

## “BEING WITTGENSTEIN”:

### Insinuating Ethics, Aesthetics and Religion in the Silence of Wittgenstein

by David Khomdram

#### Abstract:

The paper is not simply a paper but an activity where the writer is taking part as doing philosophy in such a way that – with a wee amount of regret – it could have been done by Wittgenstein. The paper acknowledges the writings of Wittgenstein not as a theory but as an activity that embraces the contingency and the inexplicability of the things of the world and the inability of philosophical structure and norms to harmonize with the events and facts of the world. The reason is simple, when we attempt to explain facts or occurrences in relation to the laws of thought, as a part of the approach there will be an activity of collecting or grouping propositions thus institutionalizing through means which are and should be totally outside of this world (according to Wittgenstein) and this is to pull the fish out of the water and trying to explain the being of fish. But the being of the fish is lost at the very moment when it was pulled out of the water; everything about being a fish is torn off from it. There can be two allusions immanent in this montage; first the being of the fish could not be successfully explained without doubt and flaws through method and approach that are completely alien to the thing. Second, it reminds us of Heideggerian notion of *being-in-the-world* – but I shall not do anything which can be nominated as being comparing Heidegger and Wittgenstein – and all I can say is that which is already there in *Philosophical Investigations*, the idea of extracting from its whole loses its sense to some other sense or to nothingness. Thus here in this paper I am presenting some montages of Wittgenstein without much pointing and briefing on some specific ideas or concepts or more precisely to some of the objective because there is a strong sense of contriteness if I had to say that *Wittgenstein said /claimed so and so about ethics/ aesthetics/ religion* and this does not mean that I am undermining all those lines on these topics made by Wittgenstein himself and his successors or commentators. But, while presenting the montages, and for *de jure* reasons, attempts will be made to reveal how Wittgenstein worked out on these concepts by not contemplating separately on them but rather they are included within the comprehensive working of the world. By doing so, all we can anticipate is not a palpable solution but more on aggravating the problems.

**Key Words:** proposition, logic, structure, ethics, aesthetics, religion, necessities, *de jure*, montage

N.B: The stanzas are bulleted with random names. (Not to be confused with labels or tags)

## Being Wittgenstein:

**Art Gallery.** I am Wittgenstein – the proposition is more challenging than confusing. This opens me to bombardment from those whoever are listening without much thought and implication, which escalates. This bombardment will consist of a whole lot of questions constitutive of *why* and *how*. This event also marks the human aptness of seeking reason and verification; or some would question the substantiality of my proposition. Some would say that it is the beginning of philosophy, tracing themselves to the ancient Greek dialogues and few would say it is wrong to seek out those because one will be trapped in an infinite regress of question and reason, thus lost in the wild, without much tools and utensils, your own conviction will limit you from proceeding further thus predicting an end in the near future despite the availability of entirety and abundance. I believe Wittgenstein is one among the latter and he did and he performed his act not as a reasonable lecturer but as an influential performer. This tradition is common among continental traditions but I shall not take up the trouble to categorize Wittgenstein to any of the school and trend of philosophical thought and it is also formidable to cast his thought and performance in any of the existing moulds because the uniqueness he established relentlessly is visible at the preface of Tractatus, “I do not wish to judge how far my efforts coincide with those of other philosophers. Indeed, what I have written here makes no claim to novelty in detail, and the reason why I give no sources is that it is a matter of indifference to me whether the thoughts that I have had have been anticipated by someone else”. (Wittgenstein, Tractatus Logico Philosophicus 1922)

**City Museum.** The answers that I can provide are numerous and I can provide valid reasons for my declaration/ propaganda ‘*I am Wittgenstein*’, but each of the reasons will hold an essence of hypothetical subjectivism. I may say, “I simply love him”, or I may say, “I believe in him and every word he said”, or “I see Wittgenstein in me” (in thought and action), I may say, “my thought and reasoning correspond to him in all the stages”, or “I was Wittgenstein in my previous life”, or “I have to be him in order to represent him and his philosophy”, or “he is and was the best in doing philosophy and I am pretty much inspired by him and thus I idolizes him – pretending and acting myself as Wittgenstein”, or simply, “I named myself Wittgenstein, or coincidentally I was already named Wittgenstein by birth” etc. Apparently, some of these reasons are palpable and others ridiculous or senseless. Now, Wittgenstein says, “It is not *how* things are in the world that is mystical, but *that* it exists.”(6.44) “To view the world sub specie aeterni is to view it as a whole – a limited whole. Feeling the world as a limited whole – it is this that is mystical”. When the pleader and pleaded come into terms, it is likely that they agreed with one among the others – which is a choice and choice doesn’t provide anything objectively – where each of them carries equal value. And when there is an attempt to retract the answer out of the entirety to conjoin with one or two, there is a huge flaw of inclination, favoritism,

and more other unwanted qualifications which can be ascribed to the act, because the other possibilities are of equal value where none could be denied in the provided context. Therefore the statement *I am Wittgenstein* carries within more than what it seems to be.

**Court.** It has become a cliché to acknowledge some of the writings of Wittgenstein on particular topic and analyze, extrapolate, assay, inspect or scrutinize and provide interpretations and estimates on our context. This is what which is anticipated of the present conference – to contemplate on Wittgenstein’s conception of Ethics, Aesthetics or Religion. But when Wittgenstein spoke about the philosophy, language, thoughts and expression etc. he never skipped any of these ideas, it is always inclusive of everything. Therefore, it is legitimate to speak of the Wittgensteinian ethics, aesthetics or religion without any specific reference to his separate writings (“separate” for those with the conviction that they are separate) on these matters. In relation to this present discussion, for *de jure* reasons, it is significantly necessary to elaborate or amplify Wittgenstein’s conception of so and so, thus enumerating, quoting and reformulating what is required for the provided context, and to do so, the act of acknowledging of the so and so will be done in relation to the painting or the ancient city of which the master architect is Ludwig Wittgenstein.

**Mayor’s Office.** Speaking of Wittgenstein is, to be honest, an arduous task where one has to be oneself, for instance, the presenter, the speaker and at the same time one has to be an objectively realistic observer. This seems to be logical, but to be logical means, according to Wittgenstein, to act within a law. But this law does not provide us with a basic sense to which we can refer to except the notion of ‘*how to act*’. And when it is traced in history, all that we can find is a network of actions, a web of doings, or in Wittgenstein’s word “an ancient city; a maze of little streets and squares, of old and new houses with additions from various periods; and this surrounded by a multitude of new boroughs and straight regular streets and uniform houses”<sup>1</sup>, but not even a single datum on which one can point to it and claim, without doubt, this is *it*. Ultimately, all we can see is uncertainty, distrust, dubiety, suspicion etc. when we came across the basics of being logical (this is further elaborated in the later section of the paper). In the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein disharmonizes the world with logic and its necessities. Wittgenstein has his own ways of projecting the reality of the world in relation to the dynamics of the existence. Nevertheless there is a complex explanation of the world – the majority addresses it as a mature explanation – in the *Philosophical Investigations* where he acknowledged the relations between the world and the language. In *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein seems to be extrapolating through the complexities and the dynamics of human language leading to whole new peculiarities; where the philosophizing

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<sup>1</sup> *Philosophical Investigations*, 18

philosopher leaves the task of philosophizing and sees the world as it is and understands the working of it. The work of tallying and categorizing had been renounced on the ground that every act of categorizing, asserting, is an act of misconstruing the world itself. Wittgenstein goes to the extent that one cannot infer a philosophical enterprise out of his writings, to be honest, which majority of his readers had been indulging in theorizing his philosophy and making severe attempts to make exclusive interpretations of man, world, mind, logic, language etc. out of his verse and context provided in his works. David G. Stern in his article *The availability of Wittgenstein's philosophy*, writes, "...Wittgenstein's writing is a mirror which reflects their own thinking so completely that his challenge to the 'deformities' of systematic philosophy is regarded as incidental".

**Garage.** The anti-philosophical tendency or putting in other words, the critique of systematic philosophy is evident not in his lines or paragraphs but in the complex picture of language and the world provided by his writings; there is no such thing as inferring but the allusion which is also self-revealing. To quote some of the lines from Wittgenstein in support of our argument in order to establish consequential version or the another of '*it*' is highly gratuitous if we represent as some few who are capable to speak of Wittgenstein in all the senses he would have wished for. But for *de jure* reasons we will be presenting the contour that can immediately reveal the anatomy of how things are possible and impossible. From the beginning till the end the paper shall be essentialized (the term is used for the audience whose inclination to the systematic philosophy has been held deep in the abyss without a single picture of realization except for the categorical explication of things and its nature which stands its conformity to the incumbent thought practice and its honorary society/s) with insecurities, slackening and ambiguity. The reason is simple and we can be justified by just claiming that we are speaking of Wittgenstein; not what he was/ is; not what he intends to or what he implies to but what he presents us like the ancient city he speaks of, like those houses and roads both constituting of new and the old – this is it, this is Wittgenstein and the *ancient city* represents Wittgenstein himself and his painting of the man-language-world. Thus to speak anything about ethics, aesthetics or religion separately or in relation to one another out of the Wittgenstein's is also part of the systematic, structural and foundational grounding with the tendency to extract something out of it, to make an explicit notion of '*the*' which is involved in practice and in theory. There may be some instances and lines or even an essay where Wittgenstein speaks of it, but his act was not done so that the scion theorizes something out of it but rather he was providing a ladder that one had to abandon when one reaches the top. Wittgenstein says "...Anyone who understands me eventually recognizes them as nonsensical, when he has used them – as steps – to climb up beyond them. (He must, so to speak, throw away the ladder after

he has climbed up it.) He must transcend these propositions, and then he will see the world aright.”<sup>2</sup> (Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico Philosophicus* 1922)

**Tailor.** The majority of Wittgenstein’s readers and commentators presumably ascertain that there should be two Wittgensteins – Wittgenstein of *Tractatus* and the Wittgenstein of *Philosophical Investigations*. But this is not what he had been doing throughout except for the readers making him to be in accordance to their requirements and necessities, to personal satisfaction for some, to canonize the ideology – with respect to their own perspective – and to influence the others that things are to be such and such. My conviction is that, whenever the dominating conceptual framework and their corresponding trends of extrapolating the work of Wittgenstein, in its true sense, does not work out the ingenuity of Wittgenstein but rather, on the contrary, limits him and his work to just explaining the world to some feeble minded audiences who are ignorant of the way things are and should be. For the truth is that Wittgenstein did more than that; he showed us the path to realize the infinitesimal, to live with the dialectical whole, to rescue the thought from just pointing, to embrace the reality of inexplicability. This does not imply that one should be mystical but the warning he brought to us is against theorizing with regard to truth and reality, existence and permanence, understanding and knowing with regard to the world.

**Clock Tower.** To begin with, whenever there is a line on logic and proposition in Wittgenstein’s speaking, it always spoke, as one way of revealing ‘*what is it to be?*’, on everything behind the general chauvinistic conception of the world. There is a very strong allusion which can accommodate everything, you name it and it is there; either ethics or aesthetics or religion, it is then shown for us to understand and enjoy but not, I believe, to theorize on it to instill to others, to prophesize it and rehabilitate others, to mechanize the artist with techniques to present the world effectively and with ease. And there is also a chance of accusing the writer for affirming what is denied if there is a proposal in such a way that *so and so is the ethical/ aesthetical theory of Wittgenstein*. One line from *Tractatus* may lead us to the ignition of a chain-reaction and that is “Just as the only necessity that exists is logical necessity, so too the only impossibility that exists is logical impossibility”<sup>3</sup>. To some possible extent, the tendency of explaining the world is hidden somewhere in the notion of necessity and as far as the modernity and enlightenment is concerned; it habituated the thought to the general propensity of finding a reasonable solution. This opens up to whole new debate on necessity and it is not where we are capacitating ourselves to indulge in with but rather to provide the opacity of circumscribing the world with incompatible tools. My contention here

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<sup>2</sup> 6.54, *TLP*

<sup>3</sup> 6.375, *TLP*

begins with the fallacy of equipping the wrong tools and the invalidity of its application while explaining the world. For instance, it is same as prescribing a myopic patient with convex lens and the hypermetropic patient with the concave lens. This does not imply that there is a decent necessity of equipping oneself with the right tools but instead what Wittgenstein would say is – there are no tools for the purpose.

**Lamppost<sub>1</sub>**. “All propositions are of equal value”. (6.4)

**Street<sub>1</sub>**. Indeed, when Wittgenstein constructs this line, the problems of assertion have been thoughtfully revealed; every instance of explanation vis-à-vis value or beauty goes to the verge of claiming that *we cannot speak of them*. Again, the silence implied here does not simply represent (which Wittgenstein and many other would assent) the inefficiency of thought and expression, if we speak of the entire Wittgenstein, but the remonstrances that will ascend out after every full stop. These remonstrances, in the form of propositions, invite further remonstrances and thus as usual one returns to the obsolete practice of regenerating the dialectics of truth and false, which, according to Wittgenstein, strictly is a part of the realm outside of our world – logical realm. He said, “...logic has nothing to do with the question whether our world really is like that or not”<sup>4</sup> and this exhibits the idea that whatever we conclude a *this* out of *that*, we are in a position claiming that it should be *this* because *that* speaks about *not-this* and *this*, and one cannot imagine both *this* and *not-this* to be *that* at the same time because it is a contradiction, which ultimately is a direct application of the logical form trying to manage and manipulate in a possible way which is at most the capability we are proud of, and which is also the founding principle of thought. But the moment we replace these symbols with any of the worldly notions, the problem arises (for instance if we imagine the coexistence of good and bad at a unique spatio-temporal framework which is possible in relation to every worldly things). This is one way of counteracting their functional value of being a guiding principle from nature towards culture. As Wittgenstein says, “....logic is not a field in which we express what we wish with the help of signs, but rather one in which the nature of the absolutely necessary signs speaks for itself”<sup>5</sup>, he has been acknowledging the possibilities of blemishing the infiniteness of the world with the limitations and centrism which will arise out of the formalities of tautologies.

**Street<sub>2</sub>**. Now returning to the proposition 6.4, it has also alienated the logical proposition and demonstration/ explanation as being bland; without any acquaintances of this world – this contingent world – because the taste of value and aesthetics is beyond our will, beyond the control of human thought and its practices that is/ will be attuned to the peer consensus

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<sup>4</sup> 6.1233, TLP

<sup>5</sup> 6.124, TLP

towards natural science and its temporal satisfaction which is occasional and contextual. Therefore any decent attempt to postulate that ethics is so and so eventually escort itself to be in a position opposite to the previous occupation; of inferring a *this* out of *that*, which could be direct application of logical norms and methods whose position lies beyond the worldly affairs. Again, if we allow ourselves to speak about ethics or aesthetics and if the major point of reference is Wittgenstein and if we recapitulate and put it into a dialogue, his lines and propositions, and finally affirming that Wittgenstein says *this*<sub>1</sub> on ethics and *this*<sub>2</sub> on aesthetics then, we are not in a position to called ourselves a follower of Wittgenstein or we cannot be in a state where we can claim ourselves subscribing and practicing Wittgenstein. This is the problem, and Stanley Cavell addresses the problem as, “...There is still, I believe, no canonical way of teaching the *Investigations* (unless beginning with the *Tractatus* and contrasting the *Investigations* with it counts as such way)”<sup>6</sup>

**Street**<sub>3</sub>. Again, proposition 6.4 is of the nature that it can still mirror a more radical thought. It can project itself as a line indicating or meaning that the dominance of one over other is not intelligible. The practice of elucidating, elaborating any concept or discipline involve a series of propositions arranged one after another; or a complex of propositions which will be responsible in establishing something whose significance is, without doubt, nearest to the idea of truth or reality. Premises-conclusion, premises-conclusion and so on until they reached the big CONCLUSION which is bigger and valuable from all the conclusions and premises they had used so far. I myself and some post-modern thinkers would say that, keeping in view the complex network of arguments in its entirety, one cannot think the dominance of the big CONCLUSION over other such conclusions.

**Emporium**. It is highly expected that the paper and its writer could be accused of misinterpreting Wittgenstein and there will be no justification in defense because there is no such thing as misinterpretation if it is a case of Wittgenstein that is also a part of *Philosophical Investigations* if it has got any significance among the readers of Wittgenstein. Stanley Cavell continues, “...and young teachers have expressed to me their greatest dissatisfaction with their own teaching of it precisely over the opening weeks, typically, it seems to me, because they are unsure that when they step back from Wittgenstein’s text they are doing justice to their sense of the particularity of that text.”<sup>7</sup> If I am asked to speak a line on the philosophy of Wittgenstein from *Philosophical Investigations*, honestly I shall not utter a single word. All I can do is either provide an annotation to the writings of Wittgenstein which is obviously not an absolute one; or lay down the montages he uses strategically or simply so as to refurbish for better

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<sup>6</sup> Notes and afterthoughts on the opening of Wittgenstein’s *Investigations*.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*<sup>6</sup>

understanding and enjoyment. Here is a section from Alain Badiou's work which will support our position and which is clear and presentable;

Let us observe first of all the syntactical solidity, the idea of a definitive presentation of planes arranged between the sayable and the unsayable, the motive of what one might call an *aphoristic completeness*: all this is finally conditioned by its inessential character, even in the eyes of Wittgenstein himself. Let us say that the presentative syntax is all the more complex and peremptory the more *what* is presented has no decisive importance for the author's meditation. Sure, all the problems are solved, but in order to show "how little is achieved when these problems are solved" (Preface). What is essential is translinguistic, it is on the order of the act. For the act alone is that by which a value manifests itself.<sup>8</sup> (Badiou 2011)

**Store<sub>1</sub>**. When Wittgenstein said, "There are, indeed, things that cannot be put into words. They make themselves manifest. They are what is mystical"<sup>9</sup>, there is a strong implication that here he is referring to ethical, religious, aesthetical notions but above all it seems that he was referring to every kind of assertion, reason and affirmation; of the segregation of absence and presence; of the analysis and explanation on the basis of some preexisting norms; of the questions and answers; of theory and proof etc. and this is where we can notice the generally unnoticed tunnel which provides a direct link between the alleged *earlier* and the *later* Wittgenstein. We are not denying the truth of these binaries but they are more or less *forms* or *theory of forms* and of inference. But Wittgenstein had made one thing clear that logic is a theory of forms and of inference, "Truth of logic can be postulated in so far as we can postulate an adequate notation" (6.1223), "It also become clear why logic was called the theory of forms and of inference" (6.1224). The problem is not with what these have to do with logic but these notions should not function proper to the worldly things; it is formidable to make reference out of this. As long as there is an attempt to explain things logically, explaining and theorizing in terms of *p* and *not-p*, there is also an attempt to make a logical proposition; but logical propositions say nothing of this world, according to Wittgenstein, but only a structure which is presupposed to be qualified for the proposition or expression and this structure, to be sure, is not worldly and empty of any worldly content – "...logical propositions cannot be confirmed by experience any more than they can be refuted by it"<sup>10</sup>. And this is what the *Investigations* had revealed; the unfathomable possibilities and multiplicity of meanings seen or realized when language is engaged in this contingent world. Albeit the notoriety of *Investigations*, the same had been revealed in his other writings which are, according to me, an extension of his previous

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<sup>8</sup> Alain Badiou, *Wittgenstein's Antiphilosophy*, trans. Bruno Bosteels. Verso, London, New York, (2011), P.168

<sup>9</sup> 6.522, TLP

<sup>10</sup> 6.1222, TLP



writings. In plain language, it is the impossibility of holding something to be true and the other to be false with a strong pretension with regard to the tautology of *p* and *not-p*; but one can profess the possibility of allowing the world to present itself as a poem or a picture upon which we can enjoy and grasp it; not to harmonize with the structure but to enjoy the mysticality of it. Wittgenstein says, “When the answer cannot be put into words, neither can the question be put into words. The riddle does not exist”<sup>11</sup>, “The solution of the problem of life is seen in the vanishing of the problem. (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?)”<sup>12</sup>. And if one seeks an answer which is a valid one, logically, and one claims it to be a necessity to further his understanding, then the necessity here is nothing but a logical necessity and nothing more.

**Restaurant.** From the beginning of this discourse, it is evident that there is always a problem when we spoke of *what ethics/ religion/ aesthetics is?* Or when we put in the form of *ethics is so and so*. Above all it is a liability to say *Wittgenstein claims ethics /aesthetics/ religion as so and so* because Wittgenstein never wished his writings to be concluded in this way. Considering philosophy in its least sense or all without a sense suggested that, “The correct method in philosophy would really be the following: to say nothing except what can be said, i.e. propositions of natural science – i.e. something that has nothing to do with philosophy....”<sup>13</sup> This is because Wittgenstein simply forbids us to categorize ethics/ aesthetics/ religion as natural science and also he does not want to make a propositional claim that they are not. Therefore I felt that I shall not be doing justice to Wittgenstein if I conclude that his ethics/ aesthetics/ religion is so and so except for an honest presentation of the network of his montages with a slight commentary and thus I am passing over in SILENCE.

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<sup>11</sup> 6.5, TLP  
<sup>12</sup> 6.521, TLP  
<sup>13</sup> 6.53, TLP

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