

WITTGENSTEIN ON THE PROBLEM OF SCIENCE AND VALUE CONFLICTS.

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Abstract

The present paper would strive to study why Wittgenstein is dissatisfied with science so far as value is concerned. The word value is a broad blanket concept that operates in a number of ways. It is derived from the Latin word 'Valere' and French word 'Valeo', meaning something to be 'worthy', 'significance', 'importance', 'strong', 'meaning' 'interest' etc. A value may be of many types. It may be of economic, utilitarian, ethical, aesthetical, axiological, spiritual etc. So far as value is concerned, Wittgenstein is interested mainly on the significances of two prominent discourses on value - ethical and aesthetical. He is also interested in the values of other dimensions like the religious experience, mystical experience etc. that help in the creation of the meaning (value) of our lives. He maintains that these things are nonsensical and can't be put into words (pictured), and lie in the realm of the transcendental. He is the view that valuing something requires going beyond science, and science has nothing to do with valuing rather it makes sending one to sleep and cold.

Keywords: *Wittgenstein, science, value, ethics, aesthetics, shown, mystical, and transcendental.*

Wittgenstein on Science and Value

If there is any value that does have value, it must lie outside the whole sphere of what happens and is the case. (*Tractatus* 6.41)

The word “science” comes from the Latin words “scientia” (knowledge) and “scire” (to know). It investigates the knowledge and behaviour of the natural and physical world, based on facts that one can prove by experiments. The foundation of the study of science is facts, which are perceivable and sharable in nature. So what science deals about is a factual investigation. But, Wittgenstein is looking for something more than facts that would create the meaning (value) of our lives. He is of the view that meaning (value) of the life will be created by things like- ethics, aesthetics, religious experience, etc. These things are beyond the realm of facts, and so beyond the boundary of science. Since science is dealing with facts, it is so naked, transparent, and mechanical. It only serves us first-hand experience. Instead of creating the meaning of our lives, science makes one feel dull and uninteresting. So he says, “In order to marvel human beings--and perhaps peoples--have to wake up. Science is a way of sending them off to sleep again”.

Ethics is earlier regarded as a science- 'the science of human conduct'. But, Wittgenstein refutes ethics as a science. What ethics is dealing about are not facts, and it can't be described by science. Ethics deals with what is good and bad. Wittgenstein says, “What is Good is divine too. That, strangely enough, sums up my ethics”. 'Good' lies outside the facts, and so we can't lead people to the 'good'. So he says, “You can't lead people to the good; you can only lead them to some place or other;

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the good lies outside the space of facts.” Ethics is transcendental. It is clear that ethics can't be expressed!

According to Wittgenstein, “Ethics and aesthetics are one and the same.” “Ethics, aesthetic and logic are linked by virtue of being 'transcendental': while everything factual is 'accidental', they try to express what could not be otherwise, the 'preconditions of the world'.” Ethics and aesthetics give room for what could be 'otherwise' (possibilities). But the intention of science is more or less fixed until proven otherwise. By maintaining that ethics and aesthetics are one, I think, Wittgenstein's intention is not to club ethics and aesthetics together as one and identical. Ethical values are by nature social, while aesthetical values are more or less subjective. Ethics can't exist outside the social world. Ethical value judgment of a person is in relation to others (social). But, aesthetical value judgment does not necessarily imply others. When a man watches a beautiful play and lost into a world detaching from the actual world, his feeling is subjective and does not affect others. But if a man's moral conduct is said to be unsocial, his conduct is judged in relation to others (society). According to S.S Barlingay, ethical values are by nature anthropocentric (human-centric), while aesthetical values are anthropo-cosmic. Thus ethical values and aesthetical values are not one and same kind. According to Wittgenstein, perhaps, they are one in the sense that they exist beyond the realm of the facts and so beyond the boundary of science.

When I come across an old man who is trying to cross a busy road and help him. I help him probably because a sense of goodness is appealing to my heart. It is not just like two mechanical objects accidentally interacts each other by causal law. The sense of 'goodness', one's ethical conduct etc. can't be put into words. They are inexpressible. Wittgenstein rightly maintains that they are at least shown and beyond the boundary of science. Henry L. Ruf writes:

The problem for Wittgenstein is that people often talk about making moral evaluations of political and social mandates and people often talk about the moral worth of people. Such talk can't be translated into Wittgenstein's kind of saying.

In an art, there need to be some creations that are over and above facts and which are constantly appealing to us. The work of art is not merely the significance of artists, but it evokes the significance of the spectators. Every creation of art has an appeal taken to a different plain. Without artistic creation, an object is a mere fact and does not play in the creation of meaning. Wittgenstein says, “The work of the art compels us-- as one might say--to see it in the right perspective, but without art the object is a piece of nature like any other and the fact that we may exalt it through our enthusiasm does not give anyone the right to display it to us.”

Aesthetic value judgment requires another important thing besides the work of the artist, that is, '*sub specie æterni*'. That is something which has a specificity that makes one transcend irrespective of what he is. In other words, aesthetic enjoyment needs something from the side of the enjoyer that makes him fly above the world of facts. So, Wittgenstein says, “...besides the work of the artist there is another through which the world may be captured *sub specie æterni*. It is--as I believe--the way of thought which as it were flies above the world and leaves it the way it is, contemplating it from above in its flight.”

We are born in a world (the world of facts) but we live in different worlds (depending on how we create meaning, i.e value). The world of the fact that is given to us is one and only one. But, in order to create a world which is enduring and contemplating we need to transcend what it is the case. Depending on how meaning is created, our worlds are different. “The world of the happy man is

different from that of unhappy man” (*Tractatus* 6.43). Being happy or unhappy depends on my attitude to the world.

According to Wittgenstein everything that can be said clearly are within the realm of science. He says, “The use of the word “science” is for “everything that can be said without nonsense”...” Science deals with the truth or falsity of the facts. But art generates certain sensibility that does not tell any facts. This sensibility is not a question of truth or false.

Science has tremendously progressed in human life. And in this present world which is driven by science, excellence is what we all give top priority. But science does not capture what human heart wants, what is appealing in our lives. Life-appealing meaning of our lives is presented by things that can't be captured by science. So he says, “People nowadays think, scientists are there to instruct them, poets, musicians etc. to entertain them. *That the latter have something to teach them; that never occurs to them.*”

In the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein main attention was not only on the meaning of the propositions based on whether they clearly pictured facts or not but also on something more than that. One of the most important concerned of Early Wittgenstein is on the things that he kept in silence. Therefore, it is not wise to take the case of silence in *Tractatus* as an out-and-out absence of noise. Silence in *Tractatus* tells a lot and here in this silence that the meanings of our lives lie. Again, his later writings, he does not like much indulge to bother about the sentential-meaning, rather he gives attention to the things which are meaningful in our lives. Here, he is focusing on ethics, aesthetics, religious experienced etc. that persist not like facts and meaningless from the picture theory point of view but are meaningful (valuable) from the life-defining meaning-making point of view. In *Tractatus*, he draws the importance of these elements and their inability to capture by the science. Life-defining meaning (value) is an important issue in the *Tractatus* as well as in his subsequent later writings. He likes to consider *Tractatus* as not merely a book on logical analysis of language but also a book on ethics.

According to Wittgenstein,

... anyone who understood the *Tractatus* would finally discards its propositions as senseless, that he would throw away the ladder after he had climbed up on it. Someone who had reached such state would have no more temptation to utter philosophical propositions. He would see the world rightly and so would recognize that only strictly meaningful propositions are those of natural science; but natural science could never touch what was really important in human life, the mystical. That would have to be contemplated in silence.

Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* was often regarded as the Bible for the logical positivism movement since the logical positivists drew their inspiration from the *Tractatus* in the foundation of their principle “The Verification Principle”. The quintessence task of the *Tractatus* is to draw a line that marked the limits of language vis-a-vis our understanding. In other words, Wittgenstein main aim of the *Tractatus* is to state what can be said and what can't be said. The book ended with his famous proposition 'What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence'. He maintained that those which are related to religious experience, mystical experience, ethics etc. are nonsensical and beyond the boundary of our understanding, and so it is not a justice to bring them in our language. On the other hand, the Logical Positivists considered only statements which are verifiable, i.e statements which are either analytic or synthetic are meaningful. Since their objective is to eliminate metaphysics from

the discourse of Philosophy, they regarded metaphysical statements are nonsensical. Ethical propositions according to them are nothing but pseudo-propositions. The logical positivists regarded Wittgenstein as the Christ for their movement since they deliberated that the crux of their verification Principle was already there in Wittgenstein's masterpiece, the *Tractatus*. But one fascinating thing here is, Wittgenstein never considered himself as a campaigner of the Logical Positivism movement.

Nonsense in Wittgenstein and Logical Positivism can't be mixed together. So far as the problem of nonsense is concerned Wittgenstein and the Logical Positivists were not in the same boat. Wittgenstein never deliberated those things which lie at the realm of nonsense as useless garbage that need to be dumped from the discourse of Philosophy. His close connection with various members of the Logical Positivism made people to think of him as a campaigner of the Logical Positivism. The Logical Positivists' objective to throw out metaphysics from the discourse of philosophy was with the deliberation that those which are metaphysical are ridiculous or useless entities. But, Wittgenstein never meant like this. He kept things like ethics, aesthetics, religious experience etc. in silence because they have no reference in factual experience, but he admitted the value (essence) of these things in our lives. The Logical Positivists took the *Tractatus* as the source of inspiration for their movement, but it was only a misreading of the *Tractatus*.

David Edmonds & John Eidinow writes:

But what many in the circle misunderstood was that Wittgenstein did not believe that the unsayable should be condemned as nonsense. On the contrary, the things we could not talk about were those that really mattered. Wittgenstein had spelt out the point of the *Tractatus* in a letter to a prominent Viennese editor: 'The book's point is an ethical one... My work consists of two parts: the one presented here plus all that I have not written. And it is precisely this second that is the important one.'

Religion is another important concerned of Wittgenstein even though he mentioned just a little about it in his writings. In *Tractatus* Wittgenstein writes, "How things are in the world is a matter is a matter of complete indifference for what is higher. God does not reveal himself in the world". (*Tractatus* 6.432). He considered God and religious experience can't be put into words since they are inexpressible and outside the world. They are nonsensical and can't be spoken about. Throughout his entire later works after *Tractatus*, be it PI or other works, he always comes back again and again to the *Tractatus* whenever he likes to talk about ethics, aesthetics, religion, and mystical. The Logical positivists wanted to mock religion, but, for Wittgenstein religion is a matter of higher enterprise.

An object may contain layers of values that can't be pictured by the science. A pen has a utilitarian value of writing. If it is designed in such a way with an artistic creation, it has some aesthetic values too. Again, if the pen is a gift from someone who is my Crush (someone I love) I will add some sentimental values on it which others can't share. Similarly, there are innumerable values that we can put to the pen. These values can't be drawn from facts. So, Wittgenstein is right in holding that value can't be put into words and so lies beyond the science.

An expectation is at the heart of valuation. Expectation signifies the incompleteness of the human situation. Expectation also creates possibilities. A saint of today may be a robber tomorrow. However, it is our first expectation that a saint of today may be a saint tomorrow too. Again, it is from the incompleteness of human situation that gives the possibility of shifting the value that ascribes to a thing in a particular context to another value in another context. A robber of today can be a saint tomorrow. So, the value of a thing is not fixed at all. An Expectation is about 'faith'. Faith is not like

facts and transcends the cause-effect relation. Expectation implies 'what could be otherwise'. Wittgenstein rightly maintains that value tells us what could be otherwise. Scientific findings are more or less intended to say 'what could not be otherwise' since its findings are presented in such a way that they are proven and true until proven otherwise. These findings are based on cause-effect relationship, and not in faith (expectation).

Suppose two men are sitting in a meadow on a full moon night. Let us take, one of them is a scientist who is driven by scientific rationality in that context, and the latter is one who is in a romantic relationship having a positive reciprocity with someone. The Scientist in that context may observe the moon as just a heavenly body- that it has no its own light but derived its light from the sun, has smaller than the Earth, is the only satellite of Earth, and so and so on. But the latter, would not bother about these facts (or information), rather he may take the lights of the full moon as if joys are showered upon him. That time he is detaching from the facts (reality) and takes into a transcendental realm. In the former case, it is all about information gathering, but the later is a life appealing meaning-making exercise. Wittgenstein is right in maintaining that without going beyond the science, an object is a mere piece of fact which takes role only in information or knowledge gathering. It is obvious that science provides us with information and knowledge that help in clearing our doubts and ignorance. At the same time, Science acts as a camouflage in covering significant parts of our lives.

We live in an era where scientific gadgets and technology colonized our bodies and minds. The Present World that what we called Post-modern (or some thinkers like to entitled the name as 'Post-Postmodern') is an age where there is fragmentation in all aspects of our lives. Only desires are created in such a way that such desires can never be fulfilled. Values or meaning of our lives is considerably dropping, while, anxiety, frustration, depression, etc. are considerably increasing. We live in a virtual world where there is only a creation of virtual pleasure, and that also very short-lived. One can make a friend without having any mutual caring or feeling, but just by an acceptance of a friend request in his or her Facebook account. These chaos or fragmentations which we are witnessing at present is a result of the suppression of life-defining meaning-making things of our lives by technocracy and it's corollary bureaucracy which was given to us by Science. I believed Wittgenstein have had already aware of all these. Why he enjoyed reading poetry, for instance, his favourite poems of Rabindranath Tagore? Why does he like us to consider his *Tractatus* as a book on ethics? Why he was not happy with Carnap when the latter mocked on the importance of religion? These questions need to be delved into with proper care. But, here in this paper, I abandoned to delve into further in these questions. However, it becomes clearer and clearer after going through with these questions that Wittgenstein likes to preserved ethics, aesthetics, religious experience etc. as par or above the Science. He is afraid that Science will do harm instead of prosperity if these elements are suppressed.

Conclusion

Here it is concluded that Wittgenstein is dissatisfied with science since there are things which are meaningful (valuable) in our lives but can't be captured by science. Things which are related to aesthetical, ethical, religious etc. can't be expressed (or pictured) by our language. They lie beyond facts and so beyond the realm of scientific scope. They are at least shown. Wittgenstein admits the importance of these inexpressible things in our lives. In *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein argues that propositions involving ethics, aesthetic, religion etc, are meaningless (nonsensical), but he accepts their importance. Here the 'meaning' is based on whether a proposition can be pictured or not.

But they are meaningful from life-defining meaning-making (significance or value) perspective. Many thinkers might have considered life-defining meaning is a minimal issue in the *Tractatus*. But I am not ready to believe it as a minimal issue since he considered the importance of the book lies in what he did not say about. Life-defining meaning of our lives becomes also one of the main issues in Later Wittgenstein's writings. Without these elements (aesthetic, ethics, religion etc), which can't be put into words, life would be so dry and naked. So, he appeals us to appreciate them. Science will make only sending us to sleep and cold. He was never a campaigner of Logical Positivists who took empirical or scientific statements are only meaningful.

Here one important thing that I would like to clarify is that, my understanding of Wittgenstein is that I do not think he appeals us to abandon science by maintaining that it has no value, but most likely he is appealing us to celebrate the things which lie beyond the realm of science-aesthetic, ethics, religious experience etc. because the meaning of life is such that most of the time it is constantly appealing to the things that can't be captured by science. Life is not a bundle of stories, but these stories are within one's own life. The significances (value) of these stories can't be pictured like facts. The meaning of our lives can't be captured by science.

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