

# Privacy of Moral Perspective

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Published online: 29 March 2015  
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**Abstract** This paper attempts to delve into Wittgenstein’s unique notion of solipsism and its centrality in his proposal of transcendental ethics. Ethics for him is an enquiry into what is most valuable in one’s life; a very personal experience of values woven around the individual subject. We analyse the true nature of ethical in Wittgenstein’s writings and argue that it can only be understood through a close examination of the relation he proposes between self and the world. Our argument is rooted around his unique notion of solipsism without a solipsistic self. This distinctive ontological relationship between self and the world explicates moral significance into the world and how morality is defined as deeply felt personal responses to life.

**Keywords** Ethics · Life · My world · Solipsism · Wittgenstein

## Introduction

This paper is inclined towards ‘using’<sup>1</sup> Wittgenstein’s writings and insights to develop and further his views on ethics. The methodological orientation is closer to the ‘users’<sup>2</sup> of Wittgenstein rather than the ‘interpreters’.<sup>3</sup> We intend to avoid getting overwhelmed by the interpretative positions and debates. Instead, focus is on drawing heavily from profound insights in Wittgenstein’s writings—earlier, transitional, and later. This

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<sup>1</sup>Wittgensteinians’ works can be classified in two different groups: ‘interpreting Wittgenstein’ and ‘using Wittgenstein’. Though their connection cannot be denied but it is important to talk them separately in discussing certain issues like ethics. For details, see Anat Biletzki (2003).

<sup>2</sup>Rorty, Geertz, Pitkin and Toulmin have used Wittgenstein in an extended sense to further their positions in philosophy, sociology, anthropology and political thoughts.

<sup>3</sup>Writings on Wittgenstein’s work by Russell, Carnap, Anscombe, Hintikka, Hacker, Goldfarb, Shanker, Kripke, Diamond and Putnam could be categorized as belonging to the interpreters group.

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methodological orientation is also associated with identifying a standpoint away from the ‘classical Wittgensteinians’<sup>4</sup> and closer to ‘new Wittgensteinians’.<sup>5</sup> The first group highlights a serious divide between Wittgenstein’s early and later works and the later group emphasizes more on seeing the thematic continuity in it. In agreement with new Wittgensteinians, we believe that highlighting the connections and continuation between Wittgenstein’s works is very crucial to grasp and make use of his complex views on ethics, aesthetics and religion. Without which, it would be difficult to resolve the paradoxes we come across in his writings.

The real issues Wittgenstein was always concerned with were ethics and the world. His approach to ethics may be summed up in his response to Russell when Wittgenstein, who was lost in some deep thoughts, was asked by Russell “Are you thinking about logic or about your sins?” Wittgenstein’s response was, “Both” (Russell 1955: 247). Wittgenstein had two major concerns in his approach to ethics: (1) what is the meaning of life? (2) How the world of contingent facts can have value? He attempts to intertwine what is very personal to an individual with issues which are merely theoretical and philosophical. Equal emphasis is given to the life and the world—life which is purely personal and private<sup>6</sup> and the world which is conceived as a series of events.

The paper primarily deals with the second concern, i.e. how the world of contingent facts can have value? But before delving into it, it is imperative to make a brief note on the first concern, i.e. what Wittgenstein meant by meaning of life. His quest for meaningful life is not to be understood in terms of a search for its purpose or its functions. ‘Why are we here and what are we supposed to be doing?’ are not his interests. Nor would he pose it in its usual form: ‘What is our destiny? Where do we go from here and how should we go?’ Meaning of life has nothing to do with scientific explanation, whether physical, chemical, biological, historical, psychological or sociological. It is simply what Wittgenstein says: the sense of the world (Barrett 1991: 97). Purpose of life cannot be located anywhere except in living it. It is not necessarily a desire or aspiration for something in life or after it. If it is meaningful, it is nothing more than a will to live. To put it simply, meaningful life is a will to live.

Wittgenstein is very cautious in acknowledging the relationship between ethics and the world when he says, ethics does not treat of the world; ethics must be a condition of the world (Wittgenstein 1961a, b: 77e). This relation between the two is established by the subject or ‘I’ which does not belong to the world but is its limit (Wittgenstein 1961a: #5.632). Subject is not directly associated with the world but it makes its appearance into the world through, what Wittgenstein calls, world’s being *my world* (Wittgenstein 1961a, b: 80e). This brings the notion of metaphysical self at the centre of Wittgenstein’s contention of giving primacy to what is ‘higher’. This paper explores metaphysical significance of self by redefining it as a philosophical self in contrast to psychological self. Wittgenstein maintains this duality throughout his works. Though he does not really rebuff the idea of seeing ‘I’ or self as psychological or empirical but calls attention to its another dimension. Transcendental feature of self makes it possible to understand the possibilities of the world.

<sup>4</sup> Reprinted by F. P. Ramsey, G. E. M. Anscombe, D. Pears, P. M. S. Hacker and P. T. Geach, etc.

<sup>5</sup> Represented and popularized in the last three decades by Cora Diamond, James Conant, Juliet Floyd, Alice Crary, Michael Kremer and Rupert Read, etc.

<sup>6</sup> We are using the expression ‘private’ and ‘personal’ interchangeably. Support is drawn from the writings of John C. Kelley (1995) and Dieter Mersch (2009: 25-50).

By claiming that ‘the world is my world’, Wittgenstein commits to a solipsistic position. Though such position would have severe limitations when analysed in our material mode of speech (Cook 1994: 55–56), but Wittgenstein recognizes and highlights the inherent merit in solipsist’s point of view. In his attempt to bridge this apparent incompatibility, he undertakes a philosophical journey from idealism to solipsism and from solipsism to realism. Finally, he ends up propounding a unique notion of solipsism without a solipsistic self and tries to resolve this incompatibility. He further argues that solipsism coincides with pure realism.

### Wittgenstein’s Solipsistic Position

The fundamental claim which solipsists make is that ‘only ‘I’ and my experiences are real’ and they use the word ‘real’ in an ordinary usage of language in contrary to unreal. Wittgenstein agrees with traditional solipsist’s intent but he finds their notion of self quite primordial. He says, ‘What the solipsist *means* is quite correct; only it cannot be *said*, but makes itself manifest’ (Wittgenstein 1961a: #5.62). Disagreement is with the material mode of speech where self is identified with ‘ego’ or person. In saying ‘I alone exist’ or ‘Only my experiences are real,’ such sentences appear to have genuine negations, i.e. they appear to allow that it is conceivable that there is something beyond immediate experience (Cook 1994: 58). Language is not conceivable if it does not represent this world (Wittgenstein 1975: §80). Names are given to objects in our immediate experiences which can only be conceived of. Therefore, the very idea of things beyond immediate experience is a delusion (Wittgenstein 1961a, b: 51e). Solipsists fail in theorizing the a priori claim that ‘I alone exist.’

Self as a combination of human body *and* soul or as a combination of human body *and* mind does not attain the purpose for which the idea of self is philosophically introduced. So, there really is a way in which there can and must be a mention of I in a *non-psychological sense* in philosophy (Wittgenstein 1961a, b: 80e). He writes further;

The philosophical self is not the human being, not the human body, or the human soul, with which psychology deals, but rather the metaphysical subject, the limit of the world—not a part of it (Wittgenstein 1961a: #5.641).

In order to understand the higher order of the world and life from philosophical perspective, Wittgenstein makes place for a willing subject.

All experience is world and does not need the subject (Wittgenstein 1961a, b: 89e).

The world is *given* me, i.e. my will enters into the world completely from outside as into something that is already there (Wittgenstein 1961a, b: 74e).

Willing subject is to be distinguished from the psychological-thinking subject in order to appreciate Wittgenstein’s ethical position. It may provide key to understand the journey Wittgenstein undertakes from idealism to solipsism and from solipsism to realism.

This is the way I have travelled: Idealism singles men out from the world as unique, solipsism singles me alone out, and at last I see that I too belong with the rest of the world, and so on the one side *nothing* is left over, and on the other side, as unique, *the world*. In this way idealism leads to realism if it is strictly thought out (Wittgenstein 1961a, b: 85e).

### From Idealism to Solipsism

Idealism, as a doctrine against materialism, holds that matter does not exist independent of ideas. We cannot know anything beyond ideas, and thereby, ideas are only real and have independent existence. We can be certain only about our own ideas and not about the existence of physical objects. In rejecting material bodies, it singles men out from the world as unique and evades skepticism regarding the existence of the external objects by reducing them as bundles of perceptions or ideas. It does not rule out the possibility of other minds which are not given in one's experience.

Idealism leaves open a room for skepticism regarding other minds. I cannot know with certainty beyond my immediate experiences about them. This skepticism successively invites solipsism that 'I alone exist'; question of existence of other minds does not arise. Idealist's skepticism is avoided by advocating the reality of 'I' and denying the existence of anything beyond it. Solipsism refutes the method of idealism which 'singles men out from the world as unique'; and advocates for 'singling me alone out'. Only 'I' and 'my ideas' exist; nothing is known to exist other than 'me'. In fact, both idealists and solipsists agree that 'the only reality is my immediate experience' but they differ on the possibility of existence of other minds.

Wittgenstein takes solipsism to be an advancement over idealist's skepticism regarding other minds. He accepts that solipsist has good sense in not allowing the possibility of existence of other minds beyond immediate experiences (Cook 1994: 56). Wittgenstein's position is closer to epistemological solipsism<sup>7</sup> in accepting the solipsistic 'I' without denying the possibility of other minds or claiming the knowledge of other minds. It is not possible to know with certainty what is there in other's minds and hence, the experiences which are given to me in present moment are only certain and real. He arrives at this point like a solipsist and recognizes the progress their thesis has made over skepticism by delineating the limits of the subject's experience.

### From Solipsism to Realism

In saying that 'I am my world' what is asserted is that I cannot think or speak of anything beyond my immediate experiences. This world is accessible and conceivable to no one else except me. But it does not necessarily imply that my world is the only real world. Existence of other's world does not get denied. Self and the limit of

<sup>7</sup> Epistemological solipsism is the doctrine which holds self as the origin of knowledge of existence. It claims nothing can be *known* to exist except the self and its content of consciousness. It does not assert that there is one and only self which is this origin (Edwards 1967: 487). Knowledge is restricted only to individual's own immediate experiences and cannot be shared with others. This doctrine cannot deny the existence of other minds as metaphysical solipsism does. It is only that their existence cannot be known with certainty.

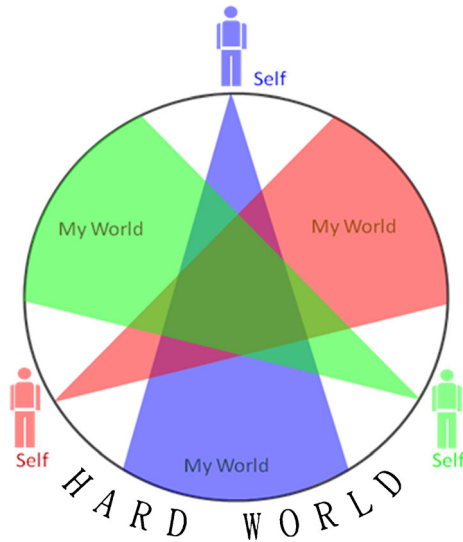
the world are intimately related with each other from metaphysical point of view. Self creates its own world by viewing the world as a limited whole. The hard world gets reduced to a self's world paving way for all to claim 'I am my world' (The microcosm) (Wittgenstein 1961a: #5.63). The world becomes identical with my world where idea of the world is constituted only in terms of my experiences. It brings the self into philosophy where 'I' is the presupposition of the world. For Wittgenstein, the world cannot be conceived as possessing attributes (psycho-physical) which are dependent on subject's experiencing them. Subject is viewed here as the limits to the world contrary to genuine solipsistic approach which views self as an experiencing subject.

Realism of Wittgenstein's position implies that there is only one world which reflects the totality of facts of which our language is a mirror image. There is only one language we all understand which is publically construed. This language defines the limits as logic pervades the world. Limits of my language mean limits of my world (Wittgenstein 1961a: #5.6). There are two dimensions of the world that needs to be investigated: 'the world' of which our language is a mirror image or logic is the condition; and 'my world' which belongs only to a metaphysical self. However, my world cannot exist if the (hard) world did not as in such a case there would be no reality for the metaphysical subject to coordinate with. Ontological relationship between self and the world is one where self makes its appearance in the world through the world's being my world.

Wittgenstein concedes the importance of a solipsist's attempt to look at the world from the subject's own point of view. At the same time, he does not deny the possibility of other's existence leading to a plurality of worlds. Such plurality of worlds would be based on individual's own unique perspectives of and experiences in the world. Everyone can have their own unique experiences and attitudes in creating their own unique world. Given the uniqueness and plurality of the worlds, it would be of concern to understand how these worlds are shared in our everyday life. It is a common world from where such plurality of worlds could be made possible; where everybody does participate and share. A linguistic ground makes it possible to reach out such projections on hard world. However, one cannot claim to share other's experiences and attitudes. The knowledge of one's own world as well as other's is always mediated by language. We do make linguistic agreements with others to have workable understanding in our everyday life.

Wittgensteinian solipsism culminates into an explosion of many 'worlds' out of the (hard) world as shown in Fig. 1. Given the limitations of language, the hard world is conceivable to me only as 'my world'. Each metaphysical subject, as limits of its own world, creates many 'my worlds'; 'I' not only transcends the hard world but also other's world. This solipsistic position makes a realistic claim in favour of a commonly shared world from which every self creates its own world.

There is only one world of which our commonly shared language is a mirror image. Ontologically multiple and distinct subjects are a prerequisite here but not ontologically multiple and distinct worlds. Wittgenstein's apt use of an analogy of an eye and its visual field clarifies this relation between the self and the world (Wittgenstein 1961a: #5.633). Akin to an eye which is not a part of its own visual field, 'I' or willing subject cannot be found in the world; it is the limit of the world. It has transcendental character and cannot be identified with 'ego'.



**Fig. 1** Explosion of many worlds

The main thrust of Wittgenstein's solipsism is that hard world remains independent of the self which is metaphysically located outside it. The 'I' shrinks to an extensionless point where one is left only with the world. 'The world is unique in the sense of being all there is' (Barrett 1991: 67). It is realism about the world arrived from solipsistic position.

Here, it can be seen that solipsism, when its implications are followed out strictly, coincides with pure realism. The self of solipsism shrinks to a point without extension, and there remains the reality co-ordinated with it (Wittgenstein 1961a: #5.64).

Self is neither a thing in the world nor a subject of experience. Self owns the world. 'There is no such thing as a subject of experiences either in the world or outside it. What lies outside the world is a presupposition of world's existence, not the presupposition of the existence of experiences' (Chandra 2002: 66). Reality referred above is physical—having extension in space. Self is metaphysical; not referred to a human being with body. The coordination between the two is made possible only through the world being *my world*.

## Two Godheads

Subject and the world stand like two major pillar of Tractarian metaphysics. Wittgenstein calls them 'two godheads' (Wittgenstein 1961a, b: 74e). The relation between the two is neither logical nor causal. The world is given to us and everybody interacts with others in the world through 'their own worlds'. Self being beyond the world cannot bring any changes in the world; it cannot interfere with what happens in the world. In the world, everything is as it is, and everything occurs as it does occur. They are factual and causal in nature. The subject, as conceived by Wittgenstein, is causally inefficacious over the events in the world and remains independent of it. I cannot bend the happenings

of the world to my will: I am completely powerless (Wittgenstein 1961a, b: 73e). The subject remains only a transcendental spectator without participating in the casual course of the world. It cannot bring any change or alter the dimension of the world.

In *Philosophical Investigations* Wittgenstein explicates the relation between self and the world by using metaphor of a portrait of a farmer sitting on the bench in front of his house (Wittgenstein 1958: §398). The farmer is shown as the owner of the house, but in the picture, he cannot enter his house. Self is like the farmer who cannot enter its house—the world which it owns. Metaphysical self is not placed in the world. The world possesses describable facts, but self or ‘I’ being the owner of the world is not necessary for such descriptions.

Wittgenstein takes an anti-Cartesian position where Cartesian subject appears illusory because for him, there is no such thing as the subject that thinks or entertains ideas (Wittgenstein 1961a: #5.631). There are no such things as thoughts and ideas floating as independent items in the world (Chandra 2002: 68). Self does not think and experience. Thinking self is nothing more than a mere illusion (Wittgenstein 1961a, b: 80e). Wittgenstein disagrees that if there is mind, there is also a subject or self to whom the mind or the mental phenomena are attributed. The self is not essentially bound up with the mental phenomena; it has no location in spatiotemporal world. Wittgenstein’s solipsistic self seems to disappear from the world. It cannot be a part of the world but is its presupposition. Its uniqueness lies in viewing it as the locus of transcendental position, the limits of the world.

Further, for the same reason the solipsistic ‘I’ is detached from history. For what has history to do with me? Mine is the first and only world. I want to report how *I* found the world. What others in the world have told me about the world is a very small and incidental part of my experience of the world. Even if we write a book ‘*The world as I found it*’, it would contain only complete description of *the world* with reference to our body. But it would exclude any description of the self. Introduction of the self is not required while describing the world. Similarly, it is not necessary to introduce any individual body while ‘I’ or self is talked about. It does not require a location in individual’s body. No special significance can be given to human body over others (Wittgenstein 1961a, b: 82e, Wittgenstein 1961a: #5.631).

The monopoly of ego or ownership of the self does not find any place in Wittgensteinian solipsism. Metaphysical self eliminates the ‘only’ subject of experience—*me*. It attains a point where it can be described as ‘solipsism without a knowing subject’ or ‘solipsism without the solipsistic subject’. Wittgenstein remains a solipsist, but his solipsistic position becomes peculiar in abolishing the ego. The self is metaphysically related with the world and manifests itself by seeing the world as *my world*. The world, i.e. my world, gets metaphysical status only within the framework set by the self.

Philosophy seeks to explore the transcendental character of self which makes the world and life ethically meaningful. The philosophical self serves the purpose of human existence from higher point of view. This purpose cannot be realized if self is entirely identified with its empirical existence in the world. ‘Self is not *in* the world rather *with* it’ (Wittgenstein 1961a, b: 75e & 79e). It is the realization of ‘self’s consciousness’ (Wittgenstein 1961a, b: 79e) where self becomes metaphysical with regard to higher order of life and the world.

By viewing self as metaphysical, Wittgenstein meaningfully maintains status of moral values and supreme goal of human life as ‘higher’. The primacy of the ‘higher’ can be established only by keeping the subject at the centre. The subject, as a willing subject, gets located at transcendental level and serves the purpose of human existence and its meaning. The transcendental moral will makes room for ethics. Will, as bearer of ethics, morally interacts with the world at metaphysical level making the world ethically meaningful.

## Willing Subject

Wittgenstein sees the willing subject or moral will as the source of moral values which brings moral significance into the world. It is not a phenomenon in the world. We cannot speak about it as the subject of ethical attributes (Wittgenstein 1961a: #6.423). A world consisting of dead matter or even of living things can in itself be neither good nor evil (Wittgenstein 1961a, b: 79e). Good and evil only enter through the *subject*... It would be possible to say (a la Schopenhauer): it is not the world of idea that is either good or evil; but the willing subject (Wittgenstein 1961a, b 79e). What is good and evil is essentially the ‘I’, not the world of living being or thing (Wittgenstein 1961a, b: 80e). No ethics would be possible without the subject. Ethics is possible even if there is only myself or the ‘I’ and no other living being (Wittgenstein 1961a, b: 79e). Such relationship between ethics and the world is plausible if transcendental self or subject is acknowledged as bearer of the ethical values. Without affecting the balance between the transcendental moral sphere and the sphere of the facts in the world, Wittgenstein attempts to find a ground for moral interaction between the willing subject and the world.

When the world is seen as a limited whole, as *my world*, the willing subject finds a transcendental moral sphere to interact with the world. Without directly associating itself with the world, subject makes its appearance into the world. It brings a change only in the meaning or sense of the world. Such a change occurs with change in attitude of the subject at the metaphysical level when the world is seen in its totality. It is not a matter of seeing any particular fact differently but of seeing all the facts together (Rudd 2004: 53). It is to be in agreement with the facts and accepting them with equanimity; ‘seeing the world aright’ (Wittgenstein 1961a: #6.54). The world appears ethically meaningful. Its boundaries change in accordance with exercise of the will. My will penetrates the world and that will is seen as good and evil (Wittgenstein 1961a, b: 73e). Hence, the good or bad exercise of the will would alter only the limits of the world, not the facts (Wittgenstein 1961a: #6.43). Things in the world would acquire ‘significance’ only through their relation with my will (Wittgenstein 1961a, b: 84e).

The transcendental turn of ethics indicates that ethics lies at the limits of the world and provides a view onto the world as a limited whole. And so, it is limited by the subject who values it. Sami Pihlstrom in his article on Guilt writes:

Ethics is essentially about the subject’s perspective or attitude to the world and life, a perspective constituting a condition for the possibility of the world, as perspectively structured by the subject. The subject is, itself at the limit of the



world, views her/his/its world as a whole under the aspect of ethical or aesthetic value (Pihlstrom 2011: 122).

Ethical attributes such as ‘good’, ‘bad’, etc., are neither the properties of the hard world, nor origination of the social world; they are predicates of the subject (Wittgenstein 1961a, b: 79e). Ethical value depends on subject’s valuational acts or attitudes, the way subject relates to the world around it (Pihlstrom 2011: 118). The willing subject determines the ethical status of the world. Therefore, happy man’s world is different from an unhappy man’s world (Wittgenstein 1961a: #6.43). One makes the world good and the other makes it a hell. Although facts of the world in both cases remain the same, but their attitude towards it makes their world so different.

The subject which is bound within the limits of its own solipsistic world has to step out from the individualistic way of seeing the world and recognize facts of the world together with equanimity whatever they may be. One could come into agreement with the facts of the world together by seeing them as a limited whole which Wittgenstein identifies with ‘*das Mystische*’ (Wittgenstein 1961a: #6.45). ‘When the mystical shows itself, one ‘sees the world rightly’—one knows how to live’ (Kremer 2004: 79). We grasp the oneness of life and the world. It is the realization of higher consciousness where there is no scope of looking at the empirical contents and identifying with them. Only in this sense life becomes eternal and realizes its higher meaning—its value. The subject, situating itself at the centre of the world, internalizes the external world transforming it into a moral sphere. In such a ‘moralized’ world sphere, ‘the subject is seen not *in* the world but *with* the world. Being with the world implies as Wittgenstein himself says, becoming attitudinally so transformed as to be able to live ‘in agreement with’ the way the world is. Feeling the world as a whole—a limited whole (Wittgenstein 1961a: #6.45), as *my world*, is to be conscious of another aspect of the same reality. It has metaphysical significance to conceive the life lived in the present where it becomes eternal.

## Moral Privacy

For Wittgenstein, ethics is an enquiry into ‘what is most valuable and important in life’ (Wittgenstein 1965: 5). It deals with the core issues of human life; one’s attitude towards it. He limits his discussions mostly by talking about what kind of life is worth living and how a man can be happy at all times in spite of the sufferings and miseries in the world. It is inept to discuss under its rubric what is required of human beings generally in a given situation.

Although Wittgenstein has not discussed explicitly the problems of ethics with relation to everyday life in *Philosophical Investigations*, he has still been credited of holding the transcendental notion proposed in earlier writings.<sup>8</sup> From his *Lecture on Ethics*, one may draw clearly that ethical values are absolute in general and relative in

<sup>8</sup> Cyril Barrett also acknowledges the paucity of references to ethics in Wittgenstein’s later writings (Barrett 1991: 227). Rush Rhees’s report in ‘Some Development in Wittgenstein’s View of Ethics’ (Rhees 1970: 94–103) and some scanty remarks in *Notebooks* and *Culture and Value* are important evidence to claim that his views on ethics had not changed. Also, see Barrett, p.126 for acknowledging continuity thesis as one of the acceptable positions among Wittgensteinians.

practice. *Tractatus* does not discuss this so overtly. His focus there remains more on the problems of life from transcendental point of view and the metaphysical self and its relation with the world. *Lecture on Ethics* brings the problem of life back from transcendental to practical life. We believe that transcendental ethics would remain incomplete unless brought from transcendental ground to relate with everyday life.

We need to avoid confusing the above claim as translating into the expression of values. In other words, call for relating ethics to everyday life does not amount to claiming it to be brought back from their metaphysical to their everyday use. Words expressing absolute values do not have an everyday use to which they can be brought back from their metaphysical one (Wittgenstein 1958: §116). They lack a ‘language-game’ or their ‘original home’. Expressions of values would lead to philosophical nonsense not because they are used mistakenly as conceptual errors. As Wittgenstein says, for errors they are too enormous (Wittgenstein 1966: 62). Such enormity cannot be captured in any linguistic expression but can be realized and felt in our everyday life practices.

By seeing life as higher and eternal, Wittgenstein attempts to show how to find the sense of the world and realize what is valuable and meaningful in it. It would be clearer with an example of an ethical situation cited by Rush Rhees (Rhees 1970: 99-101). It is about a man who is struggling to make a choice between continuing with his marriage or sacrificing it to engross himself in his path breaking research work. Situation is such that the man’s deep love for his wife and his intense engagement with his work are mutually exclusive. If he abandons his research work, he will undoubtedly stay with his loving wife but would miss his valuable work badly. On the other hand, if he leaves his wife, he will carry on with his profound work but he will not be able to help missing his wife. What he ought to do in this case? Rush Rhees believes, ‘such a man’s attitudes will vary at different times’ (Rhees 1970: 99).

Taking cue from Rhees, we have identified at least four different ways in which the man may be seen as arriving at a decision in the given situation. In the first case, evoking an ethical attitude one may ask the man, ‘Look, you have taken this girl out of her home, and now, by God, you have got to stick to her.’ The man may answer, ‘But what about suffering of humanity? How can I abandon my research?’ His deeper commitment towards the society and his research work may motivate him to decide in favour of his work. Moreover, he may also believe that his wife will probably get married again to other person and thereby, breaking away from her would not be disastrous to her at all. There can be a second scenario where by saying all this, he may be finding an easy way out of his marriage. In any case, he was to continue with his research work. A third scenario is when the man’s deep love for his wife makes him to stick with her where he is convinced that there are other fellows who can carry on the research work. There may be a fourth scenario where it may be that he has a deep love for her and yet he might think that if he gives up his work for which he is so deeply committed, ‘he would be no husband for her’, ‘he will drag her down.’

Rhees writes, ‘Here, we may say that we have all the materials of a tragedy; and we could only say: ‘Well, God help you.’ Whatever he finally does, the way things then turn out may affect his attitude. He may say, ‘well, thank God I left her; it was better all around.’ Or may be, ‘thank God I stuck to her.’ Or he may not be able to say ‘thank God’ at all but just the opposite’ (Rhees 1970: 99-101). In the first two scenarios, the

man decides in favour of continuing with his research work. In the first, clearly it is out of his deeper commitment towards the society, but in the second, such motivation is missing. Though third and fourth scenarios are guided by man's deeper love towards his wife but the decisions he may arrive at are completely contrary.

This is a case of a complex ethical situation where one finds it difficult to decide what he ought to do. Whichever way he decides to go, it has equal implication in terms of ethical parameter; has equal weight in terms of values. This is precisely because in both situations, the ethical values such as duty, obligation, love, respect, responsibility, etc., are involved. Whatever the decision he arrives at for himself has to be ethically right in the given context. In any case, we can never say one is ethically right and the other is wrong. One decision cannot override the other. 'It is hard to understand oneself correctly, since the same action which one could do out of generous and good motives, one can do out of cowardice or indifference' (Wittgenstein 1980: 48).

Generalizations are often done in a defined social or political setup. It may be possible when the given social or political parameters do not set aside space for individual particularities of acting on it differently. Most of the social norms and religious dictates can be taken as exemplary. In moral domain, it is never possible to prescribe such general actions in a given situation. The intersubjective space opens up the possibility of various ways of acting in a given situation. This may go against the traditional approaches of morality that Wittgenstein always detested. Ethics cannot be prescriptive in such strict terms. However, ethics is to do with one's particular way of seeing a situation and acting on it. 'Action cannot be ethically judged, since it presents the self-elected life form of a person that cannot require justification' (Arnswald 2009: 22). The onus is finally on the individual to pursue what she/he concedes to be ethically effective decision. Ethics cannot be recommended or stated in general. The ethical problems can be resolved only by each individual on her/his own account.

In case of an ethical dilemma, it is not the action per se which could be judged for its rightness or wrongness. Ethical evaluation of a decision, if possible, has to be based on the agent's intentions and motives guiding his actions. 'What is ethically relevant, again, is just the motivation deep within the moral agent, and there is no way of determining whether the agent, *qua* moral subject, is worthy of moral reward or punishments' (Pihlstrom 2011: 119). Since the act of the will is not an experience (Wittgenstein 1961a, b: 89e), it would be questionable whether others can ever be in a position to make such ethical evaluations at all. With respect to his *Lecture on Ethics* Wittgenstein once said:

At the end of my lecture on ethics, I spoke in the first person: I think that this is something very essential. Here, there is nothing to be stated anymore; all I can do is to step forth as an individual and speak in the first person (Wittgenstein 1979: 117).

Ethics originates from our deeply felt personal responses to life and the world (Kelley 1995: 575). They are not just social or intellectual constructs. It represents our desire to say something about the ultimate meaning of life. Ethics involves characterizing the world and our relationship to it as a whole. Since it is our personal responses which are

to be characterized in this relationship, a transcendental subject is presupposed as being capable of viewing the world as a limited whole. Both the subject as well as the very characterization are beyond the world of facts and hence cannot satisfy the condition of language. Such propositions cannot have determinate sense and can be spoken of only in the first person. They fall outside the domain of public realm of discourse.

The conception of metaphysical subject constitutes an ethical space giving rise to plurality of ethical worlds corresponding to the plurality of moral will. Ethical subjects view the world from their own unique perspectives. But at the same time, we must note that not only the ethical self cannot produce effects in the world but also its moral perspective is essentially private (Kelley 1995: 579). The common concepts conceived within our shared linguistic framework do not constitute the ethical. In other words, the ethical subject is not constituted by the shared linguistic structure or structures which create conditions for the possibility of intersubjective agreement.

## Conclusion

Understanding ethics as a personal perspective which one brings to bear on ones practices open up the possibility of integrating values in various ways into a particular individual life. Wittgenstein not only suggests this but even his style of writing on the subject is of a very personal and private nature. He is quite careful and mostly avoids giving a sense of preaching or pathos (Mersch 2009: 46) in all his works. He brings a paradigmatic change in the conception of ethics as an academic tradition. Ethics for him is no more a problem of philosophy rather it is to do with problems of life—one's own existence. That is why he believes philosophy and science cannot contribute in achieving anything in ethics as a philosophical discipline. Since the problem of life cannot be summarized in a general theory, we cannot arrive at an objective and absolute judgment in ethics. Ethical question is always a subjective one about the right way of living (Arnsward 2009: 21). This was clearly reflected in the situation discussed above of an ethical dilemma described by Rhees. The ethical problem confronting the man is not just the question of arriving at the right decision in making the choice between his marriage and his career. But, it is the question of what sort of life he is to live and what kind of person he is to become. It is a private matter for him and the answer to the question would entirely depend on his personal perspective towards life. This is what Wittgenstein meant when he said 'the solution of the problem of life is seen in the vanishing of the problem' (Wittgenstein 1961a: #6.521).

It would be more appropriate to call Wittgensteinian notion of ethics, as some writers say, praxeological (Arnsward 2009: 21) individual ethics. Ethics for him is to do with an individual clarification of life conduct. It is not a system of propositions establishing a code of conduct for working of our life world. Ethics as an experience of value is weaved around the individual subject and is about its right way of living; it is working through things for the individual subject. The problem of life is individual's search for ethical sense. Life itself is the answer to its quest for an ethical meaning. Ethics begins when language stops. Only in this context one can understand Wittgenstein's carefully chosen concluding proposition of *Tractatus*: 'What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence' (Wittgenstein 1961a: #7).

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