that “all propositions are of equal value,” there are no propositions that can report anything sublime or important (6.4; 6.41). For Wittgenstein’s denial of causality and metaphysical necessity, see Tractatus 6.31-6.375).

As such, value cannot be in the world since value cannot be incidental (and even if it was, it would not have value) (6.41). But if values are not in the world, nothing can be said of them. Value statements cannot picture any state of affairs, so value, the world’s and life’s meaning, must somehow stand outside the world.

There are no ethical propositions, only statements running against the boundaries of language (6.42-6.43). Wittgenstein sees most of philosophy as doing a similar thing: “Most of the propositions and questions of philosophers . . . belong to the same class as the question whether the good is more or less identical than the beautiful” (4.003)).

As Wittgenstein later shares in a lecture on ethics, even if an omniscient being wrote all he knew in a big book containing a whole description of the world, “this book would contain nothing that we would call an ethical judgment or anything that would logically imply such a judgment.” 236 Wittgenstein describes ethics and aesthetics as being “one and the same.” 237 In not only belonging to the realm of what

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cannot be said, but in the function they perform. In his earlier *Notebooks*, he explained how both see things *sub specie aeternitatis.*" 238 or from outside: “ethics sees the world this way.” 239 and aesthetics sees a particular object this way. 240

He even describes a musical tune as “a kind of tautology,” complete in itself apart from the world. 241

This separates strongly questions of value from scientific questions. Logical positivists (especially Ayer) assimilated this fact-value distinction to belittle ethics with their verifiability theory of meaning. For the positivist, a factual statement would be one that claims a table is solid or five feet long; it is a statement about reality. This statement can be presented to others, and if they are willing, they can use their reasoning and a measuring device to determine whether the table is actually the described length.

**The Place of Saying and Showing**

Value statements, however, cannot claim the same degree of certainty, as they do not appear to be about reality. What can they measure and how would they measure it? To say that it is true that a painting is beautiful is not about correspondence with reality, but to reveal the opinion of the speaking subject. Another person would not be wrong for thinking the same painting is not beautiful. As such, the value statements do not describe facts, but rather emotive displays of preference, as is captured in Ayer’s boo-hurrah theory. Ethics and aesthetics are both sorts of babbling, and so do not matter. Hence, we should focus our energies on the empirically verifiable subject matter of science. For Wittgenstein this suggestion completely fails to

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238 Ibid., 6.45.
239 Ibid., 6.421
241 Ibid., p.170.
presented here plus all that I have not written. And it is precisely this second part that is the important point.”242 And he clearly expressed his personal leanings: “I may find scientific questions interesting, but they never really grip me. Only conceptual and aesthetic questions do that. At bottom I am indifferent to the solution of scientific problems; but not the other sort.”243

The division between showing and saying also governs his conception of philosophy as a whole, and is at the centre of the overall project of the Tractatus ‘There are, indeed, things which cannot be put into words. They make themselves manifest. They are what are mystical.’ Philosophy is able to set limits to what can be thought, and by so doing, set limits to what cannot be thought; it ‘will signify what cannot be said, by presenting clearly what can be said’. That is, propositions can say nothing about questions of value, for all propositions are of equal value (or equally value-less), they can express ‘nothing which is higher’. Philosophy, according to the conception of the Tractatus, is an activity designed to limit what can be said, in order to gain clarity and by so doing, it must rule out the possibility of any propositions of value or meaning – ‘the sense of the world must lie outside the world...in it no value exists’. All questions of ethics and aesthetics are ruled outside of the realm of philosophy, for ‘It is clear that ethics cannot be put into words. Ethics is transcendental’. Wittgenstein continues ‘The solutions of the riddle of life in space and time lies outside space and time’ and therefore outside the realm of what can be expressed in propositions, ‘How things are in the world is a matter of complete indifference for what is higher. God does not reveal himself in the world’. At the

heart of Wittgenstein’s work in the *Tractatus*, therefore, is a concern with mysticism: ‘It is not how things are in the world that is mystical, but that it exists’. Wittgenstein has outlined a conception of logic and philosophy that prevents natural science from gaining a foothold on questions of value – ‘We feel that even when all possible scientific questions have been answered the problems of life remain completely untouched. Of course there are then no questions left, and this itself is the answer. The solution of the problem of life is seen in the vanishing of the problem.’ And this leads into the conclusion of the work: ‘What we cannot speak about, we must pass over in silence’. The overall argument of the work is therefore to enjoin upon philosophers a silence about value, for nothing meaningful can be said about it. And this argument applies to the *Tractatus* itself; in the penultimate paragraph of the work Wittgenstein writes about using his work as a ladder, which needs to be thrown away after use. The reader ‘must transcend these propositions [of the *Tractatus*] and then he will see the world aright’. Once the reader has realized that nothing meaningful can be said about value, or the problem of the meaning of life, then the reader is liberated to see the world clearly – they can gain an insight into the meaning of life, ‘(Is not this the reason why those who have found after a long period of doubt that the sense of life became clear to them have then been unable to say what constituted that sense?)’. The argument of the *Tractatus* can therefore be seen as a form of therapy, ‘to draw a limit to thought’, in order that the important questions of life of ‘what is higher’ can then be clearly shown.
understand the fact-value distinction. On the contrary, he presses that values are the only things that matter at all.

For Wittgenstein, while values cannot be talked about, a value like something’s importance is shown in how we treat it, how we spend our time with it, talk about it, and so forth. To understand this more clearly, we could consider the telling of a joke. Let’s suppose someone shares a knock-knock joke. What is said in the joke is fact or fiction (or a little of both), and may be funny, but its funniness is not something that can be said of the story in itself. To add “And this is all very funny,” to the joke would be saying something rather awkward that is not really about the joke at all. That the joke is funny is manifest in the responses (the giggles and laughter of the audience, the fact that it is shared by the listeners to their friends), not in the joke itself. The funniness cannot be said, only shown. But to hold that value judgments are nonsensical is not to degrade them, but to show the boundaries for how they can be thought about. The nonsense of value statements can never be used to justify a positivist claim that we should then turn to science’s subject matter, for then this “should” is itself nonsensical as a value statement.

After all, scientific and philosophical practices are not value-free enterprises. What fact tells us that we should investigate any given thing about the world, or make any change to the world through applying knowledge we already possess? No fact says we should search for a cure for cancer, provide shelter for the homeless, or call up a friend we have not heard from in years, and yet it is these sorts of questions that we think about almost all the time. They are the soul of the world. Wittgenstein himself wrote that the Tractatus is a “work [that] consists of two parts, the