

Wittgenstein on the Existence of Mind in the Physical World

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Abstract

In this paper I shall explore Wittgenstein's view on the existence of mind. The main concern is in this paper to give a positive theory of mind which can provide a method for understanding mind as a metaphysical reality. In this context the self is presupposed by which what we call the mental phenomena including consciousness, because without the self the mind will be meaningless in this physical world. That is, this phenomenon of world itself needs a self in which mind is the part of this phenomenal world. Wittgenstein takes mind to be in a continuation with language and world because, for him, mind is not an independent entity in this world, rather it is part of this world. Thus the existence of the mind itself in this physical world proves that mind is metaphysical.

The problem of mind is one of the important problems in science as well as in philosophy. There are different philosophical views about the mind and different scientists also define and explain mind differently. As far as our concept of mind is concerned, it does not permit a definition in terms of *genus* and *differentia* or a necessary and sufficient condition. Nonetheless, it is important to indicate what exactly are we talking about because the phenomenon of the consciousness that we are interested in needs to be distinguished from certain other phenomena of 'is consciousness' and 'of consciousness'. The phenomena of 'is consciousness' and 'of consciousness' are very much related to ideas, such as attention, knowledge and self-consciousness. Both the materialistic and mechanistic model of mind and the naturalistic model of mind try to give an epistemic explanation of mind from the third person perspective.

In this paper I shall explore the Wittgenstein's idea of the existence of mind in this physical world. The attempt in this paper is to give a positive theory of consciousness that can provide a method for understanding the mind as a metaphysical reality. The sciences of the mind have offered causal explanations of the how and what of mind, but they fail to explain the why of mind. Their explanation is based on the ground that mind is causally dependent on the material universe and that all the mental phenomena can be explained by mapping the physical universe. That is, they believe that mind is basically a natural phenomenon and that it can be explained only by the naturalistic methods of science. The naturalistic assumption is that consciousness and mind have a natural origin and therefore have to be understood within the naturalistic framework available in the sciences. Now, we can point out that the so called distinction between the 'easy problem of consciousness' and the 'hard problem of consciousness' (Chalmers 1999) has an epistemological basis because the so-called hard problem of consciousness is hard only in the relative sense, that is, it is hard relative to the current knowledge of cognitive science, which is engaged in decoding the structure of mind. The above argument suggests that the easy-hard distinction is an epistemological one and not ontological one. Again, this epistemological theory of mind is essentially committed to a scientific world view and it cannot avoid metaphysical implication of the very idea of hard problem of consciousness (Pradhan 2009, p. 79). Thus, the existence of mind in this physical world far exceeds the methods of science and needs a metaphysical explanation which is non-naturalistic and non-empirical in nature.

As we know, for Descartes mind is independent of language and the world. Unlike Descartes, Wittgenstein argues that mind is part of this world and language. Language becomes the main center of the world and it occupies a significant place in the universe. Language is embedded in the human community to express every sense of it, in which language is a part of the human organism (TLP 4.002). Yet it is the great mirror of the world (TLP 5.511), in which we express our thought and cognitive experiences. The cognitive agents do not choose to have language as the medium of representation of the world. Rather, language is the universal medium of thought and experience makes the world transparent because of the logical isomorphism of language and the world (see Hintikka and Hintikka 1986). This indicates the Wittgensteinian idea that the cognitive thinking 'I' becomes a part of the language using 'I'. This shows that mind ceases to be a substance and merges with the language centered activities called the language games. In the language game we find mental activities. Here, mind and mental activities become one. This leads to the view that mental representation merges with the linguistic representations which are nothing but language games. The question of the world being represented in language is still relevant but now the pictorial representations are grammatically secured at the very place where the language games lie, i.e., in our worldly activities. This point out the fact that the forms of life hold the promise of telling what the world is in its being interwoven with the world (Pradhan 1996, p. 128).

Wittgenstein aims at making mind available in the world. That is, he makes the mind as transparent as possible in the world in language itself. This results in making language the home of mind and the world, in the sense that our access to the mind and the world are necessarily through language alone. In this way, Wittgenstein not only demystifies mind but also makes a fresh attempt to make mind as transparent as worldly activities. On the other hand, in the case of the Cartesian framework, mind was the central concept that inherited the task of making thought, the inner core of all human activities. This led to the fact that mind belongs to the inner world (see Johnston 1994) and thought is pre-linguistic and hence an independent entity from the language. Thus mind is an autonomous and independent entity. The idea of the inner is the idea of making thought an inner process in the individual and subjective realm of the mind as distinguished from the body of man. According to this view, the inner mental process as distinguished from the bodily actions constitutes the mind (RPP II, 228). Thus mind is the storehouse of the mental process. Mind is the seat of these ac-

tivities and so consciousness becomes the innate nature of the mind. This idea of an inner aspect has been criticized by many materialist philosophers and they claim that the concept of inner is a myth.

Wittgenstein attempts to show that the idea of the inner arises because of a grammatical mistake (PI, p. 222), that is, because of the misunderstanding of the language in which we talk about the mental activities. The statements expressing mental activities like 'I am in pain' are distinct from such statement as 'I have a hand'. Statements about the mental activities like the above in the first person present tense are not descriptive statements at all. They are expressions of mental states and are not descriptive of what is happening in the mind (see Budd 1989). Therefore Wittgenstein characterizes first person present tense statements about mental activities as avowals (PI, §244) which cannot be assimilated to the third person statements about mental content (PI, §290). Wittgenstein shows that the conception of the inner is based on a grammatical mistake and that mind is real though not as a mental entity but as a mental activity. Mind is real in the sense that we are already playing the language games involving mind. That is why those who deny mind are as much at a fault as those who affirm the existence of mind. So is the case for world. Both mind and world go together in that language presupposes both as real.

Now the question arises: how does Wittgenstein conceive the relation between mind and the world in the absence of a substantial entity called mind? Wittgenstein's answer is that a mind-body dualism is not necessary to think of the mind-world relation. In fact, if mind and body are different then there can be no relation between the two. The mind belongs to the world as much as the body and so the mind is not something which is less related to the world than the body. The body, as Wittgenstein says, is the "best picture of human soul" (PI, p. 178) in that the body is not alien to the mind but is its spontaneous expression. In this sense the world is not alien to the mind as the mind requires the world and the bodies of its expression (Pradhan 1996, p. 133).

Wittgenstein argues for the mind mind-in-the-world rather than for the mind that is outside the world. The mind being part of the world is most intimately connected with the world since without the world we cannot think of what mind is. Mind is the minded being, i.e., the human being who has mind. In this sense it is not intelligible how there could be a mind beyond the world. Wittgenstein finds that what we call mental phenomena are all found in human beings. It is because only human beings or those which are closer to human beings that can be said to have mind (PI, §284). We can ascribe to them only the predicates of thinking, feeling, willing etc. But we cannot say that a dog hopes or a fish thinks (PI, §283).

However, moving beyond the reasons for the time being, it can be asked whether it is possible for a machine to be self-intelligent or self-conscious? My answer is 'No'. Wittgenstein makes the following remark while answering this question in *Philosophical Investigations*: "Only of a living human being and what resembles (behaves like) a living human being can one say it has sensations; it sees; is blind; hears; is deaf; is conscious or unconscious." (PI, §281) Again, he remarks, "We do indeed say of an inanimate thing that is in pain: when playing with dolls for example. But this use of the concept of pain is a secondary one. Imagine a case in which people ascribed pain only to inanimate things; pitied only dolls." (PI, §282) Thus, only of what behaves like a living thing can we say that it is conscious. This claim connects consciousness with life, but

not with what constitutes life; rather, with what manifests or expresses it. A non-living thing might therefore in principle qualify for the ascription of consciousness, so long as it behaves like a conscious living thing. We are so prone to count the robots in science-fiction films as conscious beings, even though they are not alive; they act as if they are. We cannot think of a stone as conscious because the stone does not behave in ways in which we recognize it as expressive of mind or consciousness.

Now the question is: What is the nature of the self which is the subject of consciousness? The nature of the self is neither the material nor psychological experiences attached to it, but it is something more and is genuinely metaphysical. What I meant by 'metaphysics' however is clearly not just any metaphysics but rather the sort of self-centric nature of consciousness that does not prevent the possibility of a third person point of view but cannot be replaced by the latter. This self-centric point of view is the unique feature of human consciousness. Metaphysically speaking, consciousness is real in the sense that it is a part of the conscious subject. The self, which belongs to conscious subject, is an important category in metaphysics because metaphysics takes into account the general nature of reality which includes consciousness, knowledge, belief, etc. These phenomena cannot be explained unless we presuppose a conscious self to which they are attributable. There is a conscious subject which is conscious and which possesses knowledge and beliefs about the world. And that subject is the metaphysical ground of the mental phenomena and that is the metaphysical self. The concepts like consciousness, intentionality, beliefs, and other mental concepts raise such questions as: whose consciousness? whose belief?, etc. And these questions cannot be answered unless we introduce a subject, that is, self as the locus of the phenomena. The locus logically cannot be a part of the phenomena of which it is the locus. Therefore, the nature of mental phenomena like consciousness and intentionality is such that they demand a subject to which they are attributable and without which they remain meaningless. Here, conscious subject is the metaphysical ground of the mental phenomena and that is metaphysical conscious self. Thus we can hardly deny the mental world as real.

Literature

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