

# The (In)Visibility of Value: A Wittgensteinian Perspective

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## Abstract

*Akeel Bilgrami (2016) has argued against the scientific method and its treatment of ethical values by declaring it a superstition of science for not considering values to be part of nature. This paper agrees with the concept of the engaged self discussed by Bilgrami in order to make sense of ethical values. However, it attempts to argue against the conceptual incoherence by juxtaposing value properties and the engaged self. The incoherence can be avoided by following a Wittgensteinian understanding of ethical values which has been explicated very briefly, yet in a significant way, in Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus and also in A Lecture on Ethics in some detail.*

Key words: *engaged self; fact-value dichotomy; absolute value; relative value; Wittgenstein; Bilgrami*

## Introduction

One can agree with Daniel Sharp who, in his review of the book *Wittgenstein's Moral Thought*, makes a categorisation of the early Wittgenstein's understanding of philosophy of ethics in the following way: a) concern for meta-ethics, b) development of a philosophical method (the method is essentially ethical in nature) and c) suggestions for a better way of living (Sharp, 2018). This categorisation, at least as regards b) and c), can be extended to the later phase of his work as well. The therapeutic method is pronounced substantially in his *Philosophical Investigations* which is often considered to be an ethical treatment of philosophical problems. However, it is debated to be implicit in the following aphorism:<sup>1</sup> »My

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1 This aphorism stands as a basis for resolute readers or, as they are often called, new Wittgensteinians of *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (TLP) who further claim this aphorism does not approve of a metaphysical distinction between what is the structure of the world and what is not the structure of the world. 'New Wittgensteinians' as a term is reflected in one of the books, namely,

propositions serve as elucidations in the following way: 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« (Wittgenstein, 1922; TLP 6.54).

The work *Culture and Value* arguably deals with the normative aspect of human life and seems to be very suggestive in offering a better way of life. In the context of this paper, I shall deal with the first point i.e. his concern for meta-ethics, particularly in the works *Tractatus* and *A Lecture on Ethics*. This concern for meta-ethics, that is, whether it is discussed in the same form in his later works, particularly in *Philosophical Investigations*, is a matter of debate.<sup>2</sup>

Bilgrami (2016) in his paper *The Visibility of Value* seems to have argued for a fusion of moral realism and moral relativity which provides for an autonomy and visibility of values. My intention in this paper is to show that these two outcomes, that is, the autonomy which is provided by an understanding of moral realism and the visibility which is provided by an understanding of moral relativity, together involve a conceptual discomfort. The conceptual discomfort or incoherence is not a logical incoherence nor does it signify any great philosophical incompatibility. In fact, the thesis itself which is discussed by Bilgrami, has a normative goal, to my understanding, the purpose of which is to develop an agency which may evolve a better human engagement with the world. However, conceptually, primacy of the autonomous value properties/values and the *engaged self* which are discussed by Bilgrami would fall into two different categories of ideals, namely

*The New Wittgenstein*, edited by Crary and Read (2000). The book contains some of the major resolute readings including Cora Diamond and James Conant. However, with the exception of Peter Hacker's article *Was he trying to whistle it?* which is a defence of standard reading. Anti-metaphysical or resolute readers do believe, just as metaphysical readers, that the *Tractatus* initially presents an atomistic understanding of reality which is represented by an ideal language with the help of truth functional logic. It also shows what can be clearly said and what cannot, and also that the metaphysical truths or the mystical can be only shown. Resolute interpretation warns the readers of *Tractatus* that they must throw away the ladder of the nonsensical propositions of metaphysics and the mystical after grasping the very division as '6.54' suggests. Besides, the resolute readers uphold that Wittgenstein himself is very critical about theorizing. Therefore, to accept the sensible/nonsensical or sayable/showable as a theory would be self-contradictory. Thus, the whole aim of *Tractatus* is carried on in his later work, *Philosophical Investigations* (PI) where he discusses the therapeutic method of treating philosophical problems.

- 2 The view that »ethics is transcendental« (Wittgenstein, 1922; TLP 6.421) may not have the same kind of meta-ethical continuity in *Philosophical Investigations* and its overall approach to language and meaning. This seems evident, however, in section: »'Anything – and nothing – is right.' And this is the position you are in if you look for definitions corresponding to our concepts in aesthetics or ethics. When In such difficulty always ask: How did we *learn* the meaning of this word ('good' for instance)? From what sort of examples? In what language-games? Then it will be easier for you to see that the word must have a family of meanings« (Wittgenstein, 1953; PI 77). My intention is not to get into this part of *Philosophical Investigations* to claim that the meta-ethical understanding of *Tractatus* is completely different from *Philosophical Investigations*, because one can equally argue that his later works – *Culture and Value* and *A Lecture on Ethics* – contain ideas regarding ethics or ethical values having different pronouncements. So, for the present context, I would not like to deal with this issue for it can be the subject of a paper in itself.

moral realism and moral relativity respectively. Moreover, an attempt is made in this paper to discuss a Wittgensteinian perspective so as to settle this conceptual discomfort. In order to get into Bilgrami's paper and, subsequently, the Wittgensteinian suggestion, one must first discuss the much evident and debated fact–value dichotomy.

### 1. *The fact–value dichotomy*

The general understanding of this dichotomy is that it has the functionality of being descriptive for fact and evaluative for value. The division between fact and value seems to be considered as belonging to two different theoretical domains. The discourse on value is projected as a discourse of moral science, while the enquiry into fact belongs to the domain of natural science. Thus, the mutually exclusive character of this distinction between fact and value keeps the dichotomy intact. This is, however, a one–sided view that maintains the theoretical boundary between fact and value. One can, however, argue against this dichotomy, as shall be discussed in this paper piecemeal. Still, the concepts of fact and value need to be explained first to make sense of the issue concerning the dichotomy.

The word 'fact' is used in philosophy or otherwise in many ways. The context that shall be discussed here is twofold. Namely, one context understands 'fact' as the obtaining state of affairs of Russell and Wittgenstein's analysis of the world in their philosophy of logical atomism. The other is the interest of natural science. This is the scientific exploration and description of the world. The first is a particular metaphysical exercise backed by a *logico–language* analysis. The second can be considered an epistemological quest of exploration and description of the given. There is also another sense in which it is used, namely, it refers to that which deals with the developments of social reality essentially manufactured by human desires. A social fact is an existing state of affairs that is very much part of a society. Social facts comply with rules and regulations for human convenience. These kinds of facts are discussed within the broad area of social ontology. Values and social facts are usually intertwined: for instance, marriage is a social fact/institution. Loyalty in marriage can be considered a value.

The word 'value' can be discussed in three broad ways in regard to its grammatical forms as verb, adjective and noun (Lemos, 1995). As regards the verb, a person 'p' can *value* X, Y & Z. The word 'value' is understood here as the activity of valuing. That is to say, 'p' is engaged in the evaluation of X, Y & Z. 'Value' is used as an adjective when X, Y & Z are valuable. For instance, X is a *good watch*. The noun 'value' indicates an existential consideration. For instance, 'p's values are such and such, or the value of a watch is such and such. The existential consideration lies in the fact that the value of X, Y and Z is indifferent to whether a person 'p' values them or not. My intention here is to discuss 'value' as used as a noun.

The fact–value dichotomy is considered to be a proclaimed dichotomy, historically by the moral emotivism of Hume and later by logical positivism, which

adds much flavour to keep this dichotomy intact. Value statements are mere expressions of human emotion and thereby are only evaluative. They vary from statements concerning facts on scientific exploration to descriptive statements. Factual statements have the status of subject independency, and value statements have the status of subject dependency. This dichotomy gets much thicker with the development of logical positivism and its treatment of value statements as being meaningless.

Much before the denunciation of logical positivism, G. E. Moore (1903) also strongly upheld the view of the “Is–Ought” dichotomy – which is famously termed by him as a ‘naturalistic fallacy’ – for the enforcement of the dichotomy that what ought to be the case cannot be logically derivable from what is the case. This must not be equated with the understanding of logical positivism’s claim regarding ethical values. The dichotomy seems important for concept control as a method of the analytic philosophy of Moore, Russell and Wittgenstein who tried to apply this in their philosophical discussions. However, the dichotomy must not be used in the background to dismantle/devalue certain ideas as was the case with the logical positivists’ understanding of ethical values as being meaningless. Wittgenstein, however, does pronounce aesthetic and ethical values as ‘non-sense’ but in a significant positive sense.<sup>3</sup>

Hilary Putnam has strongly opposed the fact/value dichotomy. He seems to reject the dichotomy that is upheld for methodological reasons by considering that it would evoke the terminus of the thought process. He claims: »The worst thing about the fact/value dichotomy is that in practice it functions as a discussion–stopper, and not just a discussion–stopper, but a thought–stopper« (Putnam, 2002, p. 44). The dichotomy becomes a discussion–stopper and thereby a thought–stopper because it might subdue the creativity of the human intellect which can potentially tend to go beyond the well–defined dichotomy. Putnam, when pronouncing the dichotomy as a ‘thought–stopper,’ perhaps is afraid of other different possibilities that just do not fit into the dichotomy itself.<sup>4</sup> This is not the only reason for which he does not approve of the dichotomy.

The main reason for the rejection of the dichotomy, as argued by Putnam, is what we call the economic reason. He considers the economic reason and pursues it in need of the entanglement of fact and value. He considers that the dichotomy might possibly hamper this entanglement just as logical positivism damaged greatly the concept of value. In this way, the economic affairs of our welfare society would be hampered if proper attention was not given to social facts. Thus, he writes, »if we do not see that facts and values are deeply “entan-

3 The utterance of the *nonsensical proposition* of the aphorism 6.54 in *Tractatus* is interpreted to signify propositions about self, ethics, aesthetics etc. However, one can very well argue that they are not considered identical with the nonsense of logical positivism. There is some evidence of Wittgenstein’s disagreement with logical positivism as reported by Ray Monk (1990, p. 283).

4 He also discusses the analytic–synthetic distinction by Kant as that which fails to provide an absolute distinction. Quine’s *Two Dogmas of Empiricism* is a classic case of rejection of analytic and synthetic truth as was held by logical positivism.

gled,” we shall misunderstand the nature of fact as badly as logical positivists misunderstood the nature of value« (Putnam, 2002, p. 46). He emphasizes his argument by referring to Amartya Sen’s project of welfare economics which is considered to be based on certain general ethical ends. Real social development (the state of affairs which determines the welfare of society) is only achieved if the right economic policies are in place. These policies are expected to be value-oriented, rather than merely profit-oriented. The project is possible if there is a proper conjunction or entanglement between values and the social state of affairs. Thus, the so-called philosophical dichotomy cannot make possible the project of welfare economics by Sen, theoretically speaking. However, the merit of Sen’s contribution to welfare economics is much reflected in his winning the Nobel Prize. Therefore, for Putnam, the philosophical dichotomy is very much unwarranted as far as the welfare of society is concerned.

However, Putnam also discusses ethics in his book *Ethics without Ontology* which can be used additionally to relate Bilgrami’s position. Putnam distinguishes between inflationary and deflationary metaphysics which are used as an underpinning for an understanding of ethics. It seems, for him, that the metaphysical background of ethics, the inflationary kind, i.e. good or goodness as such, is a *form* or is *indefinable*, as for Plato and Moore. However, deflationary metaphysics does situate ethical discourse in terms of eliminating concepts and reducing them to other different terminologies. In his own words, »A is nothing but B«, or so-and-so’s are nothing but such and suches – for example, »goodness is nothing but pleasure« or »properties are nothing but names«; or, in more recent versions, »ethical utterances are nothing but expressions of feeling,“ “physical objects are nothing but logical constructions out of sensations« (Putnam, 2005, p. 19–20). Putnam rejects both these versions of ethical discourse and approves what he calls *pragmatic pluralism*, an idea that deals with the pragmatic aspects of ethical discourse and that can be very well discussed within the limitations inherent in language i.e. within the periphery of various language games in later Wittgensteinian terms. Here, I do not wish to get into Putnam’s disallowance of the inflationary and deflationary ontological foundations of ethical discourse, but I shall proceed from the position of *pragmatic pluralism* which can situate ethical discourse in the socio-cultural intersubjective domain of human experience. This, in a way, involves some kind of moral relativity.

In his paper Bilgrami supposedly implies the position of some kind of moral realism which suggests that values are objectively present in the natural world and that the presence of values or *value properties* is humanly comprehensible if there is an engaged self. Human comprehension can be inferred from a socio-cultural perspective. This juxtaposition of the intersubjective condition and the objective nature of value properties can be considered a conceptual discomfort. Let us discuss the arguments that are provided by him for this alleged position.

## 2. *The case of Bilgrami*

Bilgrami's contention at the beginning of the paper lies implicitly with the 'Is–Ought' dichotomy as a superstition of natural science. The invisibility of values is very much countenanced as they are mere human inventions. Thus, the values themselves are not properties of the natural world and thereby are invisible to the study of natural science. Bilgrami, however, in a way argues against the dichotomy by claiming that values are very much visible, and they ought to be considered as properties in the world. So, the dichotomy is irrelevant as it gives rise to a superstitious method which is allegedly followed by natural science. One can identify Putnam's denigration with Bilgrami (Bilgrami, however, did not make the claim against the dichotomy explicitly) for the same kind of concern. Putnam's concern for the economic affairs of society can be recognized as Bilgrami's concern for the hazardous affairs of the natural world. There is one more point of agreement between Putnam and Bilgrami in this present context, which is that neither of them ascribes to any metaphysical basis for values. I shall immediately point out the background and the arguments stated by Bilgrami for making the above-mentioned claims regarding values as *objects* or *visible properties in the world*.

Bilgrami comprehends value properties or values as objects that are not of fire and water but are of *threat* and *cruelty*: for example, *threat* – a fisherman in a small unequipped boat sees a thunderstorm in the middle of the sea, and *cruelty* – a mob in a local train murders a man for allegedly carrying a particular kind of meat. These objects are not supposed to be studied by natural science. Bilgrami objects to this view. Thus, he clearly states, »In our modernity we are supposed to think that it is a superstition to claim that nature contains things, visible things such as threats and cruelties, that the natural sciences cannot study, whereas I have claimed that it is the denial of this claim that is the superstition, a superstition of our modernity« (Bilgrami, 2016, 920). One can see his attempt to counter the understanding that a boundary has been set by science to study the 'Is', and by ethics to study the 'Ought'.

Bilgrami mentions the following two arguments to validate his claim. The first, he considers to be a negative argument because it does not necessarily support his position that nature can also possess value properties. The negative argument only rejects the idea that there is nothing unscientific about the idea of »nature which contains properties and things that the natural sciences cannot study«. It is, however, believed to be unscientific for science or modernity to study miracles, and in this process, it eliminates value properties. Bilgrami considers this elimination an »illicit extrapolation«. It is, thus, for him similar to throwing out the baby with the bathwater.

The positive argument is indeed condensed. Bilgrami brings up the role of agency to argue that »the world contains value properties«. The distinction which he makes between the engaged (practical) and disengaged (theoretical) self in

order to make sense of agency is a distinction between two different perspectives. The disengaged self is interested to know reality in a detached way. He writes:

»In many of our ordinary observations we think of the world in a detached way quite informally ('That's a square table,' 'Here's the tree in the quad,' 'The water in the lake is cold,' 'She is going to class'), but when we do natural science, that detached perspective takes its most regimented form, and we predict and explain the objects, properties, and events in the world, bringing them under laws and generalizations, moving to a vocabulary of molecules, chlorophyll, H<sub>2</sub>O, neurons, etc.« (Bilgrami, 2016, 924).

This is considered as a disengaged perspective by Bilgrami from both a formal and an informal reading of the world, because there is a mechanical prediction of reality for the formal reading and for the informal reading there is, of course, disengagement. However, the engaged self is guided by an element of intention that sees the value properties of the world. He argues that, in order to be a practical engaged self, one needs to see those value properties. Thus, he says: »If we are to be practical agents engaged with the world, the world must contain elements over and above the elements that natural science (with its detached perspective) studies. Unless we describe the world in value terms – as containing such things as threats and cruelty – we could not be engaged with it in the practical sense« (Bilgrami, 2016, 925).

So, the practical agent and value properties are essentially linked. They are essentially linked because the idea of agency (the practical agent or engaged self) cannot be apprehended conceptually, at least in the present context, if there is no value property. What is implied from this is that the agent relates to the world where there are value properties such as *threat* and *cruelty*. If someone is not able to relate, s/he fails to become a practical agent, for instance, the co-passenger who behaves quite indifferently to a murder, or the tourist who enjoys a thunderstorm through an aesthetic gaze at the seaside.

This link between self and value properties is further analysed by Bilgrami in terms of a relationship between the *desirability* and *desire* of the self. The desires, if they are self-standing in nature, become disoriented and mechanical. However, if they are guided by certain desirabilities, the orientation towards those desirabilities is very much intense. Thus, the desire of an engaged self is dependent on desirabilities. Here, the desire of a self is very much part of certain psychological phenomena which are supported by the desirability of objects which are external to psychological phenomena. Furthermore, those desirabilities are value properties of the world such as *threat* and *cruelty*. This distinction between desires as self-standing phenomena and desires as not self-standing phenomena, as discussed by Bilgrami, can be understood through Harry Frankfurt's distinction of *first order* and *second order desire* to some extent.<sup>5</sup>

5 One can compare Bilgrami's *self-standing desire* and desire with desirability with Frankfurt's notion of *first order desire* and *second order desire*. First order desires are desires of desiring objects, but second order desires are reflected desires of first order desires. In the same way, Bilgrami

One can extend Bilgrami's unification of the *engaged self* with the *value properties* of the world to the idea of a juxtaposition of moral relativity because of his claims that »desires and other states of mind must be *responses to value properties in the world* in order for us to be agents« and to the idea of moral realism because »the world contains value properties«. These two extended ideas are very much pronounced in his paper. Perhaps he cares equally for both and thereby ascribes equal status to both. The positive argument discussed by him suggests that there are value properties existing independently. Here, one can ponder over the intention of the author which is presumably a normative one, but on the other hand, one may say that he also discusses clearly the idea of moral relativity. Thus, he writes:

»Perhaps one immediate implication to be drawn is that ethics is, in one sense, primarily a *perceptual* discipline. I use the word 'primarily' and mean it. I don't mean to suggest that *deliberative* and reflective elements are not important in ethics. They certainly are. But their role *nests within* a more basic perceptual understanding in which our moral agency responds to the normative demands of the value properties we perceive (or fail to perceive, or misperceive) as we navigate the world we inhabit. One obvious (there are other, less obvious things to say) nesting of the deliberative in the perceptual owes to the fact that much of our perception of values is differential and even conflicting. Agents from different cultures or backgrounds may apprehend quite different normative demands in the very same perceptible situation; indeed, sometimes a single moral agent (thinking within different cognitive frames, for instance) may do so. When this happens, deliberation and reflection of the familiar sort (ranking, weighing, assessing rational support or lack of support among values) are needed to make choices or to resolve the conflicts« (Bilgrami, 2016, 931).

The above passage not only deliberates on the idea of moral relativity but also discusses the author's suggestive approach towards the expected problems regarding moral relativity. Still, primacy is given to the engaged self and thereby moral relativity and, if at all (which is quite likely for Bilgrami) there are problems concerning moral subjectivity, the reflective rational quality of the self can be used to bring about solutions.

However, the whole juxtaposition – in a sense – of moral realism and moral relativity gives rise to the conceptual discomfort that further would reject the 'Is–Ought' dichotomy. For the present context, the rejection of the dichotomy is not so important, though conceptual incoherence is a problem. Conceptual incoherence is implied from the meta-ethical understanding of the autonomy of value properties that are believed to be part of the natural world and at the same time refer to an *engaged self* that potentially can discover value properties. Bilgrami's idea is no doubt a defensible position for normative reasons, which is discussed not only in this particular paper but also in other works by him as well. My problem regarding conceptual discomfort is as follows: if we speak of

brings in the concept of the engaged self into the discussion so as to understand the desirability of desire (Frankfurt, 1971).



agency in terms of Bilgrami's idea of the *engaged self*, then ultimately values/value properties cannot be autonomous or independent of human perceptibility. Moreover, he holds that ethics is essentially perceptual. An *engaged self* is capable of being perceptual because it possesses a desire that is not self-standing but rather is guided by certain desirabilities, such as *cruelty* and *threat*. The problem is that this perceptual capability, which can reflect on value properties such as *cruelty* and *threat*, is not objective. The social, political, cultural, economic and even intellectual affinity in the background play a significant role in creating these value properties as well. In this regard, the detached self is also engaged, were we to take into account the above-mentioned contexts. The traveller who enjoys a thunderstorm is *disengaged* because s/he cannot identify the threat as a fisherman can. At the same time, s/he is *engaged* because one can consider *beauty* as a value property. This is the contextual relative understanding of so-called value properties. I, here, do not at all mean to disregard the concept *engaged self* which develops agency as such, but to claim that agency is merely guided by *threat* and *cruelty* is problematic because threat and cruelty themselves can be extremely contextual, relative and subjective. However, self-engagement can be pursued if there is a metaphysical basis for it. Wittgenstein in his early writings discussed ethics on the basis of metaphysics. There is, moreover, one more striking similarity between Bilgrami's contention against the method of science and Wittgenstein's critique of modernity, particularly with regard to its considerations on ethical values.

### 3. A Wittgensteinian suggestion: Deciphering A Lecture on Ethics and Tractatus

Values as discussed earlier in this paper in terms of adopting the grammatical form of a noun is implied from Bilgrami's notion of value properties as being objectively found in the natural world as *threat* and *cruelty*. This can only be comprehended through an *engaged self*, as concerns Bilgrami. Therefore, one can imply that value properties and one's comprehension of value properties are, in principle, indistinguishable. In this section, I wish to discuss this implication by arguing for the autonomy of values irrespective of the subject's engagement. The following discussion of Wittgenstein is useful in this regard.

Wittgenstein discusses the idea of self and the idea of value in his early works by considering them as part of the unsayable/showable, a unique domain that is different from the objectively structured factual world. Ethical values, as such, do not fit into the objective world. Unlike Bilgrami who posited values as *value properties* of the world, Wittgenstein has reason to believe that values must belong to a different realm than the facts of logical space which constitute the whole world. »The facts in logical space are the world« (Wittgenstein, 1922; TLP 1.13).

Before discussing the *Tractatarian* distinction between values and facts, one must turn one's attention to his only written English public lecture which speaks broadly on ethical values. This was posthumously published as *A Lecture on Ethics*. At the beginning of the lecture, Wittgenstein is apprehensive about moder-

nity and the scientific method. He clearly demonstrates his discomfort toward this method for understanding something that is essentially beyond scientism.<sup>6</sup> A similar kind of apprehension is also shown in *Tractatus*.<sup>7</sup> This apprehension demonstrates that Wittgenstein believes that either one *need not* argue for a logical space for ethical values along with many other metaphysical subjects, or one *cannot* argue for the same. Wittgenstein, I believe, overtly argues for the former. If one agrees that one can argue for ethical values in the same fashion as science does for the natural world, for Wittgenstein it would be a methodological error because of the misunderstandings possible within the of logic of language.

It is important to understand the reasons provided in *A Lecture on Ethics* and *Tractatus* for not considering values as part of the natural world. Unlike the arguments stated earlier by Putnam and Bilgrami, which are very much conceivable for ethical reasons, Wittgenstein takes a different turn in maintaining the dichotomy, and he also dissolves the issue for a methodological reason by declaring the need for the division. The distinction between trivial or relative, and absolute ethical values is a prelude to maintaining the fact/value dichotomy. I perceive two reasons for Wittgenstein's maintaining the dichotomy, namely, irreducibility of absolute ethical values to the level of facts and the methodological issue regarding our use of language.

These two points are mutually interrelated. The truth of one can be the reason for the other. I shall try to further the second point since the first seems obvious and was previously discussed in the form of naturalistic fallacy, historically. The methodological issue is intended to be understood as conceptual incoherence which has allegedly been produced by Bilgrami in his paper. Relative value is valuable in relation to certain standards of fact – a certain predetermined standard – however, absolute value is valuable, not in terms of anything related to fact, but is valuable in itself (noun value). Wittgenstein lists three different experiences to make sense of absolute value which cannot be implied by any statement of fact, unlike relative value. They are merely subjective experiences for which Wittgen-

6 Before delivering his lecture, Wittgenstein made this remark for the audience, »Another alternative would have been to give you what's called a popular–scientific lecture, that is a lecture intended to make you believe that you understand a thing which actually you don't understand, and to gratify what I believe to be one of the lowest desires of modern people, namely the superficial curiosity about the latest discoveries of science. I rejected these alternatives and decided to talk to you about a subject which seems to me to be of general importance, hoping that it may help to clear up your thoughts about this subject (even if you should entirely disagree with what I will say about it)« (Wittgenstein, 1965, pp. 3–4).

7 In the preface of *Tractatus*, he mentions his apprehension in an implicit manner in terms of a thought and the limit of the thought. This is, however, evident in the aphorism, »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—and then, whenever someone else wanted to say something metaphysical, to demonstrate to him that he had failed to give a meaning to certain signs in his propositions. Although it would not be satisfying to the other person—he would not have the feeling that we were teaching him philosophy—this method would be the only strictly correct one « (Wittgenstein, 1922; TLP 6.53).

stein hesitates to attribute standard names: 1) Wondering at the existence of the world; 2) Feeling absolute safety; 3) Feeling guilty.

The verbal expressions we tend to give to these experiences are nonsense, but they are very much content with meaning when used in the relative sense. They are, thus, mere similes that are intended to mean something other than what they themselves are. This is the confusion we tend to create while (mis)using language. Threat and cruelty can be standardized as absolute and relative value, if we put the Wittgensteinian distinction in perspective. The relative sense of threat and cruelty is subject to relativism. Therefore, the *engaged self* can apprehend value properties in a very mundane way. If Bilgrami's contention is primarily focused on the experience of values of the ordinary or of the relative kind, then they are very much part of this natural or social world. Consequently, this necessarily involves subjective experience which is very prudently expressed in Wittgenstein's quotation of Hamlet, »Nothing is either good or bad, but thinking makes it so« (Wittgenstein, 1965, 6). Therefore, nothing of that sort can be generalized as Bilgrami tries to do so by dressing up the concept of the *engaged self*. However, if his intention is to value the absolute value in terms of Wittgensteinian experiences of wondering at the world, feeling absolute safety and feeling guilty etc., these can never be reduced in principle to the factual or social world because trying to do so is to misuse language. It is thus redundant to declare values as properties of this natural world.

Wittgenstein's amalgamation of ethics and aesthetics makes one further claim, namely, that these are subjects of mere engagements of the second order. The amalgamation is understood through his attempt to provide a metaphysical basis for ethics and aesthetics. Absolute ethical values are beyond human comprehension in terms of depiction through language, and so too are aesthetic values. One, however, would often consider them to be nonsense if one were to follow the method of modernity, but Wittgenstein puts his case bluntly against modernity: »That is to say: I see now that these nonsensical expressions were not nonsensical because I had not yet found the correct expressions, but that their nonsensicality was their very essence. For all I wanted to do with them was just to go beyond the world and that is to say beyond significant language« (Wittgenstein, 1965, 11). He further adds to conclude the lecture: »My whole tendency and I believe the tendency of all men who ever tried to write or talk Ethics or Religion was to run against the boundaries of language. This running against the walls of our cage is perfectly, absolutely hopeless. Ethics so far as it springs from the desire to say something about the ultimate meaning of life, the absolute good, the absolute valuable, can be no science. What it says does not add to our knowledge in any sense. But it is a document of a tendency in the human mind which I personally cannot help respecting deeply and I would not for my life ridicule it« (Wittgenstein, 1965, pp. 11–12).

Similar kinds of remarks are also found in *Tractatus*: »So too it is impossible for there to be propositions of ethics. Propositions can express nothing that is higher« (Wittgenstein, 1922; TLP 6.42). Furthermore he adds: »It is clear that

ethics cannot be put into words. Ethics is transcendental. (Ethics and aesthetics are one and the same)« (Wittgenstein, 1922; TLP 6.421). This suggests that the subjects of ethics (absolute values), religion, aesthetics and self are beyond the boundary of scientific enquiry. They cannot be objects of the natural world. For him, ethics is considered a part of aesthetics in the sense that the latter demands a second order engagement to fully comprehend it experientially.

### *Conclusion*

The evaluation of modern science of anything that is not *visible* to human empirical observation as a method of enquiry is certainly a persistent problem as far as ethical values are concerned. It has been attempted in this paper to proffer two different ways of addressing this problem. One way is discussed by Bilgrami, Putnam and others who put emphasis on the role of *agency* which does not require a metaphysical background, but rather evolves from an immanent socio-cultural background. I propose that scientism is to be discredited for having a universal method for everything including values. The paper also attempts to show, particularly in the case of Bilgrami, that modernity has failed to identify value properties. Furthermore, Bilgrami strives to establish that values are also properties of the world, but their *visibility* depends on the kind of agency that one has to develop in regard to these value properties. If we look at the world from a scientific perspective, we fail to *see* value properties such as *threat* and *cruelty*. However, this *seeing* carries with it the baggage of relativism which further problematizes the whole idea of agency which is discussed through the *engaged self*. To claim at the same time that these value properties are objectively present in the world (moral realism) causes a conceptual discomfort. The second, however, deals with dismantling the scientific method and its developments in terms of technology, etc., but it provides a metaphysical basis for our understanding of ethical values. This is the Wittgensteinian way of dealing with values of the absolute kind.

The normative nature of the idea propagated by Bilgrami and others is no doubt well thought out. It is highly recommended and suggested that present or future society involve *agency* in this regard. It is not just an academic exercise of some kind, but rather overall human engagement that ought to be a perspective of the second order (the engaged self), as suggested by Bilgrami. However, the conceptual incoherence it creates cannot be avoided. Thus, the logical space for the natural world needs to be differentiated from the metaphysical space for ethics, at least for methodological reasons. »The good is outside the space of fact« (Wittgenstein, 1980 p. 3). Moreover, the invisibility of it is its essence which evaporates the *nonsense*<sup>8</sup> for Wittgenstein.

8 As modernity, according to Bilgrami, does not grant values the status of a genuine subject of enquiry is a kind of nonsense. However, by employing the philosophical method, it can be demonstrated that the human inability to express the inexpressible is the most ethical engagement of all, as Wittgenstein would like to believe.

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*(Ne)vidljivost vrijednosti: wittgensteinska perspektiva*

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*Sažetak*

*Akeel Bilgrami (2016) zauzeo je stav protiv sijentističke metode i njezina postupanja prema etičkim vrijednostima tako da ju je proglasio praznovjerjem znanosti s obzirom na to da ne smatra da su vrijednosti dio prirode. Autor ovoga rada suglasan je s konceptom zauzetoga ja, o čemu Bilgrami raspravlja kako bi učinio smislenima etičke vrijednosti. Međutim rad nastoji argumentirati protiv koncepcijske nekoherentnosti tako da suprotstavlja svojstva vrijednosti i zauzeto ja. Nekoherentnost se može izbjeći slijedeći wittgensteinsko shvaćanje etičkih vrijednosti, što je obrazloženo vrlo sažeto, ali na istaknut način, u djelu Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, a također u Predavanju o etici nešto detaljnije.*

*Ključne riječi: zauzeto ja; dihotomija činjenica–vrijednost; apsolutna vrijednost; relativna vrijednost; Wittgenstein; Bilgrami*

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