

**TOWARDS A MEANINGFUL TALK ABOUT RELIGION -
PROSPECTS AND PROBLEMS OF LUDWIG WITTGENSTEIN'S
PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION**

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled **TOWARDS A MEANINGFUL TALK ABOUT RELIGION - PROSPECTS AND PROBLEMS OF LUDWIG WITTGENSTEIN'S PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION** is a *bonafide* record of research carried out by **Abraham Vettiyolil** under my supervision and guidance and the thesis has not been submitted previously in part or in full to this or any other University/Institution for the award of any degree, diploma, title or recognition.

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DECLARATION

I, Abraham Vettiyolil, hereby declare that this thesis entitled **TOWARDS A MEANINGFUL TALK ABOUT RELIGION - PROSPECTS AND PROBLEMS OF LUDWIG WITTGENSTEIN'S PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION** is an original research work carried out by me in the Department of Philosophy, University of Calicut under the guidance and supervision of Prof. K. Gopinathan. I also declare that it has not been submitted previously in part or in full to this University or any other University/Institution for the award of any degree, diploma, title or recognition.

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ABBREVIATIONS

<i>TLP</i>	<i>Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus</i>
<i>PI</i>	<i>Philosophical Investigations</i>
<i>PG</i>	<i>Philosophical Grammar</i>
<i>NB</i>	<i>Notebooks 1914-1916</i>
<i>LE</i>	<i>Lecture on Ethics</i>
<i>OC</i>	<i>On Certainty</i>
<i>RFGB</i>	<i>Remarks on Frazer's Golden Bough</i>
<i>RPP</i>	<i>Remarks on Philosophy of Psychology</i>
<i>BBB</i>	<i>The Blue and the Brown Books</i>
<i>LC</i>	<i>Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief</i>
<i>PO</i>	<i>Philosophical Occasions</i>
<i>RFM</i>	<i>Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics</i>
<i>CV</i>	<i>Culture and Value</i>

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INTRODUCTION

Abraham Vettiyolil. "Towards a meaningful talk about religion-prospects and problems of Ludwig Wittgenstein's philosophy of religion" Thesis. Department of Philosophy, University of Calicut, 2015

INTRODUCTION

Meaning is intrinsic to the life of human beings. It is meaning that gives life a goal, explanation and fulfillment. This is the reason that the quest for meaning is a major concern of philosophy and religion. In fact, this quest is the source of philosophy and religion. Philosophy is the search for the meaning of life, while religion is one of the most influential institutions that direct individuals to the meaning of life. The criterion of meaning differs from time to time. Aristotle considered reason as the basic criterion, since it is indigenous to humans. That is why he defined humans as rational animals. Others, like the British empiricists, stressed experience as the criterion for everything. Naturally, reason and experience were considered as the two fundamental sources of human knowledge. At the same time, both these resources were in constant conflict and in certain periods in the history of the rational itinerary of humanity, one dominated the other. Rationalists gave importance to reason and empiricists gave importance to experience. Both tried to prove the existence of God or some supernatural power either by reason or by experience.

Philosophers of religion were trying to give a rational footing to religious belief throughout the centuries. As a result of the emergence of logical positivism in the 20th century which rejected all metaphysical statements as meaningless on the basis of the verifiability principle of meaning, religious language was made meaningless. The logical positivists reduced the sacred values of religions which have been guiding human consciousness for centuries to the subjective realm of emotions.

In reaction to this, the philosophers of religion were in search of the meaningfulness and justification of religious language, therefore giving a rational footing to religious belief. Wittgenstein, the most influential linguistic philosopher of 20th century, has made a far-reaching impact on epistemology, logic, mathematics, philosophy of language and the philosophy of religion. With him, language became one of the most important elements in the philosophy of religion along with reason and experience. He integrated reason and experience within the linguistic framework.

Philosophy is conceived as a critique of language in both phases of Wittgenstein's philosophy. While philosophizing, he understood that problems cannot be solved; they dissolve. Philosophical problems, which arise when language goes on holiday, are compared to a mental cramp. A person caught up in philosophical perplexity is compared to one who is caught up in a room and wants to go out but doesn't know the way, or a fly caught in a fly-bottle. The function of philosophy is to show a way out. For him, "philosophy is a battle against the bewitchment of our intelligence by means of language."¹ So the function as well as the method of philosophy is the same in both phases of his philosophy. Philosophy has a therapeutic function, and its method is linguistic analysis. However, the method of analysis Wittgenstein employs is different in the two stages of his philosophy.

¹ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1974) 109. Hereafter, abbreviation *PI* for *Philosophical Investigations* will be cited inside the text.

Linguistic analysis focuses mainly on meaning rather than existence. In order to explore meaning, he proposes two theories of meaning. His profound thought on religious belief is based on these theories of meaning. In his early linguistic analysis religious values acquired the status of the 'mystical,' that is, the realm of silence. This is characterised as "wordless faith." Based on the new understanding of meaning as use in his later philosophy, Wittgenstein legitimises religious language. This pragmatic understanding of language allows religious language to have its footing in human life. Therefore, religious belief anchored in human life is characterised as "groundless believing."

This new understanding of meaning makes language dynamic and pluralistic, which is in sharp contrast to Wittgenstein's earlier philosophy. The exploration of dynamism in religion is interesting, and it challenges institutionalised religions. An exposition of the pluralistic understanding of religious belief is very relevant today especially in India, where we have a pluralistic religious and cultural heritage.

The present study is a search for the possibility of religion in Wittgenstein and the possibility of a meaningful talk about religion in his philosophy. These possibilities are found after a grammatical investigation into the depth grammar of language which is used in the particular context of religion. This is an attempt to bring out Wittgenstein's sublime thoughts on religious beliefs found in various scattered remarks on the topic and to show its relevance for today. This we do in four chapters by analysing Wittgenstein's linguistic philosophy, though I adopt more of an interpretative and descriptive method in this endeavour.

There is a persisting tendency in Wittgenstein to doubt the possibility of meaningful religious expression in language. Any attempt to express religion in words becomes unavoidably nonsense at the early stage of his philosophy due to the view of language he presented in *Tractatus*. An attempt at religious expression in language is to overstep the boundary of language resulting in nonsense. However, Wittgenstein's later philosophy with a renewed understanding of language with its multiple functions and meaning with its context sensitivity makes possible a meaningful talk about religious beliefs demarcating it from factual beliefs.

Since the life situations of a person influence his thoughts, in the first chapter I outline Wittgenstein's life. The first part deals with a brief biographic sketch. The second part examines his philosophical background by mentioning some of the philosophers who influenced him. The last part elucidates his attitude toward religion and his religious background, to prepare the ground for the discussion on religious beliefs.

The second chapter expounds Wittgenstein's early philosophy in two sections. The first section analyzes the relationship between language, thought and reality through the picture theory of meaning. According to this theory, which is the core of the first phase of his philosophy, language is the picture of reality – the world. The logical form is seen as the common ground of correspondence. What we can speak, we can speak with clarity about what is within the world – “facts.” The second section of this chapter shows the other side of the boundary. This is the realm of what is beyond language. All metaphysical, religious and ethical assertions are attempts to go beyond the boundary of language. The world with its facts which can

be described in language belongs to the realm of saying and that which is beyond the facts, ethics, religion, metaphysical self, logical form that is shared by language and reality. Therefore, this chapter is an attempt to explicate what can be said, and thereby to show that religion and religious beliefs belong to the realm of silence.

In the later philosophy of Wittgenstein, there is a move from static view of language to a dynamic one as an activity and as grounded upon something other than an independent reality. A shift from linguistic form to linguistic function can be observed in this transitional period. Therefore, I outline Wittgenstein's renewed understanding of language and religious belief in third chapter. The first section discusses his linguistic philosophy based on the new theory of meaning, according to which the meaning of a word is its use in language. The essence of language is in its function. This has brought about a revolution in analytical philosophy where meaning is understood as reference. Language is seen as an activity which has a function to perform. This linguistic analysis is based on his notion of the 'language game.' The multiplicity of language games and the autonomy of language games are developed on the basis of the 'family resemblance' and 'form of life.' Language gains meaning by its use in a particular context. Meaning becomes context-conditioned and occasion sensitive. The second section of this chapter explores how far one can apply Wittgenstein's new understanding of philosophy and language to religion and religious beliefs. The multiple use of language and occasion-sensitive understanding of language make possible meaningful talk about religion and religious beliefs. The use of language within the context of religion makes religious assertions and language associated with religious ceremonies meaningful. The third

section of this chapter focuses on Wittgenstein's thoughts on religious beliefs based on his lectures, remarks and conversations. At this point, I try to explicate the depth grammar of religious beliefs to see the connections among the different elements of the language game that are used. The possibility of a meaningful talk about religious belief is sought by analyzing the symbolic and expressive nature of religious belief through the celebration of various rituals.

This new understanding of language opens a new horizon in the philosophy of religion. Therefore, in the fourth chapter I explore Wittgenstein's philosophy in today's context and critically evaluate his philosophy of religious belief. The main focus, in the first part, is on his understanding of the 'mystical.' The next section examines whether Wittgenstein's philosophy with his theory of "family resemblance" can support and explain the phenomenon of religious pluralism. The following sections critically evaluate the dynamic, social, pragmatic and ethical nature of religion and religious belief. Wittgenstein's own way of looking at things from a religious point of view is analyzed by looking into the possibility of varieties of understanding of religious beliefs.

Thus, this dissertation looks into the pragmatic, dynamic, creative and pluralistic dimensions of religion and religious beliefs by exploring the linguistic analysis of Ludwig Wittgenstein. It appreciates the valuable contribution of his profound thought to the philosophy of religion, and it brings forth the challenges that Wittgenstein's philosophy poses to the dogmatic, exclusivist and fundamentalist attitude toward religion.

CHAPTER 1

WITTGENSTEIN AND HIS PHILOSOPHICAL BACKGROUND

Abraham Vettiyolil. "Towards a meaningful talk about religion-
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CHAPTER ONE

WITTGENSTEIN AND HIS PHILOSOPHICAL BACKGROUND

Introduction

A person's life circumstances or situation is closely related to his or her thinking. Coming to the sphere of religious belief, a person's life circumstances or situations become all the more important. Religious beliefs are taught and developed through the life situations where one finds himself. That is to say, life and religious belief cannot be separated; they are tightly knitted. If so, since I intend to discuss the question of religious belief as found in Ludwig Wittgenstein's philosophy, it is quite appropriate to shed some light first on Wittgenstein's life, the factors that influenced him and other related aspects. Therefore, I shall do this briefly in this chapter.

1.1. Biographic Profile

The knowledge of biographic details and historical background for many philosophers and on many topics are not so relevant. However, for Wittgenstein and his philosophy of religion, knowledge of his biographic profile is helpful to highlight the philosophical development in his career and the persons, circumstances and ideologies that influenced him. Because, for Wittgenstein, philosophy is a personal practice and one can see this practice in action in his life. Moreover, Wittgenstein's fragmentary remarks on the topic of religion can be understood in the background of his life (Carroll 6). Hence, the focus will be largely on the circumstances that led him to develop his philosophy of religion.

Early Years of Wittgenstein's Life

Ludwig Josef Johann Wittgenstein, who is hailed as the greatest seminal thinker of the 20th century, was born on April 26, 1889, in Vienna. Wittgenstein was the youngest child of a wealthiest family in Vienna. Though his family from both sides had a Jewish heritage, they had become Christianized a couple of generations before. Nevertheless, his Jewish heritage was an influence throughout his life. His father Karl Wittgenstein was a Protestant and his mother was a Roman Catholic, and he was baptized and brought up in the mother's tradition. He was brought up in an atmosphere of culture and music because his parents and siblings were musically talented. It was his father's determination that his children were to continue his business. He decided to give them private education to train their minds for rigorous business rather than academics (Monk 11). The eldest sons Hans and Rudolf rebelled against their father's wish and concentrated in music. Rudolf, who sought job in musical theatre, committed suicide in 1904. Only Kurt followed the father's wishes and became the director of the company. However, later he committed suicide. The impact of the fate of his sons Karl decided to send his youngest sons Paul and Ludwig to school later. Paul was sent to grammar school. Wittgenstein himself did not express any extraordinary musical and artistic talents in the childhood. However he dedicated himself to practical skills and technical interests. At the age of fourteen Wittgenstein was sent to Austrian school where the concentration was on mathematical and natural sciences. Then he was sent to Berlin for studying mechanical engineering for two years. Wittgenstein was registered at *Technische Hochschule* at Charlottenburg on 23 October 1906, as a student of

mechanical engineering (McGuinness, *Young Ludwig* 55). In 1908, at the age of nineteen Wittgenstein went to Manchester to do research in aeronautical engineering with an intention to construct an aeroplane of his own design eventually (Wright 528-529).

Wittgenstein was registered as research student in Manchester University from 1909 to 1910 to continue his studies in engineering. However, his interest in mathematics led Wittgenstein to read Bertrand Russell's *Principles of Mathematics*. After reading Russell, Wittgenstein began his philosophical career. In 1911, he approached Russell and began his collaboration with him (McGuinness, *Young Ludwig* 71-73). All through the year 1913, Wittgenstein remained at Cambridge with Russell, working with problems in logic and philosophy.

Wittgenstein enrolled in the Austrian army not for the sake of patriotism but for his personal sake. He was convinced that experience of facing death would improve his personality and he thought that going to war would offer such an experience. As Ray Monk notes the dairies that he kept during the war witness his conviction. "Now I have the chance to be a decent human being, for I am standing eye to eye with death" (112). When Austria declared war against Russia during the World War I, Wittgenstein was assigned to a military regiment on the Eastern front until he is transferred to a mountain regiment on the Italian front (Malcolm, *A Memoir* 8).

The Period of *Tractatus*

Wittgenstein, while serving in the army, contemplated on the problems of philosophy and took notes of his thoughts. Towards the end of the war he was captured as a prisoner by Italians. During this time he was able to finish the manuscript on problems of logic and philosophy. He wished to discuss this work with Russell upon his release from the prison. Wittgenstein was released from the prison on August 21, 1919. Soon after his release Wittgenstein approached the publisher Wilhelm Braumuller for publishing his manuscript. At Russell's testimonial, Braumuller agreed to publish the book on condition that Wittgenstein should pay the whole expense. Wittgenstein, who by that time abandoned his inherited property, had no money to meet the cost. However, with Russell's influence it was published under the title *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* in 1921 in German and later in 1922 translated into English by C.K. Ogden and F.P. Ramsey (Monk 204-205).

Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* is universally acknowledged as novel, profound and powerful. The book is carefully ordered and numbered in a decimal notation and covers a variety of topics like philosophy of language, nature of world, self and will, ethics, logic, mysticism and religion. Wittgenstein felt that his *Tractatus* was the complete solution to the problems haunting philosophy at that juncture. Even before the publication of the book, leaving the manuscript with Russell, he retired from his philosophical career. After completing his training as teacher, he went to rural areas of Austria to teach in elementary school in 1920 (Malcolm, "Wittgenstein" 229-230).

However, because of his temperament and arrogance he could not continue as an elementary teacher. Since he was very tough to his students, there developed tension between the villagers and Wittgenstein. Eventually he abandoned his career as school teacher and became a gardener in monastery in Vienna. Then he engaged himself in building a mansion for his sister and completed the work with originality within two years (Wright 535-536).

The Period of *Philosophical Investigations*

Wittgenstein was determined to withdraw altogether from philosophy after the completion of *Tractatus*. However, Wittgenstein had a rethinking that he could do more creative work in philosophy due to multiple reasons, and a few of them are worth mentioning at this juncture. Wittgenstein's teaching experience at the elementary school was not satisfactory due to his unsettled mind, demanding intellect and impatience. His teaching experience helped him to break away from the logical and scientific approach to language and to an informal approach to language in everyday life. His encounter with Fritz Mauthner, who argued that language, is considered as an instrument designed to satisfy a multiplicity of human needs rather than a formal and logical calculi, influenced Wittgenstein in the development of his philosophy. During his teacher-training program, read Wolfgang Kohler's book on *Gestalt psychology*; this influenced him remarkably. Psychological questions also occupied a place in Wittgenstein's later thought due to the influence of Freud. Another prominent element that paved the way for him to come back to an active philosophical career may be his association with the Vienna Circle. In 1928, his friends in the Vienna Circle took him to L.E.J. Brouwer's lecture on the foundations

of mathematics. Wittgenstein came to Cambridge early in 1929 and initially he tried to fix certain difficulties of *Tractatus* the colour exclusion problem.² Upon his return he was determined to solve these issues.

Wittgenstein's break up with *Tractatus* was gradual with *Some Remarks on Logical Form* and *Lecture on Ethics*.³ However, some of his *Tractaterian* ethical concepts reoccur in *Lecture on Ethics*. His break up with *Tractatus* occurred with the abandonment of the belief that every meaningful statement has definite logical structure which corresponds to the logical structure of facts pictured by statement. Instead of a unified structure of language, Wittgenstein started to think of the multiplicity of language in its simpler structures. This change of thought was the result of various occasions and confrontations with the academic community of Cambridge especially with G. E. Moore, mathematician Frank Ramsey, Piero Sraffa as well as his association with Bertrand Russell. In fact, Wittgenstein praises Ramsey and Sraffa in the preface of *Philosophical Investigations (PI IV)*.

Eventually, Wittgenstein had followers, philosophy students such as Norman Malcolm, Rush Rhees and Elizabeth Anscombe. Wittgenstein powerfully influenced the philosophical circle through his lectures and notes taken by his students. The force of his intellect, his passion and seriousness impressed those who attended his discussions. Wittgenstein was able to create a new philosophical outlook through his lectures and discussions. These notes and reflections were preserved and eventually

² According to *Tractatus* all logical relations between propositions are explicable in the terms of their truth-functionality. However, the counter examples like color exclusion are not the truth functionally complex.

³ See Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Occasions 1912-1951*, ed. by James Klagge and Alfred Nordmann (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1993) 29-35. Hereafter, the abbreviation *PO* will be cited within the text.

published and the lectures Wittgenstein dictated between 1933 to 1935 are known as *The Blue and the Brown Brook*, preliminary studies for *Philosophical Investigations*. From the year 1936 on Wittgenstein's thinking was similar to ordinary language philosophy because of the influence of G. E. Moore. He came to think of philosophy as a descriptive and therapeutic practice in the middle period between *Tractatus* and *Philosophical Investigations*.

Wittgenstein was appointed to the chair of philosophy at the University of Cambridge in 1939. However, during the World War II Wittgenstein left Cambridge and wished to contribute to the war by working outside the academic field. He got a job as a laboratory porter in Guy's hospital with help of Gilbert Ryle an Oxford philosopher whose brother John Ryle was helping Guy's hospital to prepare them for the blitz. Later Wittgenstein was transferred to a job as pharmacy technician in the manufacturing laboratory. He preferred to work in a blitzed hospital over teaching at Cambridge University. On February 1944, Wittgenstein returned to Cambridge. He wanted to finish his book before resuming the academic duties as a professor. However, he resumed the duty of a professor at the University without having finished his book. At the end of the year 1947 he resigned from his chair to devote himself to the completion of his book. In the final two years of his life Wittgenstein stayed with his friends and disciples like, Malcolm in Ithica, von Wright in Cambridge and Elizebeth Anscombe in Oxford. In November 1949 Wittgenstein was diagnosed with prostate cancer. The last two months of his life he wrote over half of the remarks now published as *On Certainty*. On April 27 he became seriously ill and he was informed of his impending death and his response

was “good.” His last words before he became unconscious were, “Tell them I have had a wonderful life.”⁴ He breathed his last breath on April 29, 1951. Many believe that Wittgenstein had an unhappy life, yet at the end he himself exclaimed that it had been ‘wonderful’ (Malcolm, *A Memoir* 100). Wittgenstein was given a Catholic burial at St. Giles's Church, Cambridge, though he did not practice Catholicism (Monk 579-580). *Philosophical Investigations* was published posthumously according to his wishes. Later his notes, lectures, conversations with his friends and students were edited and published (Malcolm, "Ludwig Josef Johann" 329).

Two Phases of Wittgenstein’s Philosophy

The major concern of Wittgenstein’s philosophy is the relationship among language, thought and reality. This concern is expressed in two phases, an early phase that is represented by his most celebrated work *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* and a later phase that is mostly represented by his posthumously published work *Philosophical Investigations*. In both phases, he traces the same problem – the problem of meaning. In the earlier stage, he expounded the picture theory of meaning. In this theory, he traces logical form as the foundation of correspondence between language and reality. In the later period, language is founded not on a single comprehensive abstract calculus of formal logic, but is placed in the setting of human life. Here he has a more coherent and holistic approach to language and meaning. Though there is continuity between the two periods with regard to the problem of meaning, there is a major shift regarding the

⁴ Mrs. Bevan wife of Dr. Bevan who treated him told Wittgenstein before he become unconscious on 28 April 1951, that his close friends are coming to meet him the following day. His response was 'tell them that I have had a wonderful life.' See Monk 579.

solution of the problem (Erling 693). There is a shift from the bedrock of logical form to the riverbed of form of life. The static understanding of language is replaced by a more dynamic understanding of language. The bedrock of language is changed from formal logic to human life (Thiselton 360).

The availability of several lectures and letters originally in German and some of them in English have made Wittgensteinian scholarship more complex. It has become difficult to speak of only *early* Wittgenstein represented by *Tractatus* and *later* Wittgenstein represented by *Philosophical Investigations*. Apart from these two celebrated works, there are number of notes and lectures of Wittgenstein that his students published later such as: *Notebooks 1914-1916*, *Philosophical Grammar*, *Remarks on Colour*, *The Blue and Brown Books*, *Remarks on Foundations of Mathematics*, *A Lecture on Ethics*, *Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics*, *Psychology and Religious Belief*, *Zettel*, *Remarks on Frazer's Golden Gough*, *Philosophical Occasions 1912-1952*, *On Certainty* and *Culture and Value*.

The principle source of Wittgenstein's remarks on religion and religious beliefs are those explicitly deal with thoughts on religion and those that have implicit bearing on philosophy of religion (Carroll 15). Wittgenstein's *Remarks on Frazer's Golden Bough* and *Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Beliefs* and *Culture and Value* have explicit reference to religion. Some of the private dairies and notes of Wittgenstein which were not intended to publish have occasional remarks on the topic of religion. However, Wittgenstein's most polished and celebrated works like *Tractates*, *Philosophical Investigations*, and *On Certainty* treat topics that are indirectly related to philosophy of religion.

1.2. Philosophical Background and Influences

Though Wittgenstein had no systematic reading in the classics of philosophy, when one traces his philosophical background, one cannot help mentioning some of the important figures who influenced his thinking. In the *Notebooks* Wittgenstein said, “What has history to do with me? Mine is the first and the only world.”⁵ He even downplays any importance of the history of philosophy in his philosophical career in the preface to *Tractatus Logico Philosophicus*. “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 thought that I have had been anticipated by someone else.”⁶ However, he admitted that he is indebted to the great works of Frege and Russell for stimulating his thoughts (*TLP* 3).

His later collected and published work, *Culture and Value* lists some of the influential figures like Boltzmann, Hertz, Schopenhauer, Frege, Russell, Kraus, Loos, Weininger, Spengler and Sraffa. “I don’t believe I have ever invented a line of thinking. I have always taken one over from someone else. I have simply straightaway seized on it with enthusiasm for my work of clarification. That is how Boltzmann, Hertz Schopenhauer, Frege, Russell, Kraus, Loos, Weininger, Spengler, Sraffa have influenced me.”⁷ Of these, Frege and Russell call for more attention, since they provide the essential background of his early philosophy as well as

⁵ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Notebooks 1914-1916*, tr. and ed. G.E.M. Anscombe (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984) 82. Hereafter, abbreviation *NB* will be parenthetically cited inside the text.

⁶ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico Philosophicus* tr. D Pears and B.F. McGuinness (New York, Routledge, 1961) 3. Hereafter, abbreviation *TLP* will be parenthetically cited inside the text.

⁷ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, ed. G. H. Von Wright, tr. Peter Winch (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980) 19. Hereafter, abbreviation *CV* will be parenthetically cited inside the text.

important targets of his later thought. Besides these, the influence of logical positivism is to be traced out at least for the development of his early philosophy. Since the present study is oriented towards the philosophy of religion, one cannot help mentioning some of the persons who might have influenced Wittgenstein in formulating some of his thought in this area, especially Kierkegaard. Direct or indirect references to Kierkegaard are very rare in Wittgenstein's writings. However, recollections of those who were close to Wittgenstein attest that Wittgenstein had several references to Kierkegaard and references to Kierkegaard appear in the manuscript materials.

Vienna Circle and Logical Positivism

The concern of the thinkers of the Vienna Circle⁸ with the logical and empirical dimensions of language earned them the name "logical positivists." Wittgenstein supported the logical aspect and empirical tendency of Hume continued by Russell, which contributed to the logical positivist formulation of the principle of verification - "the meaning of a proposition is the method of its verification" (Audi 837). Wittgenstein was an active participant of this group, though he never acknowledged himself as a logical positivist. It is the people of the Vienna Circle who attributed the principle of verification to Wittgenstein on the strength of the rejection of metaphysics in *Tractatus*. Though Wittgenstein was not

⁸ In 1920s there was a group of people in Vienna who were actively engaged in discussions of various subjects like mathematics, logic, science and philosophy. This group eventually came to be known as the Vienna Circle. Though the name Vienna Circle was first employed in 1929 the origin of the circle traces back to the early 1920s. The prominent members of the circle are Moritz Schlick, Rudolf Carnap, A. J. Ayer, Otto Nautath, etc. See Audi 836-837.

an official member of the circle, his influence in the circle was considerably strong (Padinjarekutt 1).

The intellectual relationship between Wittgenstein and the Vienna Circle was complex and surely with its conflicts. He never met the Circle in its entirety; rather he met small groups of them including Schlick, Waismann and Carnap in the late 1920s and 1930s. Carnap recalls that in the meetings of the Vienna Circle, the *Tractatus* was read aloud and discussed sentence by sentence. However, he reminds us that it is not correct to say the philosophy of the Vienna Circle was just Wittgenstein's philosophy. "We learned much by our discussions of the book and accepted many views as far as we could assimilate them to our basic conceptions" (Carnap, "Intellectual Autobiography" 24-25). Most of the members of the Vienna Circle were influenced by Wittgenstein. The circle devoted nearly a whole academic year to the reading and study of *Tractatus*, reading it aloud, sentence by sentence (Menger 86). Carnap, in his *Logical Syntax of Language*, states that "it was Wittgenstein who first exhibited the close connection between the logic of science (or simply 'philosophy,' as he calls it) and syntax" (282). A.J. Ayer, in his "Demonstration of the Impossibility of Metaphysics," stresses that the views expressed in it are not original and that it was inspired by Wittgenstein (335). This would prove to have significant influence on the discussions by the circle. However, some of the members of the circle for instance, Otto Neurath, one of the founders and intellectual cornerstone of the group remained sceptical about Wittgenstein's views.

It would be more accurate to say that Wittgenstein influenced logical positivism than to say he was influenced by logical positivism. However, it is a fact that he kept himself aloof from it.

Gottlob Frege and Bertrand Russell

An understanding of the philosophy of Gottlob Frege and Bertrand Russell would clarify Wittgenstein's philosophical background and his influence. Wittgenstein set up his theory of meaning against the background of the linguistic analysis of Frege, especially his distinction between sense and reference.⁹ Meaning in terms of referent is something central to the early phase of his philosophy. We can also trace out Frege's influence in the later part of Wittgenstein's philosophy. Frege held the fundamental principle that 'word has meaning only in the context of a proposition,' "... never to ask for the meaning of a word in isolation, but only in the context of a proposition. ... We must never try to define the meaning of a word in isolation, but only as it is used in the context of a proposition" (qtd. in Erling 695). The use of the word *context* might have influenced Wittgenstein, who is very much concerned about meaning in *context* in his later philosophy. Also the functional aspect of word in the context of proposition might have influenced him. However, the major difference is that there is a shift from the context of proposition to the context of social life in Wittgenstein.

⁹ Frege uses the word *sinn* in the sense of meaning and *Bedeutung* in the sense of reference. Both these words appear frequently in *Tractatus* of Wittgenstein. The word *sinn* comes 64 times in the sense of 'sense' and the word *Bedeutung* appears 35 times in the sense of reference in *Tractatus*. "Reference is an extra-linguistic notion, in which aspects of the real world play a part and contrasts with the intra-linguistic notion of sense, a property arising from the meaning relations between lexical items and sentences." See Crystal 329.

Wittgenstein was registered as a research student at University of Manchester. While in the laboratory he conceived the idea of placing a reaction jet at the tip of each blade of a propeller. Subsequently he could design an engine, and tested it successfully. The problems he encountered during designing a the propeller instigated his interest in mathematics. It is this search for foundations of mathematics led him to Russell. Though he was very much influenced by the 'logical atomism'¹⁰ of Russell, his influence on this theory is also considerable. There is a sort of mutual influence in this regard, but we could observe a common background for Russell and Wittgenstein in the idea of Frege that the world has the structure of the new logic (Roberts 18).

Russell's introduction to *Tractatus* helped the positivist to give a positivist reading to the text. After having approached several publishing houses leading up to 1921, the *Tractatus* had been rejected several times. Russell's endorsement did help in getting *Tractatus* published. However, Russell's interpretation of *Tractatus* is not accurate. Wittgenstein indicates his disapproval of the introduction in a letter dated April 9, 1920. "There's so much of it that I'm not quite in agreement with," ... both where you're critical of me and also where you're simply trying to elucidate my point of view" (Waisemann, *Wittgenstein and the Vienna Circle* 188).

Russell had benefited from his conversations with Wittgenstein, and he integrated some of Wittgenstein's thinking into his own work. In the series of lectures published as *Philosophy of Logical Atomism*, for example, Russell mentions that the ideas contained in the text "are very largely concerned with explaining

¹⁰ Concerning the physical nature of the world Russell's theory is logical atomism. Accordingly the world in its ultimate analysis can be reduced to atomic facts. See Russell, *Logical Atomism* 35.

certain ideas which I learned from my friend and former student Ludwig Wittgenstein" (35). References to Wittgenstein's influence are generously sprinkled throughout the lectures.¹¹

Though Wittgenstein owed very much to Arthur Schopenhauer for his mystical ideas, it is also believed that Russell was a considerable influence in this area. The characteristics of mysticism, which are outlined by Russell in his article, "Mysticism and Logic," are somewhat parallel to Wittgenstein's idea of the nature of "the mystical." The first mark of Russell's mystic was a felt insight into reality that is parallel to Wittgenstein's inexpressible feeling. Russell's point is that a mystic has a conviction of the unity of reality which is very much parallel to "feeling the world as a limited whole" (*TLP* 6.45). Finally, Russell's ideas of timelessness, good and evil are somewhat parallel to Wittgenstein's idea of the world *sub specie aeterni* and the account of good and evil which he denies in the world (McGuiness, "The Mysticism" 306-307). A striking similarity could be observed between Russell and Wittgenstein in this regard. By way of inspiration and opposition, Frege and Russell provide the essential background of his early philosophy, as well as important targets of his later thought.

Arthur Schopenhauer

Schopenhauer's transcendental idealism was taken as the first philosophical position of Wittgenstein. Although he abandoned it later under the influence of Frege's conceptual realism, the development of the *Tractatus* is very much

¹¹ Russell admits that he benefited from Wittgenstein in several places. See Russell, *Logical Atomism* 35, 46, 67 & 91. Further references to Russell's debt can also be found in the influential set of lectures published as *Our Knowledge of the External World*. See Russell, *External World* 12, 213n.

influenced by Schopenhauer. Anscombe attests that at the age of 16 Wittgenstein had read much about Schopenhauer (11). Schopenhauer's notion of "representation"¹² contributed to Wittgenstein's interest in linguistic representation that is central to the early phase of his philosophy. Wittgenstein combined his logical theory with his reflection on mystical themes, which were inspired by his experiences during the war and heavily influenced by Schopenhauer (Wright 543). Wittgenstein's "the mystical", which is one of the prime concerns of the dissertation, might have been inherited from Schopenhauer, who had an idea of direct intuition into reality (Glock 12). Even before turning to systematic philosophy, Wittgenstein had been profoundly moved by Schopenhauer's thought through *The World as Will and Representation*. During World War I, he revised his interest in Schopenhauer's metaphysical, ethical, esthetical and mystical outlook, influencing the formation of *Tractatus* (Audi 856).

Soren Kierkegaard

Kierkegaard has made a significant influence on Wittgenstein's philosophy of religion especially what appears in *Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Beliefs*. Wittgenstein had a great appreciation for Kierkegaard's thoughts. He regarded Kierkegaard as the greatest philosopher of the 19th century. Wittgenstein was aware of Kierkegaard's position of religiousness as becoming instead of being and the requirements for becoming religious. We can

¹² Schopenhauer started from a Kantian distinction between the noumenal world, the world as it is in itself and the phenomenal world, the world as it appears. Schopenhauer says the world is my representation in the sense that it is what appears to the knowing subject. See Rethy 141.

observe some kind of similarity between Wittgenstein and Kierkegaard as regards religious belief (High, "Religious Point of View" 110).

References to Kierkegaard in Wittgenstein's writings are rare. However, as the recollections and memoirs of Wittgenstein's friends attest, he made several references to Kierkegaard in conversations. All the references to Kierkegaard appear in the manuscript material left by Wittgenstein, later published as *Culture and Value*. Wittgenstein's first reference to Kierkegaard appears in 1937 manuscript. The remarks in the manuscript indicate considerable knowledge on Wittgenstein's part concerning Kierkegaard's view on Christian faith (CV 31, 32). Wittgenstein's argument regarding religious belief as a personal commitment devoid of historical proof and scientific basis has evolved from the direct or indirect influence of Kierkegaard (CV 33, 37, 38 & 53).

Wittgenstein made several references to Kierkegaard in conversations with friends which have been recorded in various memoirs and recollections of Wittgenstein. The earliest apparent reference to Kierkegaard is in Paul Engelmann's *Letters from Ludwig Wittgenstein, with a Memoir* (79). Kierkegaard also is referred to in a letter dated 20 December 1919, from Bertrand Russell to Lady Ottoline Morrell, where he indicates the changes perceived in Wittgenstein by the influence of Kierkegaard and William James (Wittgenstein, *Letters to Russell* 82). Another reference of Kierkegaard by Wittgenstein can be seen as reported by H.D.P. Lee who attended some of Wittgenstein's lectures from 1929-131. "He told me that he learned Danish in order to be able to read Kierkegaard in the original, and clearly had a great admiration for him, though I never remember his speaking about him in

detail” (218). M.O’C. Drury, one of Wittgenstein’s students and long time friend, remarked: “When some years later Kierkegaard was translated into English, largely by Walter Lowrie, Wittgenstein was displeased with the poor style of this translator. He completely failed to reproduce the elegance of the original Danish” (“Some Notes” 88). Some other remarks of Wittgenstein regarding Kierkegaard points to his considerable influence in his philosophical thought: “Kierkegaard was by far the most profound thinker of the last century; Kierkegaard was a saint” (87). Drury notes further that Wittgenstein went so far as to call Kierkegaard not merely a great writer but by far the greatest philosopher of the nineteenth century” (Drury, "A Symposium" 70).

From our consideration of Wittgenstein’s references to Kierkegaard in Wittgenstein’s published works and from reports by others, we can conclude that Wittgenstein was familiar with Kierkegaard’s religious philosophy, and this had some sort of influence in formulating his thoughts on religion.

Piero Sraffa and Frank Ramsey

A shift of thinking from the *Tractatus* to *Philosophical Investigations* was largely due to the criticism by Frank Ramsey and Piero Sraffa. Wittgenstein himself acknowledges the effectiveness of these criticisms which forced him ‘to recognize grave mistakes’ in the *Tractatus*. Wittgenstein’s pragmatic and functional attitude to language owes much to Ramsey. Piero Sraffa’s idea of the use of gesture in concrete situations might have definitely influenced Wittgenstein, as well as Wittgenstein's departure from *Tractates* to *Philosophical Investigations*. Sraffa brought unceasing criticisms against Wittgenstein's picture theory of meaning - a sentence pictures a

state of affair - as outlined in the *Tractatus* during their conversations. For Sraffa, it is erroneous to hold that the logical form should be same for a proposition and what it describes. Therefore, he argued with Wittgenstein to rethink about the theory. Wittgenstein's awareness of Sraffa's influence made him feel "like a tree from which all branches are cut" during these conversations (Sen 1242). As Brian McGuinness reports, Wittgenstein told Rush Rhees that Sraffa taught him the anthropological way of looking at philosophical problems. "The ethnological or anthropological way of looking at things that came to him from the economist Sraffa" (McGuinness, *Wittgenstein and His Times* 36). This anthropological way of looking at things brought the new theory of meaning, meaning as use embedded in the everyday human activities.

It is Sraffa's unceasing criticism of calculus understanding of language and grammar that initiated the final move towards Wittgenstein's later philosophy. Sraffa's criticism helped Wittgenstein to break with the project of *Tractatus* and come up with anthropological view that plays significant role in his later philosophy. The most fruitful ideas of *Philosophical Investigations* came out of Sraffa's criticism. Wittgenstein himself acknowledges Sraffa's influence in the making of *Philosophical Investigations* in its preface. "I am indebted to the (criticism) which a teacher of this university Mr. P. Sraffa, for many years unceasingly applied to my thoughts. It is to this stimulus that I owe the most fruitful ideas of this book" (viii). Sraffa's critique was useful to shape the final form of Wittgenstein's thought. For the introduction of primitive language and the concept of ordinary language in his philosophy, Wittgenstein is indebted to Sraffa. In order to appreciate the role of

signs in a language one should look to how the signs relate to the form of life. Wittgenstein's broader understanding of use that meshes with life is related to Sraffa's criticism (M.L. Engelmann, *Philosophical Development* 162).

William James

Wittgenstein was a reader and critic of William James. He had read James' *Varieties of Religious Experience* and wrote to Russell, "Whenever I have time now I read James's *Varieties of Religious Experience*. This book does me a *lot* of good" (Wittgenstein, *Cambridge Letters* 14). The pragmatic attitude that Wittgenstein maintained during his later philosophy has its source in William James. Russell Goodman states that Wittgenstein's pragmatic insights that a sense of interrelation between thought and action trace back to James and human thoughts are rooted in practices or deeds (*Wittgenstein and William James* 19). In fact, Wittgenstein's notion of family resemblance and his emphasis on circumstance are very closely related to thoughts of James. James anticipated Wittgenstein's conception of family resemblance. Wittgenstein's anti-essentialist position in the later stage of his philosophy has its roots in William James.¹³

Oswald Spengler

Another important figure who influenced Wittgenstein, especially in 1930s, is Oswald Spengler. Wittgenstein had commented on Spengler's influence in *Culture*

¹³ For William James there is no common essence for religion. The word religion does not stand of a single principle or essence rather it is a collective name. The meaning of religion will come out in plurality of practices and experiences. See Goodman, *Wittgenstein and William James* 53-54.

and Value.¹⁴ Wittgenstein, in his later thought, has a very pessimistic attitude to culture. It seems that he was heavily influenced by Spengler's *The Decline of the West*. He was doubtful whether his philosophy would be accepted in the current age with its decline of culture and civilization. Spengler's pessimistic attitude towards the modern cultural and spiritual condition has influenced Wittgenstein. However, he strongly believed that philosophy is especially very much rooted in culture and the life of humans. His insight about religious beliefs is rooted in culture and civilization (DeAngelis 3). Wittgenstein was attracted to Spengler's method of philosophizing "Gestalt analysis of history" or the "method of descriptive morphology" rather than the content of his philosophy (Cahill 128). Wittgenstein has appropriated certain aspects of Spengler's method and modified and applied it in his own style.

Reading Spengler, *Decline* etc. and finding, despite much that is irresponsible in specifics, many genuinely significant thoughts. *Much*, perhaps most of it, touches on what I myself have often thought. The possibility of several self-contained systems which, once one has them, look as though one were a continuation of the other. All of this also connects with the thought that we really don't know (or consider) how much can be taken from or given to humans. (qtd. in Cahill 99)

¹⁴ Wittgenstein explicitly remarks that he was influenced by Oswald Spengler along with Boltzmann, Hertz Schopenhauer, Frege, Russell, Kraus, Loos, Weininger and Sraffa in *Culture and Value*. This is quoted in the beginning of this section. See CV 19.

Wittgenstein's own remarks, later in 1941, substantiate that Spengler had a considerable influence on him. "I just want to say: These people should not arrive at the view that they are making mathematical discoveries - but rather only physical discoveries. (How much indeed I am influenced by Spengler in my thinking)" (qtd. in Cahill 128). The influence of Spengler's methodology is explicit in his *Remarks on Frazer*.

The concept of a perspicuous representation is of fundamental significance for us. It denotes the form of our representation (*Darstellungsform*), the way we look at things. (A kind of "World-view" as it is apparently typical of our time. Spengler). This perspicuous representation imparts the understanding which consists precisely in the fact that we "see the connections," hence the importance of finding connecting links.¹⁵

These philosophical influences have played a considerable role in shaping Wittgenstein's philosophy. We have discussed mainly the influences that are very significant in developing his philosophy of religion especially his development of thought from earlier stage of philosophy to the later stage.

Other Philosophical Influences

Now let us consider briefly some of the other names mentioned by Wittgenstein as having influenced his thought. First, we will treat some of those who are outside the academic philosophy but whose works Wittgenstein read as a

¹⁵ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Remarks on Frazer's Golden Bough* in Wittgenstein L., *Philosophical Occasions: 1912-1951*. Hereafter, abbreviation *RFGB* will be used within the text. Wittgenstein repeats the first part of this quote in his *Philosophical Investigations* 122.

youngster. Karl Kraus's masterful polemical analysis of language influenced Wittgenstein very much. Another influential figure in this category is Fritz Mauthner who first identified philosophy with the critique of language. Otto Weininger's idea that one has a moral obligation toward oneself, to strive for genius and the intellectual truth and clarity also influenced Wittgenstein. Logic and ethics are ultimately identical; they are no more than duty to oneself. These influenced the making of *Tractatus*. Heinrich Hertz and Ludwig Boltzmann, who were part of a Neo-Kantian tradition of philosopher-scientists, sought the possibility of scientific explanation by reference to the nature of representation. Science forms pictures of reality; the logical consequence of the pictures corresponds to the actual consequence of the external affairs it depicts. These philosophers influenced the picture theory of Wittgenstein (Glock 12-13).

Though Wittgenstein was not well read in the classics of philosophy he did read Plato, Spinoza, Hume, Kant, Augustine, Pascal, Kierkegaard, Dostoevsky and Tolstoy (Glock 53). He opens *Philosophical Investigations* with a quotation from St. Augustine. He read Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov* over and over again. He was deeply impressed by the religious attitude of Tolstoy. Tolstoy's *The Gospel in Brief*, *Twenty Three Tales*, and *The Three Hermits* were some of the favourites of Wittgenstein (High, "Religious Point of View" 109). Tolstoy's concept of Christianity has impressed young Wittgenstein in the formation of his religiosity. Tolstoy's concept of Christianity is this worldly based on a moral transformation that is distanced from traditional Catholic and Protestant understanding of salvation. For him Gospels were recourses for meaningful life. Jesus for him was one who led a

moral life of love and self sacrifice and preached it. He did not consider the historical authenticity of gospels or its divine origin (Carroll 47). The affinity between religion and ethics that is seen throughout Wittgenstein's thought can be traced back to the influence of Tolstoy who considered Christianity is intend to preach moral transformation and perfection (Tolstoy 24). Undoubtedly, these authors considerably influenced Wittgenstein in the formation of his later philosophy, especially his thoughts on religious beliefs.

1.3. Wittgenstein and Philosophy of Religion

Wittgenstein's philosophy, especially his more realistic and dynamic view of language, has considerably influenced philosophical theology. Wittgenstein's characterization of religion and religious belief can be best understood against his larger philosophical inquiry and aims which will be treated in the development of this thesis. However, let us look at Wittgenstein's attitude toward religion and his religious personality in brief.

The Philosophy of Religion and Wittgenstein

The philosophy of religion is one of the most relevant and much talked about branches of philosophy today. The philosophy of religion, as a science, studies religion in a systematic way. Religion is one of the earliest institutions of culture in human society. It could be looked at both as a doctrine and as a way of life. As a doctrine, religion is theoretical, in the sense that it has well defined concepts of God, proofs for God's existence, ideas of the relation between God and self, etc. When religion is viewed as a way of life, it deals with the cultivation of moral and spiritual

values, prayer and God realization, coping with evil, and with the actual use of symbols. Philosophers of religion have tried to give a rational footing to religious belief for centuries. The Scholastic philosophers like St. Thomas reached some sort of synthesis between faith and reason. They somehow tried to prove the existence of God rationally. The rationality of religious belief was one of their main concerns. However, this Scholastic philosophy has been eclipsed today. That means that all religions, especially Christianity, lack a proper philosophical footing in this multi-cultural, multi-linguistic and multi-religious world. Therefore, the philosophy of religion is at stake today.

Wittgenstein, the most influential linguistic philosopher of the 20th century, has had a deep impact on the philosophy of religion. Like the rationalists who gave importance to reason and the empiricists who gave importance to experience, Wittgenstein's emphasis on language has made a far-reaching impact on epistemology and the philosophy of religion. Thus, language has become one of the most important elements in philosophy of religion. Linguistic analysis focuses mainly on meaning rather than existence. Rather than proving the existence of God, Wittgenstein asked: What is the meaning of the term 'God'? In order to explore meaning, he proposes two theories of meaning. One is the correspondence theory while other is coherent theory of meaning.

Religious Background of Wittgenstein

Though Wittgenstein was baptized and brought up in the Catholic religious tradition, he didn't adhere to any organized religion in particular. Though organized religion played a very little part in Wittgenstein's family, they admired the

importance of honesty, strict performance of duty, and fulfilment of obligations to servants and dependents. The childhood of Wittgenstein was in the atmosphere of moral, cultural and material superiority (McGuinness, *Young Ludwig* 25).

Wittgenstein was given formal religious instructions. However, he lost his childhood faith under the influence of his sister who rejected the tradition of belief structures. A consciousness of sin and guilt without a ground for hope of redemption ruled the mind of Wittgenstein. It is very difficult to define the personal attitude of Wittgenstein to religion. Our information in this regard comes from his friend's comments and the memoirs. Though he had a hostile attitude to Christianity, we notice a change in this attitude. Russell, in his obituary note on Wittgenstein, points out the reason for the change of heart as his reading of Tolstoy's account on the Gospels. 'He had been dogmatically anti-Christian, but in this respect he changed completely. The only thing he ever told me about this was that once in a village in Galicia during the war (1914-18) he found a bookshop containing only one book, which was *Tolstoy on the Gospels*. He bought the book and according to him it influenced him profoundly.'¹⁶ Franz Parak, one of Wittgenstein's friends, believed that Wittgenstein underwent a conversion – a religious conversion – after the war. He recalled that Wittgenstein was not satisfied with Tolstoy's religion; however, he was greatly impressed with Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* and *The Brothers Karamazov*, which he read during the time of war. These influenced Wittgenstein to give up all his material possessions and later his own philosophy, and devote himself for inner and religious goals (McGuinness, *Young Ludwig* 273).

¹⁶ As cited in W. D. Hudson, *Ludwig Wittgenstein: The Bearing of his Philosophy upon Religious Belief* (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1968) 6.

Wittgenstein's Attitude to Religion

“I am not a religious man but I cannot help seeing every problem from a religious point of view” (qtd. in Malcolm, *Religious Point of View?* vii). What was Wittgenstein's feeling about religious experience? He claimed that he had an experience of being absolutely safe, ‘I am safe, nothing can injure me whatever happens’ (Hudson, *Ludwig Wittgenstein* 7). This feeling of *absolute safety* in many religious traditions is seen as some sort of religious experience. It may be Wittgenstein's experience during the war that prompted him to say that war was welcome because it forced one to realize that one was in God's hands (McGuinness, *Young Ludwig* 256). Wittgenstein was totally against all sorts of rational arguments for the existence of God and adding rationality to religious belief. Religion or religious belief is not a question of reason. He was against conceptualization in religion and dogmatization of religious belief. He was of the opinion that proofs for the existence of God are nothing but the attempts by the believers to give their belief an intellectual analysis and foundation, although they may not themselves have come to believe as a result of such proofs (*CV* 85). Wittgenstein's attitude toward religion involves personal and communal aspects.

For Wittgenstein religion has two aspects, the inner aspect - one's spiritual relationship to God - and the outer aspects-one's participation in ceremony, obedience and loving behaviour. Not surprisingly, Wittgenstein's engagement with religion consisted almost entirely of the former. The latter is an exile without a

community. Thus, I believe, we get Wittgenstein's ambiguous attitude towards religion in his own life. (Klagge 318)

The communal aspect was difficult for him since he was in a way alienated from the community. Wittgenstein spends enormous energy in reading, reflecting, writing and discussing religion in its various modes. He had a great respect for Catholicism and even thought to become a priest. However, he leaned more towards pietism (Monk 158).

Is Wittgenstein a Religious Person?

Wittgenstein never accepted any particular religion. Norman Malcolm says:

I do not wish to give the impression that Wittgenstein accepted any religious faith - he certainly did not – or that he was a religious person. But I think that there was in him, in some sense, the possibility of religion. I believe that he looked at religion as ‘a form of life’ in which he didn’t participate, but with which he was sympathetic and which greatly interested him. (Malcolm, *A Memoir* 72)

Malcolm also remembers what Wittgenstein told him that at the age of 21 he was struck by a play in Vienna. "In the play one of the characters expressed the thought that no matter what happened in the world, nothing bad could happen to him; he was independent of fate and circumstances. He was impressed with this thought and found for the first time the possibility of religion" (McGuinness, *Young Ludwig* 94). He was not in favour of the anthropomorphic idea of God which most of the

religious traditions cherish. In the *Tractatus* he says, “God does not reveal himself in the world” (*TLP* 6. 432).

Von Wright says that Wittgenstein had a compassionate heart which is closer to religion though we are not sure that he has anything religious in the trivial sense. Wright continues, “Certainly he did not have a Christian faith. But neither was his view of life un-Christian, pagan, as was Goethe’s” (543). Though we are not sure whether his concept of the mystical has anything to do with religion into which we are trying to make an investigation, Wittgenstein was full of wonder at the existence of the world. Though he seems to have possessed a deep pessimistic attitude, amidst this pessimism we may trace a deep sense of optimism. This is clear from his last words, “Tell them I have had a wonderful life.” Though Wittgenstein was born and brought up in a Western Christian culture and tradition his thought about religion and silence, he leans towards Eastern religious traditions. When we come to the later Wittgenstein we can see that religion is seen more as a way of life than a set of conceptualized dogmas. Though he was not favouring religious dogma he was not against rituals and ceremonies. He never rejected ceremonies in his own life. In fact, he was glad to attend mass while in prison in Monte Cassino (Chail 222).

The subject of religion had a great significance in Wittgenstein's thought; however, his personal relation to any religion is ambiguous. His negative attitude to dogmatic and systematic theology distanced himself from Catholicism. Nevertheless, he had a great appreciation for the rituals and symbols used in religion, and especially in Catholicism. "The symbolisms of Catholicism are wonderful beyond words. But any attempt to make it into a philosophical system is

offensive" (Rhees, *Personal Reflections* 129-130). He could find meaning in religious practices and ceremonies. The essence of religion is not to be sought either in its historical footing or in its dogmatic truths or truths of reason, but in observance and ceremonies of the people who make religious commitment.

In the conventional sense Wittgenstein was not a religious person. However, we cannot consider him as irreligious person. From his childhood to the time of World War I he seems to have adopted certain form of Christianity due to childhood formation and later due to the influence of some of the writers like Tolstoy (Carroll 58).

Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to give an overview of Wittgenstein's life and his philosophical background. In our discussion, we have seen how Wittgenstein's thought matured in his later phase of philosophizing. The various philosophers and systems which influenced Wittgenstein were briefly discussed in shaping his thought at various phases. This concise description of Wittgenstein's biographical profile and his attitude to religion is meant to give the orientation for the entire thesis and to prepare the ground for further discussions in the forth coming chapters. Hopefully, this brief account will help us to understand the development of Wittgenstein's philosophy, especially his thought on religion and religious belief.

CHAPTER 2

WITTGENSTEIN ON THE MYSTICAL

Abraham Vettiyolil. "Towards a meaningful talk about religion-prospects and problems of Ludwig Wittgenstein's philosophy of religion" Thesis. Department of Philosophy, University of Calicut, 2015

CHAPTER TWO

WITTGENSTEIN ON THE MYSTICAL

Introduction

The much-celebrated work of Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, which can be summed up in the proposition “what can be said at all can be said clearly and what we cannot talk about we must pass over in silence” (*TLP* p. 3), expounds his early philosophy. Logic, language and the world are the three master-issues of the *Tractatus*. It is an investigation into the essence of language – its structure, which is revealed by logic and its function, that is, to describe the world. He had in mind to trace the limits of language and of thought as well as to investigate the foundations of language, which is the form and essence of language (Pradhan 36). In the Preface of the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein brings out the purpose of the book: “to draw a boundary to thought or rather – not to thought, but to the expressions of thought” (*TLP* p. 3). To draw a boundary means to think about both sides.

The *Tractatus* is all about what can be said and what cannot be said (Barrett, *Wittgenstein on Ethics* 3). The earlier part of the work deals with the nature of language and its relation to the world. In the later part of the book, Wittgenstein deals with what is beyond the boundary of language. The purpose of *Tractatus* is precisely to show the inexpressible by exhibiting the expressible. It is an investigation which traces how far language can picture the facts of the world, and thereby points to a realm that is beyond language and scientific research, a realm

that can be termed "mystical." The prime concern of this chapter is to show Wittgenstein's view of what is beyond the boundary of language, "the mystical" which 'manifests' or 'shows' itself by explicating what is within the limits of language. The investigation, therefore, will mainly be focused on the *Tractatus* and *Notebooks* which represent his early philosophy to bring forth the distinction between saying - all that can be described in language and showing - all that cannot be expressed in language.

2.1. Language, Thought and Reality

In facing the challenge, exploring the sense of the mystical, one must begin with the analysis of what can be expressed in language. In this attempt, one of the prime concerns of Wittgenstein is to bring out the relationship among language, thought and reality. This relationship is explained by the theory of meaning, which can be seen as the focal point of both phases of Wittgenstein's philosophy. In his early philosophy, he developed the picture theory of meaning, i.e., the meaning of language is its referent. According to this theory, meaning is not simply a referent but a determinate referent. Certain inferences can be drawn concerning language and the world from the notion of meaning as determinate referent (Hudson, *Ludwig Wittgenstein* 10). The first inference would be that all that is meaningful in language must in the last analysis be reducible to what he called elementary propositions, which consist of names in immediate combination (*TLP* 4.221). The second inference would be that reality in its last analysis consists of simple objects. This necessitates elucidating his understanding of the world and language.

World and Facts

The metaphysical and linguistic concepts in the *Tractatus* are closely and essentially bound together. Wittgenstein, in his early philosophy, is primarily concerned with the logical foundation and the nature of reality. He uses the word 'world' as a synonym for reality. "The world is the totality of facts, not of things" (*TLP* 1.1). The world is not a mere collection of various things. From a complete description of all the things in the world, we cannot get an idea of what the world is. Similarly from a complete description of all the parts of a car, we cannot have an idea of what a car is. The world is divided into facts, and facts uniquely determine what the world actually is. Wittgenstein distinguishes between facts and things. Things which we can experience and see are empirical complexes. They can be named and described. When they are named, they function as objects, when they are described; they become facts (Finch 1). A fact is a set of state of affairs, and that state of affairs is a combination of objects. It follows that facts also are combinations of objects, but we can distinguish them in the following way. A fact is a combination of objects so that it can be subdivided into other combinations of objects. If these sub-groups are such that none of them can be subdivided into other combinations of objects, then each such sub-group is a state of affairs (Parkinson 13).

A fact is not itself some kind of object, but objects combined in a specific way give rise to a 'fact' 'a state of affairs'. It is not simply a collection of objects. "In a state of affairs objects stand in determinate relation to one another. The determinate way in which objects are connected in a state of affairs is the structure

of the state of affairs" (*TLP* 2.032). The objects should be capable of being a constituent of a state of affairs (*TLP* 2.011). The complex facts are composed of less complex facts. On further analysis, we will reach a point which cannot be further divided; that is called atomic fact. Thus, atomic facts constitute the simplest possible fact or state of affairs. The world is a totality of complex facts that is constituted of less complex facts, and this is again constituted of atomic facts, which is a combination of objects. The configuration of simple objects makes up the state of affairs or atomic facts.

Language

It is language that describes the structure of reality in the form of propositions; therefore, to know the structure of language, we have to know the structure of propositions. The *Tractatus* gives a clear analysis of the structure of propositions. A proposition is essentially an assertion about a fact or state of affairs. It can also be analyzed into its component propositions until we reach a proposition which cannot be further analyzed. This unanalyzable proposition is called the atomic or elementary proposition (Fann 10). The truth of a proposition depends on its agreement and disagreement with possibilities of existence and nonexistence of states of affairs (*TLP* 4.2). An elementary proposition or atomic proposition is the simplest kind of proposition which asserts the existence of an atomic fact. "An elementary proposition consists of names. It is a nexus, a concatenation, of names" (*TLP* 4.22). Name is an expression that cannot be analyzed or defined. The only possible way of defining name is *ostensive definition*, which is used in the case of something observable, that is, to point to something (The word ... means this.),

since name is always the name of an object and always refers to something simple – something without parts (Fann 12).

An elementary proposition is a concatenation of such names. Wittgenstein is *a priori* certain that there must be elementary propositions. However, no proposition is true *a priori*. It would either be true or false. Hence, language is a picture of reality, “there are no pictures that are true *a priori*” (*TLP* 2.225). “In order to tell whether a picture is true or false we must compare it with reality” (*TLP* 2.223). This brings us to an important point that all propositions in essence are contingent and not necessary. Since there are no propositions that are *a priori* true, an expression of necessity in language is impossible. This contingent nature of propositions indicates that the truth value of it lies outside the description. The externality of the truth value of propositions leads them to the world of possibilities, not to necessities. In the domain of possibilities, a proposition can be either certainly true or certainly false. “A proposition is in itself neither probable nor improbable. An event occurs or does not occur; there is no middle course” (*TLP* 5.153). It follows that there is no fact in the world that is necessarily the case. All the things in the world are on par with one another without any hierarchy. All propositions describe the same thing, namely the configuration of objects. What is of higher value is not the concern of propositions (Pravesh 9-10). Wittgenstein, in his attempt to analyze language, wants to bring out as clearly as possible the relationship of thought to reality. A proposition is an expression of a thought of reality in words (Parkinson 85).

The relationship among language, thought and reality could be understood in relation to logical forms, which are identical in the case of thought and reality. This

is to say that reality can be thought only in and through language. It is language and thought that confer these forms on reality. Though the reality is prior to language and thought, it depends on language and thought in so far as it is thought and it is represented in language (Pradhan 95). World and reality are tied down to language in Wittgenstein's philosophy. Language is thought expressed in words about reality. It is reality or the world that makes thought possible, and thereby its expression, language.

The distinction that Wittgenstein makes between names and propositions is very important. A proposition is not meaningless even if it is not true. It depicts a possible state of affairs, but in fact it is not present. However, unlike propositions, names that have no referents are meaningless. To mark this difference, Wittgenstein says that names have referents and propositions have sense (Hudson, *Ludwig Wittgenstein* 16). The meaning of a name depends on the referential object. Therefore, in Wittgenstein's philosophy there is a close connection between meaning and reference.¹⁷

Picture Theory of Meaning

Wittgenstein has established the relationship among language, thought and reality through his picture theory of meaning. Reality for him was something objective that could be pictured by language. The basic idea is: the meaning of language is that to which it refers or, in a word, its referent. The picture theory

¹⁷ N. Malla in his article in *Indian Philosophical Quarterly*, contrasts Wittgenstein's reference bound communicative function of language with Bradley's reference free communicative system. In his opinion Bradley creates a gap between language, thought and reality whereas Wittgenstein tries to integrate language thought and reality by maintaining a reference bound language. See Malla 58.

exposes the relationship of language to thought and reality. Wittgenstein holds that a proposition is a picture, a logical picture. What a picture represents is its sense. The sense of a proposition is the state of affairs it pictures or represents. A proposition states that something is the case, like “The cat is on the mat.” A proposition is not literally a picture but something like a picture, in the sense that it does what a picture does. “The proposition *only says something in so far as it is a picture*” (NB 8).

In the preface to *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein demarcates the non-sense from sensible propositions. Sensible propositions, which depict the state of affairs, are within the limits of natural sciences. They are tautologies and contradictions and belong to the realms of logic and mathematics since they are unconditionally true and their negations are contradictions. However, any attempt to express what is beyond the limits of natural sciences is named nonsense. Metaphysical discourses such as ethical, aesthetical and religious talk belong to this category (Mallick 22).

States of affairs are elementary or atomic and correspond to elementary propositions. "Wittgenstein assumes that if we can use language to talk about the world there must be some propositions directly connected with the world, so that their truth or falsity is not determined by other propositions but by the world. He called these propositions elementary propositions" (Fann 8). An elementary proposition is a concatenation of names; a state of affairs is a combination of objects. How are the elementary propositions related to the world? There is a one-to-one correspondence between the names in elementary propositions and the objects that constitute the relevant state of affairs. Language, for Wittgenstein, is purely referential at this level; whatever is expressed in language has its reference. "...that

language at the base consists of pure names and those names only refer and do not describe” (Malla 58). The general result of the theory of the truth function is that the world would get divided into nothing but atomic facts. The elementary propositions are independent of one another.¹⁸ Elementary propositions are constituted of names. To Wittgenstein, it is not a mechanical collection of names but is held together in a certain way to constitute elementary propositions; in a way it can picture facts.

How are the complex propositions related to the elementary propositions? As compound propositions are composed of elementary propositions, they are truth functions of elementary propositions. A compound proposition is truth functional when its truth or falsity is completely determinable from its constituent simple propositions. If we have all the possible elementary propositions, then by constructing all possible compound propositions out of them, we can express all the propositions about the world, all the truth and falsities about the world. If one of the components is not true, then the whole proposition may not be true. Elementary propositions are the logical picture of atomic facts, and complex propositions are the truth functions of the elementary ones (Fann 8).

Language is composed of uttered sounds and written signs, and reality is composed of objects. There is a difference among them. An idea is not a sound or sign or a thing. When a book is on a table, the idea of the book is not on the idea of the table. For something to be a picture of something there should be something in common between the object and the picture. However, words and things have

¹⁸ The independence of elementary proposition points to the fact of a pluralistic approach rather than a monistic approach in the philosophy of Wittgenstein. That is one of our prime concerns in the forth-coming chapter. It is meaning, that constitutes the basis of communication, and it is very much related to reference to reality.

nothing in common. Wittgenstein says it is the logical form that enables the proposition to picture a reality. “What a picture must have in common with reality, in order to be able to depict it – correctly or incorrectly – in the way it does, it is pictorial form” (*TLP* 2.17). “A picture has logico-pictorial form in common with what it depicts” (*TLP* 22.2). An example will clarify this. What is common between a gramophone disc of a certain piece of music, the notes of music and the actual sound of music? The music sheet pictures the sound in the same way that a photograph pictures a man. The photograph of a man does not resemble the man, in the respect that it does not contain skin, bone and blood, but it is his picture which pictures his form. Therefore, logically, what is the groove on the disc, the marks on the music sheet, and series of sounds have in common is form, logical form. It is by virtue of this logical form, the proposition becomes a picture of a certain fact or state of affairs. A logical picture depicts reality by representing a possibility of existence and non-existence of states of affairs (*TLP* 2.201). A picture agrees with the reality or fails to agree; it is correct or incorrect, true or false (*TLP* 2.2.21). The logical form can only be shown but cannot be spoken or written.

Therefore, the relation among language, thought and reality is maintained in Wittgenstein’s system of philosophy.¹⁹ What we can speak meaningfully and clearly are those propositions which correspond to the facts of the world. A word is meaningfully uttered when it has correspondence in reality. Language articulates only facts of the world, which is its referent. Any attempt to articulate beyond the

¹⁹ This understanding of the relation between language, thought and reality is very similar to that of the *Nyaya – Vaisesika*, which allows the coextensiveness of the real, the knowable and the nameable. ‘Realness,’ ‘knowability,’ and ‘nameability’ are seen as the common characteristics of the *padarthas*. Whatever is expressible in language is knowable and *vice versa*, whatever knowable is real and *vice versa*. See Gokhale 318.

world of facts is to run against the boundary of language, a common human tendency, and a source of metaphysical discourses.

Limits of the Language

If we have the totality of propositions, we will have the picture of the world. Since there are an infinite number of propositions, how will we come to the propositions that picture the world? There are propositions which are necessarily true always and under any circumstances, and there are others which are self contradictory, false under all circumstances. There are also other propositions whose truth and falsity depend upon the existence or nonexistence of the state of affairs. Both necessary and contradictory propositions are non-informative. What is informative is the contingent proposition.

Since elementary propositions always picture an observable state of affairs, what about metaphysical statements? Language is that which sets a boundary for the world. The totality of propositions is language that pictures facts. Therefore, we can speak of only facts 'whatever can be said can be said clearly and whatever cannot be said cannot be said at all.' Logical positivists, giving emphasis to the verification principle, reject metaphysics, but Wittgenstein consigns metaphysics, theology and ethics to the realm of what cannot be said. When we search for the ground for the non-significance of metaphysical statements in Wittgenstein, we can see two principles: 1) a proposition is meaningful if and only if its negation or denial is meaningful; 2) limits of our language are the limits of our world and *vice versa* (Hudson, *Ludwig Wittgenstein* 23). On the ground of the first principle "to understand a proposition is to know what is the case if it is true" (*TLP* 4.024); to

recognize the case if it is true I must be able to differentiate it from the case if it is not true. Wittgenstein in *Notebooks* asserts that a proposition to be capable of being true it must also be capable of being false (55). Thus, “the positive *proposition* necessarily presupposes the existence of the negative *proposition* and vice versa” (*TLP* 5.5151). Metaphysical statements are not negatable, and therefore, are not significant.

Coming to the second principle that language is the limit of the world and *vice versa*, language is significant only in so far as it pictures reality. It cannot get beyond reality, for then it would have nothing to picture. We cannot talk about what cannot be pictured and what is beyond the reality or the world. In accordance with the picture theory of meaning, we cannot but reject metaphysical assertions. One thing should be noted that a great deal of the *Tractatus* itself is metaphysical, as it goes beyond what can significantly be said. Wittgenstein attempted to avoid metaphysical speculation in the early part of his philosophy; however, he fell prey to another kind of metaphysics - essentialist metaphysics where meaning is found in the essential relation between language that pictures and reality that is pictured. The meaning of a sentence is found in the correspondence to an *ontic* state of affairs. This metaphysical thought in *Tractates* can lead one to idealism or to realism. A metaphysical reading of *Tractates* postulates the ultimate constituents of a possible world, logical requirement of language that can represent the world, and finally the adaptation of a mystical attitude towards what is beyond the limits of the boundary of the language (Reid 98). The preface of *Tractates* was overlooked by the standard

reading until recently.²⁰ The new interest in the preface brought forth a strong anti-metaphysical stand.

The book will, therefore, draw a limit to thinking (*Denken*), or rather - not to thinking (*Denken*), but the expression of thoughts (*der Gedanken*); for in order to draw a limit to thinking (*Denken*), we should have to be able to think both sides of this limit (we should therefore have to be able to think what cannot be thought). The limit can therefore, only be drawn in language and what lies on the other side of the limit will simply be nonsense (*Unsinn*). (*TLP* p. 3)

The project of *Tractatus* was to draw a limit to the expressions of thought that is language. Drawing of limits to thinking is considered as absurdity. Limits of expressions of thought and limit of thinking are not the same. Limits of thinking should extend beyond the limits of expression of thought.

A metaphysical reading of the *Tractatus* puts forward the nature of reality and substantial relation between language and reality enabling language to represent the reality. Metaphysical statements about the reality which try to communicate what cannot be articulated falls into nonsense (McGinn, "Between Metaphysics and Nonsense" 492). That is why Wittgenstein asserts that anyone who understands me eventually recognizes metaphysical assertions as nonsensical when he has used them as steps to climb up beyond them. When one transcends these propositions, he will be enabled to see the world aright (*TLP* 6.54). Wittgenstein should not be

²⁰ *A Companion to Wittgenstein's Tractatus*, a book from Max Black, one of the influential commentaries on *Tractatus* conveniently passes over the preface to silence. It is with Cora Diamond and James Conant that the preface gained its important as a new interpretative tool for *Tractatus*. See Howes 3.

misunderstood as anti-metaphysician.²¹ His point was that what is metaphysical cannot be articulated in propositions which constitute language and picture reality. Wittgenstein's anti-metaphysical stand is revealed in the preface of *Tractatus* and concluding remarks (Reid 97). Wittgenstein is careful to consider nonsense as that which cannot be said rather than that which does not exist. In his anti-metaphysical stand, he is concerned with the avoidance of metaphysical talk rather than the content of such a talk. The content of such a talk is what is beyond the limit of language.

2.2. Beyond Language

Language is the totality of propositions, which are reducible to elementary propositions and which in turn, picture the world. Therefore, meaningful language is one in which elementary propositions represent the facts of the world, and language is the limit of the world. What, then, is beyond the limits of language? Wittgenstein never rejected what is beyond the world and language, but his point was that what is beyond language cannot be articulated in truth functional propositions. It doesn't mean that what cannot be said in language has no reality or existence (Thiselton 367). In the preface to *Tractatus* Wittgenstein states that the aim of his book is to draw limits to the expressions of thought, and he suggests that the limit of language shows what cannot be said. In setting limits to what can be thought and presenting clearly what can be said, the realm beyond that will be manifested (Atkinson 18).

As per rule for drawing limits or setting a boundary, one should be able to think about both sides of the boundary. To draw a limit to thinking, one should be

²¹ Logical positivists of Vienna circle considered *Tractatus* as the crystallization of their own anti-metaphysical doctrine. They thought that metaphysics is nonsense and is to be eliminated, but Wittgenstein's prime concern was to show that it cannot be articulated in propositions which picture the reality.

able to think about both sides of that limit. One cannot draw a boundary to thinking and think about both sides of the boundary. In this case, the relevance of boundary drawing is nonsense. However, one can draw a limit to the expressions of thought that is the task of *Tractatus* and think about both sides of the boundary of expressions of thought. Thinking about the other side of the limit makes it a real limit. However, the content of thinking cannot be expressed since any attempt to express what is outside the limit of expression is nonsense (Howes 5). Wittgenstein considers some thinking cannot be expressed in language and about this one must remain silent. Any attempt to express what is beyond language through indirect means like metaphors create ambiguity in philosophy. The linguistic categories of sense and nonsense are in the opposite sides of the boundary of language. Any attempt to express what is beyond the linguistic limit is nonsense. Let us see now what Wittgenstein considers outside the boundary of language.

Transcendental

The entire enterprise of Wittgenstein's philosophy is about what can be said and what cannot be said. What can be said is identified with the propositions of natural science. The propositions of logic, ethics and metaphysics etc... are nonsensical, since they do not say anything about the world.²² They are attempts to transcend the limits of language in *language*. Though these propositions do not say

²² Karl Popper, a contemporary evolutionary epistemologist, replaced the verification criteria of meaning proposed by the Logical Positivists with falsifiability as a criterion of demarcation between what is science and what is not science. For Popper falsifiability of statement depends on the empirical content, the more it says about the world – the more informative - the more it is falsifiable. If a statement says nothing about the world it is not falsifiable. He says that metaphysical statements say nothing of the world so it is not falsifiable but its position is outside the boundary of empirical science. It never determines the truth or falsity. See Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* 18-19. Though Popper has changed this position, he seems to be influenced by Wittgenstein's idea of metaphysics, which lies outside the boundary of language. It cannot be expressed in propositions but it shows itself.

anything, they *show*. The propositions of logic, for example, say nothing; they show the formal – logical – properties of language and the world (Fann 23). Logic in relation to the world as a reflection is transcendental as it shows itself. Propositions of philosophy are non-sensical since they are attempts to say what cannot be said.

Wittgenstein's picture theory proposes that meaningful language mirrors 'what is the case.' What is beyond 'what is the case' is transcendental. Ethics and religion are beyond what is the case, so they cannot be pictured in meaningful language. "If there is any value that does have value it must lie outside the whole sphere of what happens and is the case" (*TLP* 6.41). There is a considerable difference between what is the case and what ought to be the case. What ought to be is the concern of ethics and what is the case is the concern of language; therefore ethics comes outside the boundary of language or it cannot be articulated in meaningful language. Concerning theology, we read in the *Tractatus*: "How things are in the world is a matter of complete indifference for what is higher. God does not reveal himself *in* the world" (*TLP* 6.432). This means that "the world is all that is the case" (*TLP* 1) and God in as much as he is deemed to be transcendent, cannot reveal in the world because a proposition about a God who transcends the world cannot be a picture of what is the case. Hence, logic, ethics and theology all come in the realm of transcendence (Hudson, *Ludwig Wittgenstein* 27).

The Inexpressible

An analytic method can be applied to propositions; however, this method is not applicable to what lies beyond the limits of language, i.e. what cannot be said. What can be said, as we have seen are propositions corresponding to atomic facts.

What is beyond the propositional language is not subjected to the analytic method. The sole concern of *Tractatus* is drawing limits to establish what can be expressed in language. Thus, this limit of thought or expressions of thought shows what cannot be said. However, the last sentence from *Tractatus*, “What we cannot talk about we must pass over in silence” (*TLP* 7) is not meant to bring a simple distinction. In a 1919 letter to Ludwig von Ficker, Wittgenstein writes:

My work consists of two parts: one presented here and all that I have *not* written. And it is precisely this second part that is the important one. My book draws limits to the sphere of the ethical form the inside as it were, and I am convinced that this is the ONLY rigorous way of drawing those limits. In short, I believe that where *many* others today are just gassing, I have managed in my book to put everything firmly into place by being silent about it. (qtd. in Goodman, *Wittgenstein and William James* 2)

What cannot be said is signified in setting limits to what can be thought and expressions of thought in language. In the early writings of Wittgenstein, he claims that objects, solipsistic self, reality and the mystical cannot be put into words and they are beyond an analytic approach.

As we have seen in the earlier part of this chapter, Wittgenstein believes that facts are composed of atomic facts which cannot be further analyzed. However, the atomic facts can be further broken down into its constituents such as objects. Unlike Russell who claimed that these objects are self subsistent and independent, Wittgenstein claims that objects that stand in determinate relation cannot be isolated

or put into words. Objects “make up the substance of the world” (*TLP* 2.021). Substance is independent of what is the case – totality of facts. “One cannot say, for example, there are objects as one might say there are books” (*TLP* 4.1272). Wittgenstein also makes the claim that objects cannot be put into words. However, objects can be named and names are representative of objects. Wittgenstein is not concerned about any existential claim of objects. We cannot know anything about objects as objects; what we know is only the names, and names can be known only in the context of the state of affairs. The dependent nature of objects in the state of affairs brings forth the different possibilities of objects. Objects in the state of affairs contain all possible combinations of relationship. The configuration of objects in its determinate relationship makes up the state of affairs and in the state of affairs objects lack independence and self subsistence. The form of objects can be represented by names; however, the content of objects cannot be put into words. An object in its form and content is reality which is limited by objects. The objects that are not named cannot be put into words. The objects that are not named are the form of the object or the possibility of occurring in the state of affairs. In other words, objects in an unalterable form cannot be expressed in propositions and cannot be the subject of analysis (Atkinson 20-21).

The form of objects can be represented by names. However, the content of objects cannot be put into words. The form and content of objects make up reality (*TLP* 5.5561). Reality is limited by objects. Solipsistic self is part of reality and also cannot be put into words. Solipsistic self which is co-ordinated with reality is without extension (*TLP* 5.64). It is not a human being in terms of body and soul

(*TLP* 5.641). It cannot be said but can show itself as my world. My soul is the limit of world soul. In *Notebooks* 49 Wittgenstein recognizes one world soul which is not part of the world. My soul which also is not part of the world is the limit of the world soul. My world is the reality with which the solipsistic self is coordinated. Reality here is the empirical reality that we experience as my world. Propositions, which correspond to the reality, do not tell us that the reality is, but only how the world is. Proposition reports an experience but later is an experience itself. The latter cannot be put into words (Atkinson 27).

The Mystical

The term, “the mystical,” is used mysteriously by Wittgenstein in his philosophy. The adjectival use of the term “mystical” indicates the inexpressible. The term appears four times in his published works, three times in the *Tractatus* and once in *Notebooks*. Now let us see the *Tractatus* version of mystical. “It is not *how* things are in the world that is mystical, but *that* it exists,” “Feeling the world as a limited whole – it is this that is mystical,” “There are indeed, things that cannot be put into words. They *make themselves manifest*. They are what is mystical.”²³

In what sense is the term mystical used? Though there are various meanings attributed to this, let us consider two prominent ones. The first one is the traditional spiritual one as being in union with God or the Ultimate Reality; the second one is wider, mysterious and awe-inspiring. It seems that Wittgenstein uses the term mystical in the second sense. The *Notebooks* confirms this. “Aesthetically, the

²³ Wittgenstein's versions of the mystical as outline in the *Tractatus* at different places are brought together here. See Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 6. 44, 6.45, & 6. 522.

miracle is that the world exists. That what exists does exist” (86). It is an experience of amazement and astonishment; it is a feeling of wonder. In the *Tractatus* this experience that the world exists is called ‘mystical’ and in *Notebooks* it is called a ‘marvel’ or as Anscombe translates a ‘miracle.’ In both cases what is meant is the same.

The experience of the world as a bounded whole is mystical. To regard the world as a whole, totality of facts transcends the individual facts and cannot be expressed in propositions. To view the world as a bounded whole and contemplate the world from outside temporality is mystical. This view of the world as a whole and contemplating it from outside is mutually dependent. ‘World exists is mystical.’ World is not the name of a simple element, and therefore cannot refer to or signify any fact. Since ‘world’ does not signify anything, we fail to give meaning to ‘world’ in the statement ‘the world exists.’ Existence is predicable only of those signs that express the possibility of becoming the constituent of proposition. All that we can say about mystical is that it consists in seeing the world as a bounded whole and marveling and wondering that anything at all exists. As the picture theory suggests, what is expressed in statements (propositions) are the pictures of facts. Statements of the mystical are not statements of facts; therefore, they cannot be expressed in words. It is beyond the boundary of language, and therefore, it is inexpressible. The mystical is the same as that which cannot be subsumed under the concept of a proposition (Roy, "The Mystical" 267-269). To understand the world as a limited whole and there is a realm beyond the limited world is ‘the mystical’ which cannot be articulated in words.

Understanding the logic of language is mystical. Understanding the logical structure that represents the structure of reality – what can and what cannot be the case – is the mystical (Barrett, *Wittgenstein on Ethics* 75). They are mystical in the sense that they are inexpressible and show themselves. It is concerned with the “thatness,” not “howness” of the facts that constitute the world. Propositions can represent the whole reality, but they cannot represent what they must have in common with reality - logical form - in order to be able to picture it. The form itself cannot be represented but must be grasped intuitively,²⁴ and that is mystical.

Wittgenstein’s two further accounts of the mystical are the feeling of being absolutely safe and the experience of feeling guilty.²⁵ The feeling of absolute safety is mystical in the sense that no matter what happens to us our equilibrium is not disturbed. Whatever happens can have no effect on our life. We accept it as accidents of life; it neither surprises nor hurts us. To be indifferent to facts, to live without fear or hope, involves a feeling of being safe, no matter what happens (*NB* 74). It can be seen as a further step of the experience of wonder that what is, is. It is a move from an experience of wonder to a total acceptance (Barrett, *Wittgenstein on Ethics* 81). Another experience is that of guilt. If one feels insignificant, looking at the world as whole with wonder is mystical. Cyril Barrett is of the opinion that “Feeling of absolute guilt is the reverse of the feeling of wonder” (*Wittgenstein on*

²⁴ There are typically two types of knowledge named *cognition* and *intuition*. Cognition is knowledge through symbolism whereas intuition is a direct and un-symbolic awareness of, or insight into reality. Cognition can be expressed and communicated, while intuition is inexpressible and incommunicable. Schopenhauer, who distinguished direct and indirect apprehension of reality, might have influenced Wittgenstein in this regard. Alexander Maslow in commenting on the *Tractatus* says that “What is grasped by intuition is a case of what Wittgenstein calls the mystical.” See Maslow 56.

²⁵ Ludwig Wittgenstein, “Lecture on Ethics,” *Philosophical Review* Vol. LXXIV, No. 1 (1965): 9. Hereafter the abbreviation *LE* will be cited within the text.

Ethics 82). Wittgenstein seems to view that all religious terms as similes or allegories. When we speak of God who sees everything and we kneel before him, it allegorically expresses our feeling of being absolutely safe in the hands of God (*LE* 10).

The mystical, as opposed to the scientific, has no questions and answers; it is an experience of wonder at the existence of reality. Wittgenstein distinguishes between what is scientific and what is mystical. What is scientific is the facts of the world which can be articulated in propositions, and what is mystical is an experience of wonder at the existence of reality that is beyond the reach of language and cannot be articulated in propositions. "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" (*LE* 11-12).

The mystical in Wittgenstein's philosophy can be understood as an attitude of mind which realizes the meaning of life. The mystic may find the sense of life or sense of the world becomes clear to him; this is the case of the happy man for whom life is no more problematic, that is to say he is in agreement with the world. Another possibility is that he may remain a prey to doubt as to whether life has any sense (McGuinness, "The Mysticism" 316). According to Wittgenstein, "the world of a happy man is a different one from that of an unhappy man" (*TLP* 6.43, *NB* 78e). The happy man is more harmonious with whatever happens in the world. In this context, it is proper to mention his view of will as an attitude to the world. I have no control over whatever happens, whatever happens, happens accidentally. It may or may not coincide with my wishes. What is in my control is to make my wishes coincide with

whatever possibly happens. In that case, I am accepting the world. The *Notebooks* makes clear that both the realization that the world is my world, the identification is with the world as a whole and the ability to live in the present are essential parts of happiness (74-75). The essential feature of a harmonious or a happy life is transcendent one which can only be shown (Choudhary 70).

Though it is possible to explain the “mystical” in the *Tractatus* without making any necessary connection with religion, we can trace a connection. For Wittgenstein "it is not how things are in the world that is mystical but that it exists" (*TLP* 6.44). He had an indifferent attitude to how things are in the world. That is very clear from a conversation with Waismann on religious language. "For me the facts are unimportant. But what men mean when they say, “*The world is there,*” lies close to my heart" (Waismann, “Notes on Talks with Wittgenstein” 12). It is reasonable to conclude that there is a close relation between what is stated in the *Tractatus* as ‘the Mystical’ and religion (Keightley 27). However, it is not necessarily related to theistic mystical experience, as it is traditionally understood.

God, Meaning of life and Prayer

Wittgenstein makes a remarkable distinction between two godheads including the world and the independent I (*NB* 74). What can be said includes the world, facts, and propositions of science and understanding of world in terms of *how it is?* What cannot be said consists of my independent I including the expressions of thought and the world in terms of *that it is*. God and meaning of life belong to the second godhead that is my independent I. The knowledge of God and the knowledge

of meaning of life are made possible from the knowledge that the world exists (Atkinson 127).

Wittgenstein's introduction of the relationship between the eye and the visual field in *Notebooks* gives an important clue to understanding the relationship between God and the world or in a way what can be said and what cannot be said. The eye is not in the field of sight; thus the eye cannot be made into the object of sight. The existence of the eye is understood from the necessary relationship between the eye and the visual field. Same relationship exists between what can be said and what cannot be said. However, it is necessary to examine the relationship between God and world. Understanding the proposition "God does not reveal himself in the world" (*TLP* 6.432) in this context needs further explanation of "in." In the case of the eye, it does not reveal itself in the object of sight, or as in the case where thinker cannot be turned in to the object of thought. In the above cases, the word "in" indicates a demarcating point between the opposites. In the case of thinker and thought, the eye and object of sight there exists a mutually exclusive and dependent relationship. There is no separation between the two in each case. The same type of relationship exists between God and world. However the world is not my world. It is the world of facts. The proposition, God does not reveal himself in the world draws the distinction between God and how things are in the world. It means God cannot reveal himself in the world of facts. Thus God lies outside not inside the world of facts or of what can be said. There exist a co-dependent relationship between God and the world (Atkinson 128-29).

To talk about God is something self-contradictory in Wittgenstein's early philosophy, since it goes against the boundaries of language. Here let us try to articulate what he has tried to say, what cannot be said in his earlier works especially in *Tractatus* and *Notebooks*. There are certain references in the *Tractatus* regarding God. God cannot create anything contrary to the laws of logic. He cannot create a world in which two contradictory propositions are true (*TLP* 5.123). Wittgenstein puts a logical prohibition to God's entry into the world. If God is conceived as the creator, He cannot be part of the created world. If he is part of the created world, He is not a genuine creator.

The philosophical point, that the concept of the higher, to which values like ethics, aesthetics and religious beliefs belong, is strengthened by another proposition of the *Tractatus*. "How things are in the world is a matter of complete indifference for what is higher. God does not reveal himself *in* the world" (*TLP* 6.432). This proposition seems to go against those religious traditions of the world which believe in a God who has revealed himself in the world in one way or other. It prohibits all theories of incarnation and re-incarnation of God which serves as the foundation of many world religions. Re-incarnation makes no sense unless the incarnation theory is accepted. If the incarnation theory is accepted once, the re-incarnation theory cannot be rejected (Maudgil 73). When we consider this proposition in the context of the whole philosophy of Wittgenstein, we can see that it is impossible for God to reveal himself in the world. Since what we have in the world are only facts or states of affairs, God cannot reveal himself as a fact or state of affairs which constitute the world (Tripathy 15). He cannot be a part of the world, or one among the facts. "God

is not factuality” (Roy, "The Mystical" 272). It is in the realm of higher where values are. The transcendental status of God is emphasized.

Wittgenstein has made some remarkable entries in the celebrated *Notebooks*, supporting the proposition of the *Tractatus* that “the world and life are one” (*TLP* 5.621). The meaning of life and the sense of the world are synonymously used in *Notebooks*. The meaning of life is not understood in its traditional sense of purposiveness. The meaning of life for him is simply the sense of the world, that which makes it intelligible. The facts in the world happen to be there and are not intelligible in themselves. The sense of the world lies outside the world of facts. What is outside the world is the value that gives sense to the world. “The meaning of life, i.e., the meaning of the world, we can call God” (*NB* 73). We can call this higher that gives sense to the world, God. Cyril Barrett interprets this proposition in the following way: “It could mean that God is not a being, but the name we give to explanations of facts at a higher level. ‘God’ is a composite or portmanteau word for ethical, aesthetic and other values with which we grace the world” (*Wittgenstein on Ethics* 98). Another entry regarding God in *Notebooks* is the simile of father. However, this notion of God as father is not like the Biblical God who is considered a compassionate and loving father. What Wittgenstein has in mind, commentators say, is God as fate or reason for everything that happens. The meaning of the world or meaning of life is God, and meaning is not a being. The relationship between God and meaning of life is that to believe in God means to understand the question about the meaning of life. To believe means to understand that there is more than facts. One can know about God is that this world exists. The world exists is not a fact, but

a feeling that the world is a limited whole (*TLP* 6.4). This belief is not to be considered as normal usage. To believe means to understand the question about the meaning of life, that is to recognize that all possible questions are put into words and answered. The question of the problem of life remains untouched; to see that the facts of the world are not the end of the matter referring to the fact that the answer to the problem of life lies outside the language; to see that life has meaning referring to a feeling of dependency on what lies outside the language – God (provisional name) (Atkinson 132).

Wittgenstein also mentions human powerlessness and dependence on something that is independent of our will, that we may call God or Fate. The givenness of the world and powerlessness to steer the happenings of the world are related. We are masters of our own destiny to a very limited extent. “I cannot steer happenings of the world according to my will, but am entirely powerless. I can make myself independent of the world and then in a certain sense master it only in so far as I renounce any influence on its happenings. The world is *given* to me i.e., my will enters the world entirely from outside as into something already there” (*NB* 73).

The concept of God and belief in God in early Wittgenstein are closely connected to the world as it is and the meaning of life and the sense of the world. God is the one who is transcendent and in a way outside the boundary of language; any attempt to give an account is to run against the boundary of the language. The meaning of life is ethical in that Wittgenstein believes a person who follows the good life is one who lives as the willing subject in the present. Living in the present

means to view the world as *sub specie aeternitatis*. This means to view the world as a limited whole and contemplate this world in this way is mystical (Atkinson 89).

Prayer is conceived as thought about the meaning of life and the sense of the world. This prayer is not the prayer of petition, but philosophical contemplation in which we think about the sense or meaning of the world which lies outside the world of facts. “To pray is to think about the meaning of life” (NB 73). Thought itself is prayer. In other words thinking is praying, thinking how the world is ‘that it is’, is prayer.²⁶ ‘To believe in God is to understand the question of the meaning of life, to see that life has meaning.’ Wittgenstein says further in the *Notebooks*, “To believe in a God means to understand the question about the meaning of life. To believe in a God means to see that the facts of the world are not the end of the matter. To believe in God means to see that life has meaning” (NB 74).

Word and Silence²⁷

“What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence” (TLP 7). The whole of the *Tractatus* is expressed in this concluding proposition. This is the climax of what was elucidated in the *Tractatus*. Commenting on this proposition, McDonough calls this Wittgenstein’s “doctrine of silence” (McDonough 236). What is uttered is word or language, and it is meaningful only when it pictures the reality – the facts or states of affairs. What we can speak is all about the facts in the world.

²⁶ Martin Heidegger insists that thinking is thanking. “As we give thought to what is most thought-provoking, we give thanks.” The thanking man wonders at all ‘that is’. He wonders at the splendor of Being. Man’s privileged relationship to being is more tangibly exercised in his thanking-thinking that ‘shepherds’, ‘houses’ and listening to Being. See Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking* 146.

²⁷ This is taken from the title of a book by Raymond Gawronski, *Word and Silence, Hans Urs von Balthasar and the Spiritual Encounter between East and West*.

Language sets a boundary. Boundary always presupposes two sides: one-side, words and the other side silence; word and silence (Gawronski 1). Wittgenstein has never said and would never have said that metaphysics is nonsense. What he said is that the attempt to say anything at all (in the sense of stating propositions) about what is beyond the world will result in nonsense. Wittgenstein's anti-metaphysical stand is manifested in the preface of *Tractatus* and he criticized the traditional metaphysicians who presented their theses in propositions (Fann 26).

Metaphysics, ethics, and religion belong to the realm of the transcendental, which cannot be said but only *shown*. The whole enterprise of the *Tractatus* is to show what is inexpressible by expressing clearly what can be expressed. Language is used to show the realm where language fails, or word is uttered to show the realm which word cannot represent but only show.²⁸ What is beyond the boundary of language cannot be articulated in words and so needs to be passed over in silence. It is the mystical that *shows* itself. This is very close to the treatment of the mystical in the Eastern religious traditions like Hinduism and Buddhism where the negative way of articulating the ultimate Reality is widely prevalent.²⁹ Though Wittgenstein was in favor of a religion without speech, he didn't rule out the occurrence of speech, which for him is an important religious behavior, not a theory (Creegan 78). He was highly critical about the conceptualization and dogmatization of religious

²⁸ With regard to saying and showing we could make a comparison with Heidegger. Wittgenstein's notion of what can be shown closely parallels what Heidegger puts under the primal *Saying*. It is of a letting-be-seen, always in its 'presenceing.' We are listeners to the primal *Saying*. Both these thinkers express their wonder at existence.

²⁹ The negative description the Ultimate Reality (*neti, neti*) is very well known in India. Moreover Wittgenstein's approach to religion as thoughtless and speechless (mystical) comes very close to the Indian classical approaches. For example, yoga system speaks of *citta virti niroda* - cessation of all mental fluctuations.

experience. Metaphysics and religion are beyond language, and they show themselves. Man wonders that anything exists. That is beyond words, only silence.³⁰

Tractatus ends not with statement about silence but really in silence. The purpose of the book as stated in the preface is to make clear what can be said, and what cannot be said is to be passed over in silence. At the end of the book after making the clear distinction between what can be said and what cannot be said, one transcends the level of language, that is silence, a subject that cannot be predicted.

Conclusion

Early Wittgenstein was very much misunderstood as anti-metaphysical. He was considered one of the leading figures of Logical Positivism, which rejected metaphysics outright as meaningless since Positivists were very much concerned about empirical verification for the meaningfulness of statements. Wittgenstein advocated the correspondence theory of meaning in his early philosophy, but he never rejected metaphysics. His point was that metaphysical statements could not be articulated in propositions, which is the right language for him. The metaphysical statements are not in the category of science. They are outside the boundary of empirical science. He was against the conceptualization and dogmatization of religious beliefs and looking for proofs for the existence of God. For him, all these are outside the boundary of scientific scrutiny. He explicated what is beyond language by the analysis of the relationship among language, thought and reality. What is beyond language is 'the mystical,' which cannot be articulated in words;

³⁰ Word represents the world, and silence represents what is beyond, the mystical. Words are articulation of thoughts about reality. This is an eastern mystical approach where we can see that there is no thinking about reality that it is an experience of simply 'to be.'

religion comes in this realm. What he advocates in his early philosophy is a religion of speechless faith. Wittgenstein does not rule out religious language completely. Speech occurs in religion, but it is a part of religious behavior not as a theory. Wittgenstein would have thought that something ineffably shows itself through religious language; religious language speaks for itself. There is something unutterably contained in what is uttered in religious language. Therefore, the proper language – propositional – cannot be applied to religion. What cannot be said can be seen, since it shows itself? Such is religious language in Wittgenstein's early philosophy.

CHAPTER 3

LANGUAGE-GAME AND RELIGIOUS BELIEF

Abraham Vettiyolil. "Towards a meaningful talk about religion-prospects and problems of Ludwig Wittgenstein's philosophy of religion" Thesis. Department of Philosophy, University of Calicut, 2015

CHAPTER THREE

LANGUAGE-GAME AND RELIGIOUS BELIEF

Introduction

The linguistic analysis of the *Tractatus* results in the picture theory of meaning. The structure of language reveals the structure of reality, for language is founded on the bedrock of reality. We can observe a decisive change in Wittgenstein's philosophical reflection on language and meaning in the later period of his thought. There is a move from a static view of language to a dynamic one as an activity and as grounded upon something other than an independent reality. Also, there is a shift from linguistic form to linguistic function in his transitional period. In his later philosophy, language is not seen as directly referring to reality in itself, but is viewed as an activity within a social context. It is founded on an ungrounded way of action. It is life - form of life - which is not founded on something more fundamental - that is the fundament. Form of life is the ground of language and meaning. The logical form of the *Tractatus* is replaced by form of life that bridges the gap among language, thought and reality. In Wittgenstein's earlier philosophy, we have the image of a bedrock with a stable foundation, but here we have an image of a riverbed with its flexibility. The plurality of languages is not given once and for all, but new language-games come into existence and others may disappear. This change in the theory of meaning in the later period made a tremendous impact on his view of religion and religious beliefs. The distinction of *saying* and *showing* in the early philosophy makes it clear that religion belongs to the realm of *showing* and cannot be expressed. Whatever can be expressed is expressed in propositions.

Propositions express only fact; religious belief is not a fact, therefore inexpressible. Later, under the impact of his new theory of meaning, Wittgenstein changed his views on religion and religious discourses. The meaning of religious propositions is to be understood in the background of the language game and form of life.

This chapter attempts to trace Wittgenstein's understanding of religious belief on the basis of his revised view of language and its functioning. He maintains that religion, religious belief and the meaning of religious statements have to be determined in the background of specific language games and forms of life. For Wittgenstein, the meaning of religious language involves utility within a context. Every word is to be used in its original home to be meaningful (Parmach 114). Therefore, the first part of this chapter deals with his notion of the language game and form of life, and the following section will be an application of these notions to religion and religious belief. The second section will deal directly with the nature of religion and religious belief on the basis of *Philosophical Investigations*, some of Wittgenstein's lectures and notes in this regard. The explicit nature of religious beliefs is outlined on the basis of *Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief*, *Culture and Value*, and *Remarks on Frazer's Golden Bough*. The final section will deal with some meaningful talk about the religious rituals and practices based on the symbolic and expressive nature of religious rituals.

3.1. Language, Action and Situation

Wittgenstein, in his search for meaning, merges the linguistic and extra-linguistic factors together in his later philosophy. The problem of meaning was a

main concern for him throughout his life. The early Wittgenstein is characterized by atomistic determinacy with regard to meaning. The meaning of language is based on the relationship between the name and the object to which it refers. The meaning of language is independent of its context where it is used and by whom it is used. The later Wittgenstein embraces holism with regard to meaning. Accordingly, a word derives its nature and meaning from its place within its network of language (Braver 81). Language is seen against the background of human life, which is in contrast with his early understanding of language, which is purely logical. Atomism gave way to holism in Wittgenstein's later thought. This was made possible through his language-game methodology and idea of form of life. Language is seen as a game in which words are used in different contexts; those uses give rise to different meanings. This gives a more holistic and dynamic vision of language which is placed in the situation of action. This holistic understanding of meaning liberated from the object-meaning bond fundamentally altered the landscape of Wittgenstein's thought.

The Concept of the Language-Game

Wittgenstein's later philosophy and his new theory of meaning are founded on the concept of the language-game. Whatever the genesis of the concept "language game,"³¹ it is introduced first in *The Blue and the Brown Books* and frequently used in most of his later works. It is not, however, an easy task to give an explicit idea of

³¹ Norman Malcolm in his book, *Ludwig Wittgenstein: A Memoir*, narrates an incident that seems to have given rise to the concept of a language-game. One day when Wittgenstein was passing a field where a football game was in progress, the thought first struck him that in language we play *games* with *words*. A central idea of his philosophy, the notion of language-game, apparently had its genesis in this incident. See Malcolm, *A Memoir* 65.

what the language-game is. Wittgenstein did not give any clear exposition of it. The numerous examples given by the author do not explicate the concept, and scholars differ in their views. The language-game could be seen, as an analogy to describe language. In his attempt to describe a complete language, Wittgenstein describes the circumstance of the use for linguistic expressions. To explain what language is, he brings forth the analogy of a game. The game analogy has become a novel technique of philosophical analysis especially in linguistic analysis (Baker and Hacker, *Meaning and Understanding* 51-52).

Can we compare language with a game?³² Though game and language are divergent in many respects, there are some philosophically important points on which they agree. Rules determine a game, and language is determined by its own rules. This can be taken as a starting point in the comparison of language with a game. The meaning of a word is not determined by the object it stands for, but is determined by the rules governing its operation.³³ Sentences are formed out of words according to combinatorial rules, and their use in the speech act is specified by the rules. The use of instruments is another inevitable characteristic of both a game and language. Words are the instruments we use in language. Moreover, the use of different words in different contexts gives rise to different meanings. Therefore, setting is very important for language as for every game; without a setting we cannot play a game. “Like any other game, a language-game is ‘played’ in a setting” (Baker

³² In an interesting study on language and games, J. F. M. Hunter has highlighted the differences and similarities between language and games. He has drawn nine similarities between language and game with some dissimilarity. See Hunter, “Wittgenstein on Language and Games” 293-302.

³³ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Grammar*, ed. Rush Rhees, trans. Anthony Kenny (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1974) 59. The abbreviation *PG* for *Philosophical Grammar* will be parenthetically cited within the text hereafter.

and Hacker, *Meaning and Understanding* 54). The use and purpose, role and function, are important features that play a central role in Wittgenstein's philosophy. The language-game may be defined functionally as follows: "language game is a system of operational rules, which necessarily determines the functions of linguistic signs through the application of the rules."³⁴ This opens up the necessity of looking at the new understanding of meaning, linguistic functions and rule following. Together they present a dynamic picture of language. Wittgenstein has used the language-game in a variety of ways as in *Philosophical Investigations*:

Review the multiplicity of language-game in the following examples, and in others: Giving order, and obeying them, describing the appearance of an object, or giving its measurement, constructing an object from a description (a drawing), reporting an event, speculation about an event, forming and testing a hypothesis, presenting and presenting the results of an experiments in the tables and diagrams, making up a story and reading it, play-acting singing catches, guessing riddles, making a joke; telling it. Solving a problem in practical arithmetic, translating from one language into another, asking, thanking, greetings, praying. (23)

Since language games are used as signs in contexts, there are innumerable kinds of language games depending on the contextual use of words. There can be different kinds of sentences, and the same sentence can have a different meaning in different contexts. Multiple language games can be differently categorized, such as

³⁴ Dan Neshier has compiled this definition out of various statements of *Philosophical Investigations* such as nos. 559, 139-142. See Neshier 55.

pure and impure depending on the content and involvement of factors. In a pure language game, according to Pitcher, Wittgenstein includes pure speech activities such as telling a joke or reporting an event whereas in an impure language game there are some extra-linguistic factors involved such as "builders game." However, the distinction between these two kinds of language games is a matter of degree. Language-games can also be categorized into real and imaginary language games such as the imaginary builders game. They can be religious or non religious language-games. As K. C. Pandey maintains, there is no rigid compartmentalization among these categories, and they can depend on each other. For example, the religious language-game depends on the ordinary language game since the terms and composition of the religious language-game happens in the background of day to day life (*Religious Beliefs* 149).

Wittgenstein, in his later thought, tried to come out of his atomistic thought on meaning to a coherent and holistic understanding of meaning. Frege's idea of the context principle, that words have meaning within a sentence, was an inspiration for Wittgenstein. However, Wittgenstein's holistic understanding of meaning goes far beyond Frege's understanding of breaking the closed system of propositions to a larger and broader setting of cultural practices and social behavior that make up human life. Words find their meaning within their position in the system. Words attain meaning within the language-game against the background of human life (Braver 84). If words are detached from any particular language-game and its background, meaning will change. "A meaning of a word is a kind of employment of it. For it is what we learn when word is incorporated into our language ... when the

language-game changes, then there is a change in concepts, and with the concepts the meaning of words change."³⁵

Meaning as Use

Wittgenstein begins *Philosophical Investigations* with dissatisfaction and shows the inefficiencies of the picture theory meaning (*PI* 1). The one-to-one correspondence between word and object which is the core of the picture theory of meaning has to stop at some point leading to the breakdown of the theory. The relationship between the picture and the object pictured is pre-supposed in this theory through a process of using such relationships. This calls for the need to consider the different uses of linguistic expressions in different context to determine the meaning (K.C. Pandey, *Religious Beliefs* 141). Such a need necessitated a new theory of meaning and varieties of understanding linguistic expressions considering the extra-linguistic factors involved. A coherent theory of meaning as use is presented by Wittgenstein in *Philosophical Investigations* considering the concept of the language-game and form of life.

According to the new theory of meaning, a word has its meaning in its use in language. The use of a word in language determines the meaning. Thinking this way, he introduces a ‘Copernican revolution’³⁶ into analytic philosophy. Wittgenstein defines meaning as follows: “For a *large* class of cases - though not for all - in which we employ the word “meaning,” it can be defined thus: the meaning of

³⁵ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *On Certainty* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1972) 61, 65. Abbreviation *OC* will be parenthetically cited within the text hereafter.

³⁶ Till then meaning is understood as naming or meaning of a proposition as its referent. Now utterance of a word is not simply a reference but a reference for a purpose. The word has a function to do. Meaning does not depend either on external object or on internal object.

a word is its use in the language” (PI 43). Actually, the way in which a particular word is used in language explicates the meaning of that word, rather than the referent determining the meaning. Wittgenstein states in *Philosophical Investigations*, “Let the use of words teach you their meaning” (PI 220). The use of a word gives its meaning. “Use of a word in *practice* is its meaning.”³⁷ Use is very much connected with practice. It is a matter of training. Every sign in itself is dead; it is use that gives life to it. “Every sign *by itself* seems dead. *What* gives it life? – In use it is *alive*. Is life breathed into it there? – Or is the *use* its life?” (PI 432). Meaning and use are two inseparable aspects of words. Words are used in a multiplicity of ways in different language-games (Hanfling 43). In Wittgenstein’s later philosophy, the theory of meaning is very pragmatic. For him, the meaning of an expression is determined by its role in the language-games, and language-games are linguistic activities. This position is very close to the pragmatic view that meaning is primarily a property of behavior (Haack, “Wittgenstein's Pragmatism” 64). Thus it is the use not the reference that determines the meaning of words and sentences in language. “The use of a word in such a case is like the use of a piece in a game, and you cannot understand the use of a queen unless you understand the use of the other pieces. What you do with one sort of piece is intelligible only in terms of what you do with it in relation to what is done with the other pieces” (Wittgenstein, *Conversations 1949-1951* 41). The meaning of a queen in a chess game is not contained in the wooden piece out of which it is made; however, the queen as part of a chess game derives its meaning from its context and its

³⁷ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Preliminary Studies for the “Philosophical Investigations” Generally Known as The Blue and Brown Books* (New York: Harper & Row, 1960) 69. The abbreviation *BBB* for *the Blue and Brown Books* will be parenthetically cited within the text hereafter.

relationship with other pieces on the chess board. Wittgenstein's holistic understanding of meaning goes beyond a single movement of a piece in a chess game to the consideration of the thoughts and emotions of the one who makes the move. "Every significant word or symbol must essentially belong to a system, and the meaning of a word is its place in a grammatical system" (*PO* 51). Each part of the language-game is interdependent with other aspects; they cannot retain meaning outside their proper context. One cannot use a word that is valid in one language-game in another language-game where it will not belong. "Someone who idealizes falsely must talk nonsense-because he uses a mode of speaking that is valid in one language-game in another one where it doesn't belong" (qtd. in Braver 86).

Language as a Communicative Tool

In Wittgenstein's conception, language is an activity involving the use of words as communicative tools. Language is compared to a toolbox with different instruments for different purposes and usage:

They are more or less akin to what in ordinary language we call games. Children are taught their native language by means of such games, and here they even have the entertaining character of games. We are not, however, regarding the language games which we described as incomplete parts of a language, but as language complete in themselves, as a completed system of human communication. (*BBB* 81)

He emphasizes the pragmatic aspect of meaning. Language is a game in which words are used in different ways; to understand the use means to understand the rules of use, "... the essence of language - its function" (*PI* 92). The essence of language or the meaning is not in its reference but lies in the function which the word has to perform.³⁸ He explains it with an example:

Language is meant to serve for communication between a builder A and an assistant B. A is building with building-stones: there are blocks, pillars, slabs and beams. B has to pass the stones and that in the order in which A needs them. For this purpose they use a language consisting of the words "block", "pillar", "slab", "beam", A calls them out; B brings the stone which he has learnt to bring as such-and-such a call. (*PI* 2)

We can imagine this language as the language of the tribe of builders. Children of this tribe will be acculturated into it, and it will be used within the context of building activity (McGinn, *Wittgenstein and Philosophical Investigations* 41). A word has a function to perform other than the reference. The fusion of language and action can be seen in the concept of the language-game. "I shall also call the whole, consisting of language and the actions into which it is woven, the "language-game" (*PI* 7). Action, therefore, lies at the bottom of the language-game.

³⁸ According to the picture theory of meaning logical form is the essence of meaningful language. Here we may notice a major shift from logical form to performance which has gained predominance in his later understanding of language.

Language as Rule-Bound Activity

The puzzling question that emerges from Wittgenstein's account of the language-game as a rule-bound activity is the possibility of individual freedom. Wittgenstein considers language as rule governed institution. However, he never defined institution, custom or convention. Considering the example of a sign post as an example of following a rule, Wittgenstein denied a merely causal account of following a rule. We have been trained to react in certain ways to such signs, and we do act and a person goes by a sign post only in-so-far as there exists a regular use of a sign-post, a custom (*PI* 198). Therefore, a custom implies regular use and excludes a single isolated experience of single individuals.³⁹

Wittgenstein, in his later thought, sought the essence of language, in terms of its function and use in contrast to his earlier concept of logic as the essence of language. "The strict and clear rules of the logical structure of propositions appear to us as something in the background – hidden in the medium of understanding" (*PI* 102). Against this understanding, he later explores, "We are talking about the spatial and temporal phenomenon of language, not about some non-spatial, non temporal phantasm" (*PI* 108). There is no essence transcending the existence of actual spacio-temporal language that is spoken and written. There is no ideal conceptual essence of language that determines the ordinary language. In Wittgenstein's language-game, a rule is not something abstract that influences and determines every human action. However, rules are very much embedded with human action, and to a certain

³⁹ See Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics III* ed. G.H. Von Wright, R. Rhees and G. E. M. Anscombe, (London: Basil Blackwell, 1978) 21. The abbreviation *RFM* will be parenthetically cited within the text hereafter.

extent they cannot be separated. He holds an anti-essentialist position here. His entire philosophical career is not to dig out the transcendent essence of language but to explore the real existence of ordinary language permeated in the very life of humans.⁴⁰

As a game is identified by its rules, so is language. To play a game properly we should know the rules of the game and be able to use them accordingly. The rules can be understood by constant practice. So, one learns language by the constant use of words according to the rules of the language. Children learn language by a process of using words that can be called a game, a language-game, "... teaching of language is not an explanation but training" (*PI* 5). Learning these rules is a matter of training, of acquiring a skill. "To understand a language means to be master of a technique" (*PI* 199). Language is an activity which involves a process of using words. Interestingly, Wittgenstein compares language to a chess game. Words are used in language as we use pieces of wood in the chessboard. Here words are like tools which can be used in various ways. To learn to move in chess means to know the rules of moving; similarly, the use of language requires the knowledge of the rules in language, which is gained by practice (Cell 148-149). Our knowledge is based on the bedrock of social practices.

In his theory of meaning, Wittgenstein distinguishes surface grammar and depth grammar. "In the use of word one might distinguish 'surface grammar' from

⁴⁰ The idea of importance to existence rather than essence is also to be noted in his understanding of family resemblance – on essence of games transcending the existence of actual games; ostensive definition,- "an ostensive definition can be variously interpreted in every case" (*PI* 28) meaning and use etc.

‘depth grammar’” (PI 664). The syntactic aspect of meaning is referred to as surface grammar and the semantic and pragmatic aspects are seen as depth grammar. "Every significant word or symbol must essentially belong to a system," and ... the meaning of a word is its "place" in a grammatical system" (PO 51). The meaning of words is determined by the system where it belongs. Words which make up language not only belong to the grammatical system but also to the extra-linguistic system constituted by its cultural and social backgrounds.

Language as Dynamic and Institutional

Language is a social activity or institution like a game. Like any other activity language too evolves. “Commanding, questioning, recounting, chatting are as much a part of our natural history as walking, eating, drinking, playing” (PI 25). Therefore, Wittgenstein affirms a multiplicity of language-games, which are not fixed but keep changing.

But many kinds of sentences are there? Say assertion, question, and command? – There are countless kinds: *countless* different kinds of use of what we call “Symbols”, “Words”, “Sentences”. And the multiplicity is not something fixed, given once for all; but new types of language, new language games, as we may say, come into existence, and others become obsolete and get forgotten. (PI 23)

This rightly points to the dynamic nature of language. In fact, nothing is immune to change in language. This linguistic dynamism has far-reaching implications, at least in epistemology and in the philosophy of religion.

Language as a rule-bound activity has an institutional character. To enter into a rule-bound activity means to accept certain ways of doing things. Meaning is not reduced to the individual realm. Wittgenstein's refutation of private language points to the community character of language. There is a public, objective criterion for the correct use of words. The meaning of words does not rest upon the mental phenomena or the private realm of thought; rather, it is a patterned use embodied in the language-games. "To understand a sentence means to understand a language. To understand a language means to be master of a technique" (*PI* 199). In order that humans agree in the language they use, they all must use the same language that is closely connected to their way of life. The meaning of a word does not exclusively belong to its use by an individual but to the historical community that uses it. Individuals are not free to interpret the rules. "Meaning is protected from individual caprice by the social training into which individuals are initiated, by conformity to a rule that is an institution, and by the fact that a word is one of a complex system of signs whose parts cannot be altered from moment to moment at the individual's liberty" (Conway 38).

Wittgenstein's discussion on the rules and rule-following raises certain questions such as constitutive, regarding grasping and communitarian aspects. Regarding the constitutive question what constitutes the rule, Wittgenstein rejects the traditional answers of *Platonism* and *Constructivism*⁴¹ regarding rules. For

⁴¹ According to the Platonism of rules, there is an absolutely objective fact about which way of going on from the initial steps in a mathematical series is the correct continuation and an absolutely objective standard of what it is to go on using a given descriptive word in the same way as before. Those standards are dictated by the nature of reality. On the other hand, according to constructivists, there is absolutely no objective standard of what counts as continuing a series correctly because there are indefinite number of possibilities and none of which is absolutely better than the other. What makes the continuing series is the step we make and it is determined by us. It is constructed from the step we actually make. As regards the descriptive words it is constructed from the application we actually make. See Child 123.

Wittgenstein, rules and standards of correctness are basic features of our practices. Following a rule is fundamental to the language game (Child 316).

In grasping a rule and following it, Wittgenstein holds an anti-intellectual view; that is, I do not consult anything that tells me how to apply the rule. I simply do what comes naturally, given my training: I obey the rule blindly (*PI* 21), as a matter of course (*PI* 238), without reason (*PI* 211). When I follow a rule there is no intellectual application involved. I simply act in an appropriate way. Though it is a blind activity, it has a pattern and regularity. Following a rule is practice (*PI* 202). Rule-following as a practice involves an action of using apart from its regularity and pattern. Rule-following is not an isolated individual activity; it requires a definite context. Wittgenstein remarked that "What in a complicated surrounding, we call following a rule" we should certainly not call that if it stood in isolation" (qtd. in Child 136).⁴²

Following a rule is 'a practice,' 'a custom' (*PI* 202, 199), according to Wittgenstein. However, there are different interpretations regarding the communal or social nature of this practice. According to the communal interpretation of rule-following, individuals cannot follow rules in isolation. The standard rationale for the community requirement for rule-following is that it provides a standard of correctness by reference to which the individual can continue the practice or usage. In contrast to this communal interpretation, some commentators argue that practice by an individual can give the required regularity and context without the involvement of the community. "We could imagine human beings who spoke only

⁴² See Wittgenstein, *Wittgenstein's Lectures on the Foundations of Mathematics* 335.

in monologue, who accompanied their activities by talking to themselves - An explorer who watched them and listened to their talk might succeed in translating their language into ours" (*PI* 243). In the general context of Wittgenstein, one could conclude that there is a communal context in which a rule is followed. The paradigmatic instance of a rule is that it involves human dealings for Wittgenstein. In those cases, there is interaction between different people. This does not mean that an individual can give himself some rules to regulate his life (Child 145-146).

In Wittgenstein's later philosophy, the theory of meaning is pragmatic. For him, the meaning of an expression is constrained by its role in the language-games, and language-games are linguistic activities. This position is very close to the pragmatic view that meaning is primarily a property of behavior (Haack 164). Meaning is not determined by the referent but by the grammatical rules and their usage. In other words, rule and rule-following determine the meaning. Meaning is not something abstract that determines the use of a word in a particular context; rather, it is the use of a word in a particular context that determines the meaning of a word. Meaning is not something abstract but embodied in the concrete use of language. There is no intermediary between meaning and use; there is no gap between meaning and the use of language.

Individuals cannot design and obey rules privately. Meaning does not depend upon its use by an isolated individual, but by individuals who belong to a historical community. The rules and interpretations are guarded by the rules and the historical community of users. Individual freedom is restricted by the responsible historical community. The individual is not free to choose radically different conventions and

rules. Language as a communicative tool is made possible only by some agreement among the members of the community of users. This agreement is very much in the life of the members of the community rather than in their opinions and definitions. This is not contextualism; linguistic systems are grounded upon something more fundamental - human life. Language games get meaning from life; human activities are woven into the fabric of language (McGinn, *Wittgenstein and the Philosophical Investigations* 110).

The Concept of Family Resemblance

The pluralistic nature of language is implied in Wittgenstein's exploration of meaning through the analogy of the game. Uses of words vary in language and in different contexts give rise to different language-games. Is it absurd to ask what are their common characteristics or what is the essence of the language-game or language? What exists between them is a sort of similarity. Wittgenstein uses the word game to bring out the type of similarity he has in mind:

Consider for example the proceedings we call "games." I mean board-games, card-games, ball-games, Olympic games, and so on. What is common to them all? – Don't say: "There *must* be something common, or they would not be called 'games' " – but rather *look and see* whether there is anything common to all. – For if you look at them you will not see something that is common to *all*, but similarities and relationships and a whole series of them at that. (*PI* 66)

Since these similarities and relationships form families of games, it is called *family resemblance*. “I can think of no better expression to characterize these similarities than 'family resemblances' for the various resemblances between members of a family: build, features, colour of eyes, gait, temperament, etc. overlap and criss-cross in the same way. –And I shall say: ‘games’ form a family” (*PI* 67). We cannot find anything general or common to all games, whereas games form a family, members of which have family likeness. It is the network of similarities that enable us to call them games (Baker and Hacker, *Wittgenstein Meaning and Understanding* 191). One game does not exhaust the entire meaning of the word game.

As with games, there is nothing common to language or language-games. "I am saying that these phenomena have no one thing in common which makes us use the same word for all,- but that they are related to one another in many different ways" (*PI* 65). The similarities existing among them enable us to call them “games.” Looking at the surface grammar we are tempted to say that these language-games are the same and have the same meaning and function. However, these language-games are divergent and have different functions to perform. This diversity is brought out by the notion of family resemblance. This is a very crucial, central and challenging aspect of Wittgenstein’s philosophy; it contrasts sharply with the older essentialist position.⁴³

⁴³ It is crucial in Wittgenstein’s attack on essentialism – the view that there must be something common to all instances of a concept that explains why they fall under it. It is central to a pluralistic approach which is well appreciated today and it is challenging because it is against the common tendency of looking for essence and generality.

Autonomy of the Language-Game

Based on the diversity of language-games and the categorization of these language-games governed by their own rules and regulations and situated in their own context, it may be assumed that language-games are autonomous. An ordinary game is considered as complete in itself and governed by its own rules and is self contained. However, language-games, in the strict sense, are not autonomous. A builder's game, for example, cannot be described as autonomous since they may use other words to convey their emotions, intentions and desires. Based on the categories of language-games such as primitive and complex, impure and pure, real and imaginary, and ordinary and religious language-games, autonomy can be applied to the first set of language-games. The second set of language-games derives its elements from the first set of language-games; therefore, they can claim only a restricted or limited autonomy. For example, a religious language-game, which is of prime concern later in this chapter, cannot claim a complete autonomy, but only a restricted autonomy (K.C. Pandey, *Religious Beliefs* 150). A religious language-game gets its meaning by depending on the ordinary linguistic discourse that is part of human activity. The innumerable language-games, having some similarities, are not totally cut off from each other. They have limited or restricted autonomy in the sense that the language-game is related to other aspects of life. The dependence of language games can be better understood with the notion of form of life. The relationship between the language-game and form of life explains the concept of restricted the autonomy of language-games.

The Foundation of Language

The quest for a foundation or ground is universal in philosophical enterprises. Wittgenstein, himself, in his search for the foundation of language, argued that the difficulty is to realize the groundlessness of believing. At the foundation of well-grounded belief is the belief that is not grounded (*OC* 166). Here is an attempt to find "the ground"- which is groundless - of meaning and thereby beliefs in Wittgenstein's thought. In contrast with his picture theory of meaning which explained the relation between language and world through a single logical form, Wittgenstein has moved toward an activity-based account of meaning in *Philosophical Investigations*. The metaphor of the language-game is connected with forms of life. The metaphor of language-games signifies a specific linguistic context within which words move. Words taken out of their particular context have no meaning or life. It is the context that gives life to words or signs. "The sign (the sentence) gets its significance from the system of signs, from the language to which it belongs ... As a part of the system of language, one may say the sentence has life" (*BBB* 5). The concept of form of life is central to Wittgenstein's later thought since context and situation play a central role in the determination of the meaning of words. Baker and Hacker define form of life in the commentary of *Philosophical Investigations* as follows:

A given unjustified and unjustifiable pattern of human activity. ... It rests upon, but is not identical with, very general pervasive facts of nature. It consists of shared natural and linguistic responses, of broad

agreement in definitions and judgments and of corresponding behavior. (*An Analytical Commentary* 48)

Words instead of picturing reality have meaning through contextual employment in linguistic and non-linguistic settings. Words and propositions are not autonomous, and they cannot be divorced from their native surroundings. The linguistic and nonlinguistic horizon of meaning is to be taken into consideration in the determination of meaning (Schulte 108). The concept appears five times in *Philosophical Investigations*:

- (1) “It is easy to imagine a language consisting only of orders and reports in battle... And to imagine a language means to imagine a form of life” (19).
- (2) “Here the term “language game is meant to bring into prominence the fact that the speaking of language is part of an activity, or of a form of life (23).
- (3) “So you are saying that human agreement decides what is true and what is false” - it is what human being *say* that is true and false; and they agree in the *language* they use. That is not agreement in opinion but in form of life (241).
- (4) Can only those hope who can talk? Only those who have mastered the use of a language. That is to say the phenomena of hope are modes of this complicated form of life (p.174).
- (5) “What has to be accepted, the given, is - so one could say – forms of life” (p. 226).

Since Wittgenstein never defines this concept, it is open to various interpretations. J. F. M. Hunter gives four possible interpretations:⁴⁴ The first one is that form of life is identical with the language-game. The second is that form of life is a sort of package of mutually related tendencies to behave in various ways: to have certain facial expressions and make certain gestures. The third and fourth are cultural and biological ones that are in support of human freedom.

The prominent account of form of life is the organic and biological interpretation. "The form of life is something typical of a living being; it is typical in the sense of being very broadly in the same class as the growth of living organisms or as the organic complexity which enables them to propel themselves or to react in complicated ways to their environment" (Hunter, "Forms of Life" 224). Language – teaching is a trial and error process, fitting to the needs and difficulties of each individual. This process involves all kinds of tactics and devices and they are designed to mold and guide him until he uses an expression the way we do. The molding and shaping process is to be conceived as that of training an organism. It is like teaching a person to dance. "For here I am looking at learning German as adjusting a mechanism to respond to certain kind of influence" (*PI* 495). This process as a kind of training (for example in *PI* nos. 6, 189, 208, 630) and emphasis on the practice serve to link language-acquisition to learning a dance which is a matter of conditioning of the organism to respond in complex and artful ways (*PI* 208).

⁴⁴ This concept is developed from Hunter who gives possible interpretations about Wittgenstein's views on form of life. See Hunter, "Forms of Life" 223-243.

Wittgenstein also comments on learning correct judgments. It does not matter what the system is; what is important is that the system should result in correct judgments. To learn correct judgments means to learn to perform correctly (*PI* 227). Wittgenstein explains this in the following way: “So you are saying that human agreement decided what is true and false. It is what human beings say that is true and false; and they agree in the language they use. That is not agreement in opinion but in the form of life” (*PI* 241). Human agreement is the part of the framework on which the workings of our language are based, and such, human agreement is nothing but agreement in the form of life. “If language is to be a means of communication, there must be agreement not only in definition but also in judgment” (*PI* 242). According to Wittgenstein, agreement in reaction is a precondition for the possibility of the language-game. “The phenomenon of hope is a mode of this complicated form of life” (*PI* 174). He also speaks of grief, joy, anger, fright and unhappiness as modes of forms of life.

To emphasize the importance of the agreement of form of life as the presupposition for the working of the language game as a means of communication, Wittgenstein speculates, “If a lion could talk, we could not understand him” (*PI* 223). What makes it impossible for us to understand the lion’s language is the difference in the forms of life. Human beings do not share the same form of life with the lion. Naturally, they have different ways of acting, reacting, behaving and if possible, judging and they rest on the biological constitution of lion. Here Wittgenstein implicitly concludes that form of life is rooted in the biological constitution.

The fact that human beings can learn languages other than their own native language also points to the fact that learning other languages requires the agreement in the forms of life among the different linguistic communities. Since cultural forms of life are different among different linguistic communities, it is the primordial form of life that is common and makes language learning possible. It is the biological common constitution which makes human beings one species and serves as the foundation for modes of acting, reacting, behaving, and judging.

Another possible interpretation is cultural as something that is accepted by all, as it is given, as our culture and traditions are given to us. Sometimes Wittgenstein speaks of natural history referring to form of life. He explains, “Commanding, questioning, chatting, are as much a part of our natural history as walking, eating, drinking, and playing” (*PI* 25). Other references are “common behavior of mankind” (*PI* 106), “culture” (*Zettel* 164), customs and institutions which explicate the concept of form of life in his philosophy. The cultural form of life is a mode of reaction and judging that is created within a certain cultural setting. Those modes by which we see things and react in a certain way can change with different implicit or explicit social trainings. “What is to be accepted, the given, is - one could say – form of life” (*PI* 226).

In Wittgenstein’s notion of form of life, there are two different aspects, namely primordial and cultural. The primordial aspect of form of life is one that is rooted in the biological constitution of human beings and that is universal to all and non-arbitrary. The cultural aspect of form of life is such that it is the one created by the members of a certain cultural community and that it is variant and arbitrary with

different cultural communities. Words, instead of picturing reality, have meaning through contextual employment, through linguistic and non-linguistic settings. Words and propositions are not autonomous, and they cannot be divorced from their native surroundings. These linguistic and nonlinguistic horizons of meaning are to be taken into consideration in the determination of meaning. In the actual use of language, it is necessary to take nonlinguistic circumstances into account. These nonlinguistic factors and structures are "groundless grounds." Though it is groundless, it functions as the ground for much of our thinking and speaking (Braver 11).

Relationship between the Language-Game and Form of Life

Though we cannot consider the language-game and form of life as identical, they are closely connected.⁴⁵ "And to imagine a language means to imagine a form of life" (*PI* 19). We cannot conclude from this statement that language means form of life. A possible interpretation would be that we cannot imagine a language outside the framework of human activities in which that language is used. An extra linguistic involvement in linguistic affairs is explicated by the notion of form of life. "The main focus of his interest was the connection between linguistic expressions and habitual actions – that is, actions hardly noticed because they seem so natural" (Schulte 108-09). Language is developed in human context, which becomes so natural, that it is not noticed.

⁴⁵ Manuel Rebeiro, after having made an analysis of the texts regarding form of life and language games in Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*, reached the conclusion that both these concepts are in no way same. However there exists an undeniable deeper connection between them. See Rebeiro 200.

Language-games are interconnected with daily life and the activities of humans. In order to name something to be a language-game or language there should be a connection between the linguistic expressions and action. "Here the term "language-game" is meant to bring into prominence the fact that the *speaking* of language is a part of an activity, or of a form of life" (*PI* 23). The use of words or the uttering of words itself is a part of an activity. Every utterance taken out of its home has no meaning, or in other words utterance is part of an activity or way of life in which it is housed (Sutherland 296). The link between the concept of the language-game and the kinds of usage is clear from examples like giving orders, asking, thanking etc. Every activity that strikes us as natural goes to shape our form of life and our language (Schulte 109).

Language-games are linguistic, but form of life is a non-linguistic aspect of language. Language-games are woven into the non-linguistic aspect. A language-game cannot be cut off from form of life. The use of language is done in the background of form of life. Thus to imagine a language is to imagine a form of life (*PI* 7 and 19). Members of any community are guided by some sort of agreement among themselves because of form of life. Form of life makes it possible to behave in a particular way, taking into account different aspects of life. It naturally involves all aspects of life. Thus Wittgenstein in *Philosophical Investigations* claims that: "It is what human beings say that is true and false; and they agree in the *language* they use. That is not agreement in opinions but in form of life" (241). Therefore, the language-game and form of life in Wittgenstein's thought are inevitably bound together.

Understanding and Participation

Rules and interpretations are grounded on conventions and customs of using the language in which we are trained. Language becomes meaningful only when we share the common form of life or certain customs and conventions. The agreement in form of life gives the foundation for meaningful language. Within the patterned framework, particular linguistic activities emerge. We should agree in some fundamental orientations. Form of life, which is the common framework of all activity, is the ultimate basis of all linguistic communication and understanding. “The common behavior of mankind is the system of reference by means of which we interpret an unknown language” (*PI* 206). We start not with words but with actions or reactions. Participation in a certain form of life is needed for understanding a language. Understanding a language means to master the rules or techniques that are embedded in a certain form of life; therefore, participation in the form of life is fundamental in understanding language.⁴⁶ Wittgenstein in *Philosophical Investigations* contrasts the human form of life with other forms of life. Therefore understanding is a matter of sharing a common form of life. In Wittgenstein’s later philosophical analysis, language is an activity within the human context. The meaningfulness of language consists in its use in different situations.

Understanding the language-game as system in the background of form of life in Wittgenstein's thought calls for the possibility of understanding, criticizing

⁴⁶ This participation is that which enables us to understand a language. It raises a serious question regarding translation from one language to another. Quine comes with radical indeterminacy of translation and doubts whether sentences of a language rooted in a culture radically different from our own will have enough similarity to sentences of our own language to permit a meaningful translation. We understand the meaning of sentences only when we understand their systematic use by the speaker of the language in various contexts. The more we participate in the form of life the more will be the accuracy of translations. See Bolton 329.

and justifying the language game. As we have seen earlier, the language game with its autonomy in a limited sense can be understood better by participating in the form of life which helps people to behave in certain ways, language-game with its own rules and patterns based on the life of the community can be internally justified and admits self criticism. 'Justifications are internal to particular language-games. Hence criticizing a language-game from the outside can never be a matter of rational argument, but only of persuasion' (*OC* 92, 262, 608-12).⁴⁷

Now, Wittgenstein's position regarding the meaningfulness of religious language and religious belief is to be examined.

3.2. Implications for Religious Belief

Wittgenstein never gave an exhaustive philosophical analysis of religious belief. However, his philosophy, especially the concepts of language-games and forms of life, has a bearing on religious belief. Here we try to understand the implications of his later philosophy for religious belief. This is done from two angles: one, from the changed understanding of philosophy and the other, from the revised view of the meaning of language. The central focus here will be the distinct language game of religious beliefs.

New Understanding of Philosophy and its Implications for Religious Belief

The nature, task and methods of philosophy are major concerns in both phases of Wittgenstein's thought. Philosophy, Wittgenstein understands, has a prescriptive function in his early philosophy. In the *Tractatus*, he describes the

⁴⁷ See K. C. Pandey, *Religious Beliefs, Superstitions and Wittgenstein* 156.

function of philosophy as follows: “Philosophy aims at the logical clarification of thoughts” (*TLP* 4.112). “It must set limits to what can be thought; and, in doing so, to what cannot be thought. It will signify what cannot be said, by presenting clearly what can be said” (*TLP* 4.114-5). Here the role of philosophy seems to be more prescriptive. It prescribes what we can say, what we cannot say. However, in his later philosophy there is a drastic change in his approach to philosophy. Here, the role of philosophy is to describe the actual use of language. “Philosophy may in no way interfere with the actual use of language; it can in the end only describe it. For it cannot give it any foundation either. It leaves everything as it is” (*PI* 124). “Philosophy is conceived as a battle against the bewitchment of our intelligence by means of language” (*PI* 109). “What is your aim in philosophy? – To show the fly the way out of the fly-bottle” (*PI* 309). So philosophy has a therapeutic function. Language consists of multiple uses, each with its own grammar or rules of use. By ‘grammar’ here Wittgenstein means not surface grammar but depth grammar. Confusion and puzzlement occur when we use the grammar of one language for another. “Language trespasses its limits or ‘goes on holiday,’ when particular expressions are used outside their proper domain or range of application” (Stanesby 163). When rules are broken, philosophical problems and puzzles arise; it is solved when the order is restored. This is done by describing the proper use of language in its proper contexts where it gains its meaning. Different theories are viewed as different therapies, and each medicine is useful and fruitful in its specific context.

Since the task of philosophy is to describe the actual use of language, and since no one can deny that religious language is used, the task of the philosophy of

religion is to describe the actual use of language in religion. It never enters into the actual use of religious language, but it describes the use of religious language by the believer. It does not prescribe what should be religious language, but it leaves the different language uses of the believer as it is. Religion has a therapeutic function as does philosophy. Different religious traditions are different therapies; each one tries to use it in specific context and gain its meaning.⁴⁸

New Theory of Meaning and its Implications for Religious Belief

In Wittgenstein's earlier philosophy, religion and religious belief became nonsensical by the introduction of the concept of the boundary of language, since any attempt to articulate what is beyond the boundary of language is nonsensical. According to the picture theory of meaning, a proposition is meaningful only when it pictures the facts of the world. In religious language, there is nothing to picture; therefore, it becomes nonsensical. However, in his later philosophy, Wittgenstein had a totally different understanding of meaning, which he expounded with the analogy of the language-game and the notion of forms of life. Understanding of language is seen as understanding the rules according to which it is used in specific contexts. As we have seen in the previous section, meaning arises from the use of words in contexts. "For a *large* class of cases - though not for all - in which we employ the word 'meaning' it can be defined thus: the meaning of a word is its use in the language" (*PI* 43). Let us see some of the implications of this the new theory of

⁴⁸ This function will be more clarified when we deal with the functionary nature of religious belief – life guiding role of religious belief – in the next section. We shall also see the implications of Wittgenstein's revised understanding of philosophy for theology under the title "Theology as Grammar."

meaning – meaning as use – that is in sharp contrast with Wittgenstein's earlier understanding of meaning as picture.

Variety of Uses

Meaning understood as use allows a variety of uses in different circumstances. Language is not one tool serving one purpose but a collection of tools serving a variety of purposes (Wittgenstein, *Zettel* 322). The multiplicity of the language uses legitimize religious language. Wittgenstein enlists the multiplicity of language-games people play in his *Philosophical Investigations*, which includes religious belief as a language-game among others.

Giving orders, and obeying them– Describing the appearance of an object, or giving its measurements– Constructing an object from a description (a drawing)– Reporting an event– speculating about an event– Forming and testing a hypothesis– Presenting the results of an experiment in tables and diagrams– making up a story; and reading it– play-acting– Signing catches– Guessing riddles– Making a joke; telling it– Solving a problem in practical arithmetic– translating from one language into another– asking, thanking, cursing, greeting, praying. (23)

Though these examples do not explain what a language game is, they describe the various situations in which people use language. Religious belief is one among them. It describes how scientific – forming and testing a hypothesis, etc., is distinguished from religious – thanking, praying, greeting, etc. This helps us to see

religious belief as a language-game and to look for the sense of religious belief within the language-game itself. This does not imply that some particular activities are exclusively attached to certain language-games. Since it is the actual use of words according to the rules in a specific context which gives rise to meaning and sense, the sense of religious belief is to be sought only within that particular context and rules. How religious belief is used and where it is used determine the sense of religious belief as a language-game. Meaning depends very much on the *weltanschauung* – a way of looking at the world. It is the worldview that determines the criteria of meaning. Language is used differently according to the worldview of the people (Miller 130).

The sense and nonsense of propositions depend on the boundary, which is set by language in the *Tractatus*. Any attempt to go beyond the boundary of language will result in nonsense. It is the limit of language that divides *sense* from *nonsense*. As Alan Keightley rightly points out: “In *Tractatus*, nonsense appeared by crossing of the external boundary. In *Philosophical Investigations*, nonsense is produced by crossing an internal boundary without crossing it completely” (56). In his later philosophy, Wittgenstein radically re-drew the map of language. So it is sensible to speak of religious belief as a particular language-game. Logic is found within the internal boundary of language game. The sense and nonsense are found in the actual use of language in the different contexts of our lives. Religious beliefs and assertions make sense only in so far as they do not attempt to cross the boundary of that particular language-game. Thus, the multiple use of language legitimizes not only

religious language but also the variety of religious languages. This also raises some difficulties that will be discussed in the next chapter.

Language-Game and Form of Life

Though the two important concepts of the language game and form of life cannot be identified, there exists an affinity between them. As we have seen in the previous section, language cannot be imagined outside the human context. Meaning is rooted in the context of human activity. Speaking of language is part of human activity. When this theory of meaning is applied to religion, the meaning of religious language is seen to be rooted in religious practices. The treatment of religious belief, as a distinctive language-game, takes for granted religion as a form of life, which Wittgenstein never identified though he is very close to it when he said, “Why shouldn’t one form of life culminate in an utterance of belief in a Last Judgement?”⁴⁹ What is important, as basis, is form of life for Wittgenstein. For he says, “only in the stream of thought and life do words have meaning” (*Zettel* 173). “A smiling mouth smiles only in a human face” (*PI* 583). The significance of something depends on the surroundings. Religious belief has meaning within the surroundings of religion.⁵⁰ We have a belief only in the background of a system of beliefs. That system of beliefs is what we call religion, which has become so natural by way of practice. Wittgenstein cites that it is the practice which gives words their life. “Practice gives the words their sense” (*CV* 85). Therefore, a sense of religious

⁴⁹ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief*, Cyril Barrett ed., (Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1970) 58. The abbreviation *LC* will be parenthetically cited within the text here after.

⁵⁰ George A. Lindbeck argues that one can have a religion before one must have a religious experience. See Lindbeck 37-38. Cited in Sommerville 595.

belief comes from use, not from assertions. Religious belief is grounded on religious practices. Therefore, the search for the sense of religious belief leads to the discussion of the situation in which it is used and how it is used and practiced.

Social Character of the Language-Game

As we have seen in the previous section, language by its very nature is communal. In Wittgenstein's later philosophy language is meaningful when a historical community uses it. The individual is initiated into training by which he learns to use the language according to the rules and understand its meaning. Thus, he masters the technique of understanding. Wittgenstein views a child learning its mother tongue as a language-game. "We can also think of the whole process of using words in as one of those games by means of which children learn their native language. I will call these games "language-games" and will sometimes speak of a primitive language as a language-game" (*PI* 7). The application of the language-game to religious belief calls for a rethinking of religious belief. The evolution of belief is something that is part of natural history. Following the rules that determine a game is a matter of mastering the techniques. This mastery is obtained by practice. Religious belief, whatever may be the kind: thanking, greeting, praying, etc., has become a part of life. It has become so natural, so to say unnoticed. "You must bear in mind that the language-game is so to say something unpredictable. I mean: it is not based on grounds. It is not reasonable (or unreasonable) it is there – like our life" (*OC* 559). This does not mean that a particular language-game, for example religious belief, is associated with a definite set of practices. It is true that the language and the associated behavior make the concept intelligible. We start not

with words but with deeds. Wittgenstein quotes from Goethe's *Faust*, "In the beginning was deed" (CV 31). Words are the gradual evolution in the evolution of action or practices. Religious belief taken as a language-game is a matter of mastering through constant training, rather than explanation.

Language-game of Religious Beliefs

Wittgenstein's attempt to illustrate the nature of language by its relation to the language-game and the understanding of language by its proper linguistic uses leads to multiplicity of language-games and varieties of linguistic meanings. The innumerable language-games open up the possibility of considering the distinct language-game of religious beliefs as a form of life.

Wittgenstein did not explicitly argue for the distinct language-game of religious beliefs in his published works. However, the Wittgensteinians such as Norman Malcolm, Rush Rhees, D.Z. Phillips and Peter Winch applied the concept of the language-game to religious beliefs and considered that religious beliefs have their own autonomy within the background of religion. Religious beliefs, as particular language-games, have their own rules and grammar and are used within their boundary of religion. Such a use of language within the religious beliefs is meaningful as a distinct religious language-game. As a distinct language-game, religious beliefs are demarcated from ordinary beliefs and empirical beliefs. They belong to different domains and calls for different meanings and justifications (K.C. Pandey, *Religious Beliefs* 164).

The language-game is the speaking part of the form of life. Form of life is the larger border within which language-games flourish. Religious language is understood as part of religious life. Within the larger setting of religious life and activities, varieties of language games such as praise, worship, prayer and miracles take place. Religious language that is part of religious beliefs is formed in its own rights with its own rules and regulations. Religious beliefs as a distinct language-game and religion as a unique form of life, have their own distinct criteria. Religious beliefs are not subject to any criticism from outside their form of life. In order to understand religious beliefs, one has to partake in the religious form of life. It can be criticized only from within. Religion as a distinct form of life has its own rationality or irrationality criteria. This is normally understood as Wittgensteinian fideism and was present even before Wittgenstein himself had exposed his position on religious beliefs in connection with his later philosophy. Wittgenstein's application of the idea of the language-game and form of life to religious belief and religion comes only later in his *Lectures and Conversations* which we will discuss later.

'Theology as Grammar'

Wittgenstein has used a parenthetical remark in the *Philosophical Investigations* "theology as grammar." This expression is to be understood in the background of his later philosophy of language and grammar that are associated with the concepts of the language-game and form of life. One could observe a development of thought about grammar in Wittgenstein from *Tractatus* to *Philosophical Investigations*. For Wittgenstein, philosophical inquiries are investigations into the grammar of language. Grammar in *Philosophical*

Investigations replaces logical symbolism of *Tractatus*. This change in approach is not a result of a single leap. However, it is a gradual change in the significance of grammar in the construction of *Philosophical Investigations*. The goal of *Tractatus* was to set a limit to language and thought through logical symbolism. Wittgenstein developed a calculus conception of grammar with its autonomy of rules to establish the limits of language and thought in *Philosophical Grammar* and complimented it in *Big Typescript*. He developed an anthropological view of grammar through *The Blue and the Brown Book* to *Philosophical Investigations* (M.L. Engelmann, *Philosophical Development* 1-2).

The concept of grammar is one of the key notions in his later thought. As far as language is concerned, grammar is generally associated with the structure (syntax) of language. However, Wittgenstein uses grammar as associated with meaning (semantics) in his later thought. For him, grammar refers to an investigation of content (semantics) rather than form (syntax). The concept of language and grammar is best understood in relation to the use of language in a particular context (Baker, *Wittgenstein's Method* 60). The concepts of grammar, meaning and use are intimately connected. Grammar describes the use of words, and the use of words bring forth meaning (*PG* 60). As opposed to the *logico-syntactic* use of words of *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein describes use as an activity of speaking with words in the context of extra-linguistic activities. The *Logico-syntactic* use of words is a narrow use of words representing the way a word could or could not combine with other words in the sentence. However, the use of words in a broader understanding concerns the use of words in a particular context. It pertains to the use

of language in the context of various human activities (*PI* 23). Corresponding to the two dimensions of use, Wittgenstein has distinguished two kinds of grammar i.e. surface grammar and depth grammar.

Surface Grammar and Depth Grammar

In *Philosophical Investigations* 664, Wittgenstein describes the distinction between surface grammar and depth grammar. Surface grammar "consists of obvious syntactic features of the sentence and the words of which it is composed" (P. Hacker, *Mind and Will* 434). It is how an expression grammatically appears to be constructed on the basis of paradigmatic cases, whereas "depth grammar can be made evident by a description of the overall use of a relevant expression, by a survey of its combinatorial possibilities and impossibilities of the circumstance of its use and of its consequences" (434). Accordingly, the syntactic form of an expression corresponds to its surface grammar, and depth grammar corresponds to the way an expression is used. Depth grammar is relevant in determining the meaning; therefore, to know the meaning of a word we need to look at its use in a broad range of sentences. Describing the use of an expression or its depth grammar is describing how it can meaningfully combine with other expressions in well formed sentences. Surface grammar represents the syntactical form that different expressions appear to share. Depth grammar represents the aspect of the use of an expression with combinatorial possibilities and impossibilities of words in construction of sentences according to the rules. Wittgenstein's concept of depth grammar emphasizes a wider domain of language use, mainly integration of speech with other human activities. A context-sensitive or occasion-sensitive aspect of language use is taken into consideration in depth grammar (Travis 100). Occasion-

sensitive grammar would specify occasion specific rules for the purpose of a particular occasion of utterance, a correct use of an expression. Syntactic grammar remains the same in two different utterances; however, the occasion-sensitive grammar can vary. Surface grammar is misleading. "And now compare the depth grammar, say of the word "to mean", with what its surface grammar would lead us to suspect. No wonder we find it difficult to know our way about" (*PI* 664). Depth grammar, which is the interest of philosophical investigation, investigates the various occasions in which the word or expression is used meaningfully. Philosophers need to look outside the boundary of the sentence to the way the sentence meshes with our lives (Travis 109).

Surface grammar refers to all the formal grammatical rules and depth grammar refers to the circumstances and relationships that dictate language use (Kripke 96). Depth grammar takes into account the extra-linguistic context where the speaker meaningfully expresses the statement. It expresses everything that accompanies the statements when a certain person approaches and uses them. The subjective aspects of the speaker which are embodied in the meaning of an expression are treated at the level of depth grammar. Surface grammar is only the explicit content and form of a sentence with its grammatical rules whereas depth grammar is the context of an expression's use and the role the sentence plays in the speaker's life. The sentence can have multiplicity of occasion-sensitive grammars depending on the occasion in which it is used. Even though the surface grammar remains the same, occasion-variant grammar may vary due to the change of context. The two different types of grammar identified by Wittgenstein are mainly the grammar that describes the use of words in the context of sentences, and the

grammar that describes the use of words in the context of particular activities on different occasions.

Language, Grammar and Essence

The basic concept of grammar in Wittgenstein is that the rules which govern the use of words constituting meaning. Grammar, in general, is identified with "rules for the use of a word" (*PG* 113). In the analogy of the language-game, Wittgenstein maintains that the rules of a game are the grammar of that game. For example, in the game of chess, its rules permit certain moves and make chess intelligible. Likewise, grammatical rules permit moves in the language and make it meaningful. Grammar consists of a set of rules and that directs the use of language, thereby determining the meaningfulness of the language. The different sets of rules are based on conventions having their basis in the form of life. Grammatical rules are conventional. "Grammar consists of conventions" (*PG* 138). Grammar and the grammatical forms of our speech provide the framework for the use of language in various contexts. These grammatical forms have their origin in conventions. Linguistic rules are given along with the form of linguistic behavior. These rules have no grounds to justify they are given and is like our life. Grammar is not something that is abstract in Wittgenstein's conception. It is very much situated into life and practice. Grammar is not arbitrary (Forster 7). It is there like our life, and we have no choice. "When I obey a rule, I do not choose. I obey the rule blindly" (*PI* 371). Grammatical rules are not arbitrary in the sense that my reason has no role in choosing the rule. It is there like our life and part of our practices. "I have exhausted the justifications. I have reached bedrock and my spade is turned. Then I am inclined to say, This is simply what I do" (*PI* 217). I am acting without justification. "My reason will soon give out. And then I

shall act without reasons" (*PI* 211). Reason and justifications have no place at the normative character of rule following (Williams, *Blind Obedience* 190). However, grammar is arbitrary and autonomous in the sense that it is independent of the reality. Grammatical rules are not justified by the reality and are not accountable to them (P. Hacker, *Will and Mind* 435). Arbitrariness points to the dynamism that grammar constitutes the way we encounter the world.

Grammar is *essential* for Wittgenstein in describing language; an inquiry into the grammar is inquiry into the essence of language. According to Wittgenstein, grammar expresses the essence. "Essence is expressed by grammar" (*PI* 371). Human beings have an inherent "craving for generality" (*BBB* 20) claims Wittgenstein. There is a natural disposition of human beings to seek the essence of things. However, Wittgenstein maintained an anti-essentialist position during the later stage of his philosophy. In *Philosophical Investigations*, he mentions different language games, but nowhere has stated what the essence of a language-game is. There is nothing common to all but only similarities which he portrays as family resemblance (66). Then what does it mean when Wittgenstein claims that grammar expresses essence? How does grammar express essence? He is not holding on to an independent essence in the world in the sense of universals. Language for Wittgenstein, at this stage, has a self-referential nature.⁵¹ He makes it clear that the essence of language, that is, its function and structure, is not hidden from us (*PI* 92).

⁵¹ Heidegger language had a non-metaphysical approach to language. Language is not considered as a tool but the essence of language is in its coming to be. Heidegger's philosophy about language is the *essencing* of language. Language is neither merely an instrument for conveying a prior thought nor a tool for expressing calculative thought. For Heidegger, language is not merely a system of signs subject to the control of human will. Human speech is activated at listening to the speaking of language from the perspective of being. When we are listening to the 'saying' of language we let something to be said to us. "Language is the house of being. In its home, man dwells." See Heidegger, *Basic Writings* 220. We speak in so far as we listen to the speaking of language. We attune to the tune of the primordial saying of Being through language. See Puthenpurackal 221.

It is there in our linguistic practices and activities. Instead of denying reality outside to interact, Wittgenstein claims that reality has no semantic content outside of language. The essence is linked to everyday thoughts and linguistic practices. In Wittgenstein's attempt to liberate language from its metaphysical concept, he brought language back to its original home. "What *we* do is to bring words back from their metaphysical to the everyday use" (*PI* 116). Here Wittgenstein brought back language from the metaphysical to the practical domain. Grammar is not a way of uncovering an essence that is hidden in the use of language; however, grammar itself is the essence. This essence is seen in the language-game and precise varieties of language games. The grammar that expresses the essence is found in the use of language within everyday human existence.

Grammatical rules have both arbitrariness and non-arbitrariness. Grammar is in a sense arbitrary (Forster 21). The arbitrariness of grammar is more associated with the conventional understanding of grammar. It is the grammatical variety that makes grammar arbitrary. These various grammars can be mixed in the utterance of another sentence. If a sentence is grammatically various, its utterance in two different instances have different grammars and utterance of the same in a third context may have an indeterminate grammar between the earlier utterances. Therefore it is difficult to prescribe a unique grammar for each utterance. Language can be grammatically fluid since certain grammar can change over the course of time (Citron, "Simple Objects" 22). "Language-game does change with time" (*OC* 256). This change takes place at the level of concept formation. "If I have made the transition from one concept-formation to another, the old concept is still there in the

background" (*RFM* IV 30). The arbitrariness of grammar is understood in terms of variety, fixedness, indeterminacy and fluidity.

Language, Grammar and Theological Expressions

Wittgenstein's claim "Grammar tells what kind of object anything is (Theology as Grammar)" (*PI* 373) is to be seen in an interpretative manner in the background of the stated claim that grammar expresses essence. Looking at the use of words within its surroundings is the best way to find what something is. When we look at the nature of something, we have to pay attention to the usage of words in the human form of life. The application of this grammar model to theology is seen in this parenthetical remark. Theological discourses, like god-talk, are brought down to their 'original home' which is the religious practices, rituals and human existential situations. The grammar of theology is the grammar of practice for Wittgenstein.

A grammatical investigation reveals what kind of object something is. Considering 'theology as grammar,' as a parenthetical remark, points to broader and deeper understanding of language. Especially in theological language, one considers what lies around it. Wittgenstein's remark, "How words are understood is not told by words alone (theology)" (*Zettel* 144) is to be read in this context. The kind of objects used in theology is to be understood from a grammatical investigation which is in the broader perspective. The kinds of objects that are used in religion and religious beliefs are to be understood in its grammatical situation. Grammatical remarks such as, "What is God?" or "How does God communicates," are to be looked at by how they are used (*Zettel* 717). "The various uses of 'God' (the various grammars or grammar of the word) will indicate what people (or a people) mean by it. The

description of the uses of 'God' also involves making connections, finding links, and, above all, looking at what people do, *how they act in the surrounding and circumstance in which the world is used*" (M.L. Engelmann, *Philosophical Development* 264). Concepts like God, love and sacrifice used in theology are to be understood in the context of its use in celebrations, festivals and conventions (Bell, "Theology as Grammar" 310). These concepts are used in a particular way by the believer, and gain meaning. These words gain meaning not because of any object referring to it outside language, but because these words are related to the people who use them individually or collectively. The grammar of language is autonomous in the sense that it is independent of any reality outside language. "A grammatical rule does not stand in a relation to reality such that we can give rule and reality and then see whether they agree or not" (Wittgenstein, *Lectures* 1930-32 86). The grammar of language is not molded after the structure of a language independent reality (Medina 52). The autonomy of language is in relation to the object not in relation to individuals or the community that uses them. According to Moore Wittgenstein in his lecture on religion in 1933 said: "Luther said: "Theology is Grammar of word of God". / This might mean: An investigation of the idea of God is a grammatical one" (qtd. in Citron, "Religious Language Game" 22). However, Moore later circled the "of" before God in his notes. Either usage ends up in the idea that the grammar of the word 'God.' It is grammatical usage that reveals the meaning of the theological expressions i.e. God, soul etc (Citron, "Religious Language" 23).

Objects used in theology like God, soul are of a *kind* which the grammars of theological expressions describe (Bell, "Theology as Grammar" 311). These objects

are of a special kind which requires no evidence or empirical support. Grammar which expresses the kind of objects in all religious utterances is not uniform. Grammar of religious utterance is complex, various, and mixed. The analogy of the language game and form of life are used for the purpose of showing the complexity of language and its close relationship with people and their lives (Ashford, "Wittgenstein's Theologian" 360). Wittgenstein introduced the concept of family resemblance in the later thought to deal with the variety of grammars of sentences and to reject the grammatical uniformity. For Wittgenstein, a given expression is not always used in the same way, but rather in various ways. "A word has meaning someone has given to it. There are words with several clearly defined meanings. It is easy to tabulate these meanings. And there are words of which one might say: They are used in a thousand different ways which gradually merge into one another. No wonder that we can't tabulate strict rules for their use" (*BBB* 28). Wittgenstein's remarks that "If we look at the actual use of a word, what we see is something constantly fluctuating..... If for our purposes we wish to regulate the use of a word by definite rules, then alongside its fluctuating use we set up a different use by codifying one of its characteristic aspects" (*PG* 77). Thus, for Wittgenstein, the meaning of a word depends on the grammatical variety of utterances in which it is used. The grammatical variety of meaning of a word brings forth the indeterminacy and fluidity characteristics of the grammar of language (Citron, "Simple Objects" 30).

Wittgenstein's remarks on the varieties of the grammar of religion state that the word God has been used in multiples ways. There is no uniform grammar for the word God.

I have always wanted to say something about grammar of ethical expressions, or e.g. of 'God'. / ... / Now: use of such a word as 'God'/. It has been used in many different ways: e.g. sometimes for something very like a human being - a physical body. There are many controversies about meaning of 'God', which could be settled by saying I'm not using the word in such a sense as that you say. (qtd. in Citron, " Simple Objects" 30-31)

The use of any word like God does not have a uniform grammar within religious setting. Varieties of grammatical usage make religious utterance complex. These grammatical usages are not only various but also mixed and indeterminate. It is not a singular set of rules that govern any particular linguistic usage within religion. The grammatical usage of religious utterance belongs to complex grammatical categories. The expression, theology as grammar, has a broad meaning understood in the context of the grammatical analysis of language and the new understanding of meaning as use (Citron, "Simple Objects" 31).

3.3. The Nature of Religious Belief

The search for the nature of religious belief, I suppose, is all against the very philosophy of Wittgenstein. He was a critic of essentialism, as we have seen, one cannot identify a common property for different religions. "... But *look* and *see*

whether there is anything common to *all* – for you look at them you will not see something that is common to all, but similarities, relationship and a whole series of them at that” (*PI* 66). At the same time, looking at how believers use religious language enables Wittgenstein to describe some of its characteristic features. This material is found in a series of lectures Wittgenstein gave at Cambridge in 1938. The lecture notes are not available to us; however, the notes taken by some of the students are at our disposal.⁵² Wittgenstein did not check the accuracy of the notes, but they are the most complete source available to us on Wittgenstein’s views on religious belief. Wittgenstein recognized that the reductionist approach failed to feature the distinctive character of religious belief. Wittgenstein points out the logical distinctiveness of religious belief that distinguishes it from other areas, especially the scientific. The content of the *Lectures on Religious Belief* can be summarized as follows:

Religious belief is an unshakable commitment that guides one’s life and is not based on evidence or arguments; it is incommensurable with atheistic thought in the sense that the assertions of believers and nonbelievers do not contradict one another; and although religious belief is not reasonable it is not unreasonable. (Martin 369)

Let us consider each of these in detail. Another important source we could rely on is the philosophical notes that Wittgenstein kept from the years 1929 to

⁵² This is compiled and edited by Cyril Barrett from notes taken by Yorick, Smythies, Rush Rhees, and James Taylor and it is titled as *Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief*.

1951, with significant remarks on religion. A selection of it is published under the title *Culture and Value*.

Religious Belief as an Unshakable Commitment

Religious belief is absolute, unlike hypotheses or opinion. It is absolute in the sense that it is not dependent on anything else but itself. It is a commitment which is not shaken by any contrary evidence. He says, “*very* intelligent and well educated people believe in the story of the creation in the Bible, while others hold it as proven false, and the grounds of the latter are well known to the former” (*OC* 336). It is not the intellectual and rational basis that makes the belief firm. Even in the face of good evidence to the contrary the believer still holds the belief – that is what he calls firm belief that can make a difference in our lives. This is characterized in *Lectures* as ‘unshakable belief.’

For Wittgenstein, religious beliefs are not matters of empirical fact. They neither can be justified by an appeal to evidences, nor can they be criticized on the ground of non-supporting evidences. For example, the religious utterance, ‘There will be a last Judgment Day’ should not be approached as one that will occur in future as if one approaches an empirical belief. One utters such a religious statement to express his commitment to a certain way of seeing things and a certain way of living. Thus, suppose somebody made this his guide line for this life: believing in the Last Judgment. Whenever he does anything, this is before his mind (*LC* 53).

Religious belief can be seen as a passionate commitment to a system of reference. A system of reference is a system of concepts, and concepts play a vital

and fundamental role in the life of a religious believer. “It strikes me that a religious belief could only be something like a passionate commitment to a system of reference. Hence, although it’s *belief*, it’s really a way of living or a way of assessing life. It’s passionately seizing hold of *this* interpretation” (CV 64). This passionate commitment to a system of concepts involves a distinctive way of leading one’s life (Child 223). Religious belief involves a distinctive set of religious concepts in describing and thinking about the world and life. It is a commitment to those concepts to lead life in a certain way.

Certainty is considered as one of the characteristics of religious belief, and this is not one of intellectual certainty but of love and trust. Commenting on the entries in *Culture and Value*, Cyril Barrett compares the certainty of religious belief to that of mathematical propositions. However, it is also different: The certitude of a mathematical proposition depends on its intrinsic logical structure, whereas religious belief lacks such intrinsic logical structure and extrinsic support (*Ethics and Religious Beliefs* 182). It is a matter of heart and soul. The genuineness of religious belief is not weighed by the intellectual caliber, but by action which the believer is prepared to perform on account of the belief. There are many entries of Wittgenstein's to substantiate this. Let me cite one of them,

... So we have to content ourselves with wisdom and speculation.

...But if I am REALLY to be saved, – what I need is *certainty* – not wisdom, dreams or speculation – and this certainty is faith. And Faith is what is needed by my *heart*, my *soul*, not my speculative

intelligence. For it is my soul with its passions, as it was with its flesh and blood, that has to be saved, not my abstract mind. (CV 33)

A significant element here in Wittgenstein's religious thought is that religion is a realm of passion rather than intellect. Religion springs from emotive lives and passions not from speculative mind. A similar citation can be seen as "wisdom is cold and to that extent stupid (faith on the other hand is a passion)" (CV 56).

Though unshakableness is considered as one of the characteristics of religious life, there is room for doubt. The man who believes in the Last Judgment acknowledges that this is not a well-established fact. Belief is possible where doubt is permissible. In fact, his religious belief may alternate with doubt. This is something that differentiates religious belief from empirical belief. Religious belief is unshakable in the face of doubt even to the extent of alternation (Putnam 145). The firmness and steadfastness in belief do not depend on the grounds. This commitment could be further explained by the groundlessness of religious belief.

Religious Belief as “Groundless”

The search for a foundation or ground is something very fundamental to human beings. The apologists were in search of scientific evidence and proofs for religious belief about which they were questioned. In Wittgenstein's philosophy, religious belief is groundless. Religious beliefs are not factual beliefs; they do not represent how the world was, is or will be. He thinks that it is misconception to justify religious beliefs that are supported by sufficient evidence or can be criticized for lack of sufficient evidence. According to Wittgenstein, trying to justify or

criticize religious beliefs on such grounds is ludicrous (*LC 58*), ridiculous (*LC 59*), and repellent or repugnant (*Child 223*).

First of all, religious beliefs are not based on any scientific or historical evidence. We don't talk about hypothesis or about high probability or about knowing (*LC 57*). Religious beliefs are not factual beliefs; however, religious beliefs involve certain factual beliefs: beliefs about the occurrence of certain historical events. World religions including Christianity rest on certain historical facts: the birth, public life and ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus.

Wittgenstein's response to the acceptance of historical facts in any religion is not sufficient for religious belief. He comments that Christianity does not rest on a historical basis. Religious beliefs associated with Christianity are not treated like historical or empirical propositions.

Christianity is not based on a historical truth; rather, it offers us a (historical) narrative and says: now believe! But not, believe this narrative with the belief appropriate to a historical narrative, rather; believe through thick and thin, which you can do only as the result of a life. Here you have a narrative, don't take the same attitude to it as you take to other historical narratives! Make a quite different place in your life for it. (*CV 32*)

The fundamental attitude that a Christian adopts about a Biblical narrative is one of passion and that is different from a historical narrative that is tentative. Any new evidence may falsify or change the adopted historical narrative. This type of

falsification is out of range with Biblical narratives. The believer believes through thick and thin. Wittgenstein's more mature view on religion is not in any way connected to speculative beliefs and historical events (Clack, *An Introduction* 53). For Wittgenstein, historical narrative seems to be an occasion for believing. Later in *Remarks on Frazer* Wittgenstein urges that religious ceremonies are not to be discussed and explained as if they were based on historical narration or scientific discourse. They are expressions of deep personal feelings, social events and existential concerns (Harre 221).

Someone could adhere to a Christian belief while accepting the historical occurrence mentioning the Gospel as false. In the case of belief in the Last Judgment Day would possibly involve some factual components involving some sort of empirical belief about the occurrence of a future event. However, Wittgenstein would hold the view that a belief in the Last Judgment is not about the nature of reality or the occurrence of past or future events. Rather, belief in the Last Judgment is an expression of a commitment to seeing the world in a particular way and leading one's life accordingly (Child 225).

Queer as it sounds: The historical accounts in the Gospels might, historically speaking, be demonstrably false and yet belief would lose nothing by this: not however, because it concerns 'universal truth of reason'! Rather because historical proof (the historical proof game) is irrelevant to belief. This message (the Gospels) is seized on by men believingly (i.e. lovingly). *That* is the certainty characterizing this particular acceptance as true, not something else. (CV 32)

The gospel may be historically false; however, the belief in the gospel truth will remain the same. Wittgenstein is not asserting or denying the historical truth of gospels; however, his claim is that historical truths are irrelevant in religious belief (Hodges and Aikin, "Possibility of Religion" 4).

The total character of religious belief is not the result of good evidence. Religious people often claim to base their belief on certain evidence, thereby leaving open the possibility of testing the truth of their religious belief. Wittgenstein seems to overlook this claim of the believers. However, he wanted to show the differences between the way evidence is used in scientific hypothesis and in religious belief. Empirical evidence does not provide an adequate ground for religious belief, since even a non-believer could uphold the empirical evidence for a belief though he himself doesn't share the religious belief. Wittgenstein says that if one believes in the forecast or predictions made for the future several years in advance this belief would not be held as religious belief (*LC* 56). A believer will hold a religious belief in spite of the absence of any strong evidence for the same and this, according to Wittgenstein, could be termed as the firmest kind of belief (*LC* 57). It would then appear that people are not reasonable enough with regard to religious belief. It is reasonable in one sense and not reasonable in another sense (*LC* 57-58). When we make a religious assertion, it is not reasonable in the sense that it is not like a hypothesis, which may be rejected after critical scrutiny.⁵³ The believers do not

⁵³ The criterion of demarcation between science and metaphysics was empirical verification for Logical Positivists. Karl Popper finds this criterion is not adequate and suggests another. According to him, it is testability, or, in his own version, falsifiability; *i.e.*, refutability is the criterion of demarcation. But we have to keep in mind he never advocated a sharp distinction between science and metaphysics. See Popper, *Realism and the Aim of Science* 159. This can be viewed as the influence of Wittgenstein.

reason their belief as the scientists and historians do with regard to their theories.

The rationality of religious belief is to be checked within the language-game.

Wittgenstein puts an end to the rational challenge to religious believing. Religious believing is not epistemic (Hodges and Aikin, "Possibility of Religion" 5). It is not because he has sufficient reason to believe rather, it regulates his life. "Indubitability is not enough in the case. Even if there is as much as evidence as for Napoleon. Because the indubitability wouldn't be enough to make me change my whole life" (*LC* 57). The rationality of religious belief will be dealt with in the last part of this chapter.

Secondly, in Wittgenstein's opinion, this type of groundlessness is not an exclusive feature of religious belief. There are ordinary everyday beliefs that are very fundamental to our understanding and knowledge of ourselves and the world in which we live, which is not so well, established (Barrett, *Ethics and Religious Beliefs* 179). Here, Wittgenstein is making an important philosophical point that what we consider a ground of beliefs is based on something more fundamental; namely, a whole system of beliefs, which is taken for granted. In *On Certainty*, Wittgenstein examines the notion of a ground of belief. Belief is bound to a system or grammatical framework. "When we first begin to believe anything, what we believe is not a single proposition; it is a whole system of propositions" (141). The belief is within the context of a system of beliefs, and it is the whole system that forms the ground of particular beliefs. This system itself is not based on grounds; it is there, like our life. "You must bear in mind that the language-game is so to say something unpredictable. I mean: it is not based on grounds. It is not reasonable (or

unreasonable). It is there – like our life" (559). There are more entries on this regard in *On Certainty*, which substantiate this point. "Knowledge is in the end based on acknowledgment" (378). "I really want to say that a language-game is only possible if one trusts something" (509). What is acknowledged and what is trusted is taken for granted. What is taken for granted is not grounded on something else.

Groundlessness does not mean foolishness; it means that it is not based on any scientific evidence. One does not believe alone but among the believers in the contexts of the belief system and its form of life. The so-called ground is the common or shared form of life. It is groundless in the sense that we cannot go further than this common form of life to find out some external evidence. This system of beliefs does not rest upon any evidence but it is there like our life (Bell, "Theology as Grammar" 310). "The end is not ungrounded presupposition: it is an ungrounded way of acting" (*OC* 110). The ground is the way of life. This is what Dallas M. High qualifies as "indwelt belief" – belief embedded in action, practice or life ("On Doubting" 257). This indwelt belief system as such is not brought into question and justification because belief cannot be separated from life.

Philosophers of religion were in search of proofs for the existence of God in a certain era of history. Wittgenstein emphatically rejects such considerations. For him, this is the wrong way of posing the problem. For him, that God exists or not, is not the problem, but what is important is what is meant by the word 'God.' "God's essence is supposed to guarantee his existence – what this really means is that what is here at issue is not the existence of something" (*CV* 82). The believers believe not

on the basis of the proof for the existence of God. If their faith is based on proofs, then it is not true religious faith.

A proof of God's existence ought really to be something by means of which one could convince oneself that God exists. But I think what *believers* who have furnished such proofs have wanted to do is to give their 'belief' an intellectual analysis and foundation, although they themselves would never come to believe as a result of such proofs. (CV 85)

It is the believers who try to give an intellectual foundation for religious belief. They try to give foundation to what they believe in justification. Religious belief itself is not an outcome of any intellectual enterprise.

Religious discourse is to be neither explained nor justified. Explanation is a matter of theories. "Theory steps beyond the limits of experience, either into realms we cannot observe or by way of making reference to entities of which we have no direct experience. Theory explains by reason of the fact that the postulated entities account for what we do experience" (Harre 231). However, in religion, use of word God does not intend to postulate existence of any being that is beyond human observation. That is why Wittgenstein repeatedly insisted that Christianity is not a set of doctrines and that the doctrine of predestination is not a theory. If we consider the doctrine of predestination as a theory it would be telling us something beyond human practices. Religious discourse neither justifies nor explains religious practices. To adopt religious talk is to express one's commitment to a certain way of life (Harre 231).

Influenced by Tolstoy,⁵⁴ Wittgenstein has brought about the nature of religious belief with the metaphor of a tightrope walker. "An honest religious believer is like a tightrope walker. He almost looks as though he were walking on nothing but air. His support is the slenderest imaginable. And yet it really is possible to walk on it" (CV 73). As in Tolstoy's dream, the image of suspension is brought up. The support for an honest religious thinker is the slightest rope or a suspended rope. The believer is somewhere in mid-air not sufficiently based on ground. This image is invoked to present a religious believer as someone who tries to reconcile between the passion of faith by which he makes the commitment through constant practice and the intellect's quest for foundation. This image is brought forth by Wittgenstein to insist that religious belief is not to be conflated with other kinds of beliefs especially that of scientific and empirical ones. Religious belief is considered as groundless or having no foundation on historical evidence and empirical evidence (Burley, *Religious Forms of Life* 58).

Religious Belief as Picture

Wittgenstein explains the normative function of religious belief by considering the role of pictures in life. In the earlier phase of his philosophy, language is conceived as a picture of the reality. Propositions, as pictures of state of affairs, are static; they are idle pictures. However, in his later philosophy, Wittgenstein describes the dynamic role of pictures in our life and language. He says: "One wants to say that an order is a picture of the action which was carried out

⁵⁴ Leo Tolstoy recalls a dream where he is lying on a bed, little by little collapsing beneath him and finally supported by a single rope, with a abyss below and nothing but empty sky above. Religious believer looking at the sky is ignoring baseless bottom. See Burley *Religious Forms of Life* 56.

on the order; but also that it is a picture of the action which *is to be* carried out on the order” (*PI* 519). Here we can see the close connection between the picture and the action to be carried out. A religious belief, taken as picture, is a call to live by it and also to interpret the religious teaching in the light of that picture. Therefore, the picture has a normative value.

It is correspondence that makes language a picture of reality in Wittgenstein's earlier philosophy. Later, when he uses the technical term "picture" to describe religious belief, he presupposes no correspondence; it may not refer to any object or person. A corresponding reality is not a necessity in the case of religious belief. What is important is the picture itself, and the role it plays in human life. “The whole weight may be in the picture” (*LC* 72). When Wittgenstein uses the term picture for religious belief, he does not refer to the referent but to the meaning. For example when we say “God,” we do not look for the referent behind the word “God” or we don’t look for the proof for the existence of the referent, but we look for the meaning of the word “God.” He also says that the meaning can be arrived at by the role it plays in the life of the believer. In *Philosophical Investigations* Wittgenstein brings forth his idea of a picture. "A picture tells me itself is what I'd like to say, that is it's telling me something consists in its own structure in its own forms and colours" (523). This very same thought is found in *Lectures*. A sentence expressing a religious belief is that 'It says what it says. Why should you be able to substitute anything else? (*LC* 71). A religious picture expresses itself. This thought is further carried out in *Remarks on Frazer* while considering religious belief as expressive (Burley, *Religious Forms of Life* 61).

Wittgenstein understands religious belief as being capable of controlling human life in the sense that it is able to change one's whole life. A particular belief may be a guideline for life; it somehow regulates his life. An example will clarify it.

Suppose somebody made this guidance for this life: believing in the Last Judgement. Whenever he does anything, this is before his mind. In a way, how are we to know whether to say he believes this will happen or not? Asking him is not enough. He will probably say he has proof. But he has what you might call an unshakable belief. It will show, not by reasoning or by appeal to ordinary grounds of belief, but rather by regulating for all in his life. (Burley, *Religious Forms of Life* 53-54)

Wittgenstein considered religious belief as using a picture to regulate one's life. The picture is always present there to guide one's thinking. This picture constitutes the framework for what makes sense of his experience of life (Keightley 52). A belief becomes religious, therefore, when it has control over the life of the person who believes it. In the Last Judgment, a future divine retribution is what Wittgenstein calls a picture before a believer's mind controlling his actions when one is tempted to do something evil. Wittgenstein's understanding of religious belief has gained a moral character. Religious expressions serve some sort of moral purpose recommending a commitment to a particular way of life (Clack, *Wittgenstein, Frazer and Religion* 71).

Wittgenstein used the technique of employing the pictures of God. The picture, 'god created man' (LC 63), is not a description of any state of affairs. "That

talk of God is in some manner expressive of feelings, attitudes and emotions" (Clack, *Wittgenstein, Frazer and Religion* 67). The function of the utterance of faith is to express existential attitudes of life and their practical use in guiding human actions. According to Wittgenstein, religious belief is upholding certain pictures which help to give orientation and guidelines his actions and attitudes. Commitment to such a picture is founded on passion not in intellect and systematic understanding is insignificant (Hoyt 39). In talking about the life-guiding role of religious beliefs, Wittgenstein makes an important point that religion is more a matter of praxis than merely a matter of intellect. This will be examined in more detail in the next section.

Religion is a Matter of Praxis

Religion is not a set of doctrines. It is not a set of theories about what happened or what will happen to the human soul, but rather a description of what actually happens to the human soul. Even in his later stage of philosophy, Wittgenstein could well imagine a religion that is without doctrine just as he advocated some type of speechless faith in the earlier phase. Cyril Barrett quotes a reported conversation in Schlick's home on December 17, 1930, from *Wittgenstein and Vienna Circle* by Wiener Kreis as follows:

I can well imagine a religion in which there are no doctrinal propositions, in which there is thus no talking. Obviously the essence of religion cannot have anything to do with the fact that there is talking, or rather: when people talk, this itself is part of religious act and not a theory. (qtd. in Barrett, *Ethics and Religious Belief* 186)

Religious talk, insofar as it is considered a religious act, can be accommodated in the philosophical understanding of Wittgenstein. What is important for him is not the word but the role of the word in the life of the believer. It is practice that gives the word its meaning. Wittgenstein, in his understanding of meaning as use, is also consistent in its application to religious belief. The pragmatic understanding of language is also applied here with regard to religious belief. What is important is not the word or sound but how it is used and applied in everyday life. Religious language is part of religious activity; therefore, being a religious behavior it gains meaning. Actions speak louder than words.

Certain readings from *Culture and Value* which are not sufficiently elaborated invite us to see religion as a way of life, a way of acting rather than a theoretical account of the world. "I believe that one of the things Christianity says is that sound doctrines are all useless. That you have to change your life. (Or *the direction of your life*)" (CV 53). Though Christianity is mounted with doctrines and sometimes well established ones, penetrated into its heart, it is a way of life rather than an offering of theoretical explanations. Penetrated into the depth grammar, which Wittgenstein brought out in *Philosophical Investigations*, religious language does not give a description and explanation of supernatural entities as natural science describes and explains the natural entities and facts. Religious assertions are not fact statements (Clack, *Wittgenstein, Frazer and Religion* 55). The significance of religious expression is not its referent but its function in a person's life. "The way you use the word 'God' does not show whom you mean - but, rather, what you mean" (CV 50). The words used in religious utterances may refer to someone or

something; however, the use of those words and their effects in practical life is what matters.

The predestination account (CV 30) is not an explanation of the will of God or the destiny of human kind; rather, it is expressive of the human 'sigh'. The talk of creation is an expression of wonder at the world. "If someone who believes in God looks round and asks 'Where does everything I see come from?', "Where does all this come from?", he is *not* craving for a (causal) explanation; and his question gets its point from being the expression of a certain craving. He is, namely, expressing an attitude to all explanations" (CV 85).

Wittgenstein expressed powerful remarks on religious ceremonies and rituals in his Remarks on Frazer's *Golden Bough*.⁵⁵ He criticized Frazer's essentialism that attempted a universal explanation to different ceremonies and rituals. Frazer explains the modern European fire festivals in the same manner that he explains the ancient Celtic festivals, assuming that there is one underlying reason for all these festivals. However, Wittgenstein observes that there can be similarities among different fire festivals performed at different times. "Besides these similarities, what seems to me to be most striking is the dissimilarity of all these rites. It is multiplicity of faces with common features which continually emerges here and there."⁵⁶

⁵⁵ *The Golden Bough* was first published in 1890. Frazer describes the rituals and ceremonies of early and pre industrial societies. He conceives magic, religion and science as different systems of understanding and manipulating the natural world. Development of human thought from magic to religion and then to science is described here. This book was widely known and read during the first half of twentieth century. See Child 230.

⁵⁶ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Remarks on Frazer's Golden Bough*, in Wittgenstein L., *Philosophical Occasions: 1912-1951*, (Indianapolis: Hackett Pub. Co. Inc, 1993) 143. Abbreviation *RFGF* will be parenthetically cited within the text hereafter.

Religious Belief and Rationality

The rationality of religious belief is a puzzling question in Wittgenstein's philosophy. He seems to play down the role of reason in religious belief. It is not a question of rationality or proofs. He is holding a more pragmatic criterion than a rational criterion for religious belief. The importance of religious belief is not in the proof and reason, but in the way it regulates our lives (Karuvelil, "Epistemology of Religion" 122). Wittgenstein was impatient with proofs for the existence of God. He maintains that although religious belief is not reasonable, it is not unreasonable:

They base things on evidence which taken in one way would be exceedingly flimsy. They base enormous things on this evidence. Am I to say they are unreasonable? I wouldn't call them unreasonable. I would say, they are certainly not *reasonable*, that's obvious. 'Unreasonable' implies, with everyone, rebuke. I want to say: they don't treat this as a matter of reasonability. Anyone who reads the Epistles will find it said: not only that it is not reasonable, but that it is folly. Not only is it not reasonable, but it doesn't pretend to be. (LC 57-58)

The terms not being reasonable and being unreasonable are not so clear in the above statements. The term being unreasonable is a term of rebuke. Here reason is relevant but not taken into account. However, being not reasonable is not a term of rebuke since reason is irrelevant. Religious belief is not reasonable in the sense that the question of evidence is not relevant in religious belief. "If there were evidence, this would destroy the whole business" (LC 56). In that sense, religious belief is not

rational or reasonable. However, being not reasonable does not mean it is irrational. Rationality and historical evidence play little role in religious belief; therefore, they cannot be called to rebuke. In order to support the view that religion is not a matter of reason, he refers to St. Paul. Therefore, belief in the word of the cross is not unreasonable (M. Martin 379). Religious belief is not reasonable in the sense that it is not grounded on reason or scientific proofs; it is not unreasonable in the sense that it finds its reasonability in a particular language game, which is founded on a particular form of life. Rationality is found only within the game, and the language-game, as such, is not called for justification. Wittgenstein notes again that “if the true is what is grounded, the ground is not *true*, nor yet false” (OC 205). The ground itself is not called for justification.

Theologians and teachers of religion offer proofs for the existence of God and give evidence for the truth of their beliefs. However, Wittgenstein in *Lectures* says that people who say that they hold their religious beliefs on the basis of evidence does not show that they do (LC 60). Though they offer proofs, it is not on the basis of any of these proofs that anyone actually believes.

A proof of God’s existence ought really to be something by means of which one could convince oneself that God exists. But I think that what believers who have furnished such proofs have wanted to do is to give their belief an intellectual analysis and foundation, although they themselves would never have come to believe as a result of such proofs. (CV 85)

As for Wittgenstein, reason that is used in religious belief by theologians looks entirely different from the normal reason that is applied in empirical and factual beliefs (*LC* 56). The fact that believers can give reasons for the beliefs they hold does not mean that their beliefs can be tested or criticized on the basis of standards of justification that are used in other beliefs. The fact that people can come to religious belief through experience does not prove that it is supported by evidence.

One can see this distinctive character of religious belief from a holistic framework in the later philosophy of Wittgenstein, that is, in the light of the language-game. In that sense, a scientist in the formulation of a hypothesis plays a language-game which is different from the game played by a believer. Religious belief, when taken out of its home, is blunder. It strays into a foreign system or game where scientific reason rules. “Whether a thing is a blunder or not” says Wittgenstein, “it is a blunder in a particular system. Just as something is a blunder in a particular game and not in another” (*LC* 59). It appears, however, that the tone of his whole discussion sounds as if he doesn’t agree with those who suppose religious belief to be unreasonable. Those who dismiss religious belief on the basis of its not meeting the requirements of scientific proof are, in fact, making blunders by equating believers and scientists (Keightley 53-54).

Wittgenstein agrees that experience can lead people to religious belief; however, this experience is not the same as sense perception. The experiences that can lead people to religious beliefs are not sensory perceptions. “Life can educate one to a belief in God. Experiences, too, are what bring this about; but I don’t mean

visions and other forms of sense experience which show us the existence of this being', but, for example, suffering of various sorts. These neither show us God in the way a sense impression show us an object, nor do they give rise to conjectures about him, Experiences, thoughts, - life can force this concept on us" (CV 86).

There is a danger of reducing religion to mere superstition, when we treat religious belief a matter of evidence in the line of scientific hypothesis. This would be contrary to the ideals of religious belief in Wittgenstein's understanding of the subject (LC 56). Wittgenstein does not allow any attempt to treat religion and science as belonging to the same mould. He makes it clear by making an explicit reference to Scarlet O'Hara's attempt to do so in a symposium (LC 57-59). Father O'Hara has reduced religious belief to the scientific mould. His attempt to bring out the relation between science and religion is something praiseworthy today, where we talk much about the relationship between science and religion. However, the point Wittgenstein wants to communicate is that religious belief transcends science and history (Barrett, *Ethics and Religious Beliefs* 191). The rationality and irrationality of belief depend very much on the system of beliefs to which it is related. Religion and science form two different systems. The sense and justification of religious belief is to be sought only within the religious system of belief and not in the scientific system that would be blunder (Risjord 247). As far as meaning and justification are concerned, religious beliefs are different from ordinary or scientific beliefs. The meaning of empirical or scientific beliefs is empirical while the meaning of religious beliefs is spiritual and in a totally different realm. For example, a belief that the cat is on the mat is an ordinary belief which can be empirically verified

where as belief in the existence of God is totally in a different domain which is spiritual and may not be verified empirically. Even the belief that the existence of love between two people is in the emotional domain is also in another domain. Religious belief has more of a life impact or is more morally oriented. Belief in the existence of God or the immortality of the soul has a greater impact on the believer. Any belief remains baseless with lack of evidence for justification. However, the nature of belief differs from context to context. These examples show that their evidences are different especially religious beliefs which are our concern here. They have their own peculiar evidences whose rationale is different from the rationale of ordinary beliefs (K.C. Pandey, *Religious Beliefs* 159). Believers' reason for their belief, but it seems to be unreasonable to nonbelievers. Wittgenstein construes this in *Lectures*, "You may say they reason wrongly. In certain cases you would say, they reason wrongly, meaning they contradict us. In other cases you would say they don't reason at all, or it is an entirely different kind of reasoning" (LC 58). The nonbeliever applies ordinary criteria to religious beliefs and thinks that the believer commits a blunder. However, Wittgenstein maintains that blunders are reasonable and are related to the context or system to which the reference is made. "Whether a thing is a blunder or not - it is a blunder in a particular system. Just as something is a blunder in a particular game and not in another. You could also say that where we are reasonable, they are not reasonable -meaning they don't use reason here" (LC 59). Thus belief has different meanings and different reasonableness in an ordinary context and in a religious context. Wittgenstein claims a distinctive reason which a believer holds for religious belief make religious belief demarcated from ordinary

belief. This claim is further elucidated in the discussion of incommensurability of religious belief.

Wittgenstein's approach to religious beliefs is clear with no affiliation with scientific approach. For him, religious belief is no way justified or supported by any types of scientific reason. The rejection of scientific involvement in religious beliefs can be viewed in two different approaches of Wittgenstein. First of all, he criticizes Father O'Hare, in *Lectures on Religious Belief*, for his rational justification of religious beliefs, and secondly, he criticizes Frazer, for rejecting religious belief for lack of scientific evidence and foundation.

Wittgenstein, while criticizing Father O'Hare, has brought up the distinction between religious beliefs and superstition. Though both religious beliefs and superstitions have some basic factors in common, they are distinct at their core. Religious belief is based on awe, fear and terror while superstition is based on reasoning and evidence. Together with Kierkegaard, Wittgenstein maintains that fear is a factor in religious beliefs. This feeling of fear is the outcome of the awe and distress of the believer. "Christian religion is only for the one who needs infinite help, that I only for the one who suffers infinite distress. Christian faith - so I believe - is refuge in this ultimate distress" (CV 52). Superstitious beliefs also have the same fear underlined; however, they are distinguished from religious beliefs because they look for evidence and scientific support for the actualization of certain beliefs as in the case of belief in the Last Judgment after a dream. When one looks for scientific proof and evidence for religious belief, it becomes superstition. Wittgenstein in his

Lectures and on Religious Belief criticizes Father O'Hare for justifying religious beliefs with rational support and making it superstitions.

In 1948, Wittgenstein described the difference between superstitious beliefs and religious beliefs as following. "Religious faith and superstition are quite different. The one springs from fear and is a sort of a false science. The other is trust" (CV 82). This shows that later in his career Wittgenstein had brought the element of trust into the picture of religious beliefs differentiating them from superstitious beliefs. Suresh Chandra, one of the leading Wittgensteinian from the East, holds the position that Wittgenstein had changed his viewpoint regarding the basic features of religious beliefs and superstitions beliefs. Fear, awe and reverence have special significance in the life of a believer and can be seen as the basis for religious beliefs, whereas the basis of superstitious beliefs is evidence and reasoning. It is the attitude of the believer that makes a belief superstitious or religious.

The task of philosophy is to describe the functioning of religious beliefs in the life of the believer. It does not engage in criticizing and justifying religious beliefs. Wittgenstein is not much unimpressed with those who see religious belief as matter of reason or evidence (CV 59). He insists that genuine religious faith is love (CV 33) what Kierkegaard calls passion. Wittgenstein identifies true religiosity with love and passion rather than involvement of reason. His understanding of religious belief as love, trust or passion is mostly seen in connection with his rejection of religious beliefs as theory or reason. Wittgenstein claims that Christianity is neither a doctrine nor a set of theories but a description of something that actually takes place in human life (CV 32). Predestination is not a theory but arises from personal

suffering (CV 30). A believer who looks around and asks where everything I see comes from is not craving for a causal explanation; he is expressing an attitude to all explanations (CV 85).⁵⁷ By putting Kierkegaard's notion of passion into the scene of genuine religious belief, Wittgenstein's interest is not in the subjective phenomenology of religious belief, but rather in the broader role that religious belief plays in the believer's life. Here Wittgenstein's understanding of genuine religious faith as passion or love has some indubitable characteristics such as genuine religiosity not founded on reason or empirical evidences. Such religiosity demands a total commitment resulting in the profound existential transformation of the individual (B. Plant, "Passion and Fundamentalism" 281).

Wittgenstein's view on miracles is also worth mentioning here. Miracles are those events which cannot be explained by science. In his *Lectures*, he sees miracles with reference to a feeling of wonder. At this wondrous moment, there are no facts involved; they are inexpressible. A scientific explanation is not possible for a miraculous event, since science cannot explain absolute values like ethical and religious ones. "All I have said is again that we cannot express what we want to express and that all we say about the absolute miraculous remains nonsense" (*LE* 44). An expression and explanation of the absolute value of a miracle is nonsensical.

Later in *Remarks on Frazer*, Wittgenstein criticizes Frazer who accounts for magic and miracle on the same level as both are against the natural laws. For Frazer, savages did not have knowledge of the natural law nor the abstract idea of God as the modern man has. Therefore, they erroneously believed in miracles and magic

⁵⁷ See B. Plant, "Wittgenstein, Religious "Passion" and Fundamentalism" 280-283.

brought about by a magician. For Wittgenstein, though, primitive people did not have knowledge of the abstract laws of nature; they had an understanding of nature and its happenings and also of the involvement of divine interventions in nature. He rejects any scientific scrutiny in the case of magic and miracle. Further, in *Culture and Value* he holds the view that miracles are caused by God, and he emphatically rejects any intervention of "god man" in miracles (51-52). He is not impressed with "god man" performing miracles. Wittgenstein endorses a spiritual explanation of the happening of a miracle as it is brought by some supernatural entity. However, he rejects human interference in the occurrence of natural laws. All human interferences can be explained and expressed; however, miracles cannot be explained. He admits supernatural intervention in natural laws, and he marvels and wonders at such occurrences. When one is able to come out of the scientific mode of thinking and scrutinizing, one would be able to wonder at a miracle. An attempt to bring "god man" into the picture will make miracles into superstitious beliefs (K.C. Pandey, *Religious Beliefs* 245-247).

Incommensurability of Religious Belief

Wittgenstein's claim that a religious believer and a non believer do not contradict each other can be observed throughout his lectures. For example, the person who believes in the Last Judgment and the person who does not believe it do not contradict (*LC* 55). The disagreement between believers and unbelievers results from the use of different pictures. The essential difference between them is that the believers use the relevant pictures with the relevant connections, and the unbelievers do not. They do not contradict one another since contradiction is possible only if

both use the same picture with the same meaning while holding opposite beliefs.

Wittgenstein puts it like this: Suppose someone is ill and he says:

"This is punishment," and I say: "if I'm ill, I don't think of punishment at all." If you say "Do you believe the opposite?" – you can call it believing the opposite, but it is entirely different from what we would normally call believing the opposite. "I think differently, in a different way. I say different things to myself. I have different pictures. (LC 55)

The disagreement between the believer and nonbeliever is not merely a matter of regulating or not regulating life on the basis of a picture, but also having different interpretations of life and the world. When the theory of meaning as use is taken seriously, we come to know the meaning of what Wittgenstein says about difference in meaning by a believer and a non-believer. When one says, "I believe in the Last Judgement," it has a meaning which is different from another person who says, "I don't believe in the Last Judgment." The ordinary use of these words is part of their conceptual framework. They have different conceptual schema. The non-believer has no religious thoughts in him. Both believer and non-believer have different ways of thinking (Clack, *An Introduction* 71).

These different ways of thinking are very much dependent on the believer's and non-believer's training or how they mastered the use of the picture. Wittgenstein's concept of religious belief as "a passionate commitment to a system of reference" (CV 64) is very often compared to a system of concept or a system of measurement. There exist different systems for measurement of length or distance.

One of the systems can be simpler and more convenient than the other; however, Wittgenstein would insist that it is a mistake to think that one of these systems is right and others are wrong. If one person believes in the Last Judgment and another does not, they employ different sets of concepts. Since these two people employ different world pictures and are committed to a different system of concepts, one of them cannot be right and other wrong (Child 227).

In Wittgenstein's example of 'God's eye sees everything,' its meaning depends on the conclusion we draw from this picture. The sharpness of God's eye to see every hair of man will not seem silly to the believer, but he would find it silly to talk about God's eyebrows, since he is trained such a way. This is the way he uses the picture (Hudson, *Ludwig Wittgenstein* 52). However, it may be ridiculous to an unbeliever since he is trained in a different way. Both the believers and unbelievers are on entirely different planes. Hence, there is no point in saying that they contradict one another. In other words, they are playing two different language-games. Though there are many authors who turn against Wittgenstein on the point that an unbeliever cannot contradict a believer, it goes along with the notion of the language game in *Philosophical Investigations* (M. Martin 378). If we want to understand the words that occur in the statement of one person, we have to participate in his form of life. The believer and the nonbeliever both fail to participate in each other's form of life, and therefore, are not contradicting each other (Chaturvedi 180-81).

Wittgenstein has introduced the notion of "seeing as" in *Philosophical Investigations* (193-214). This notion has a close connection with religious belief as

a picture and the incommensurability of religious belief – the religious belief of a person cannot be compared or contradicted by another person who does not hold that religious belief. Wittgenstein distinguishes between the two uses of the word ‘see.’ The first one is seeing what is there, and the second one is seeing a likeness between two objects. This he calls noticing an aspect. Two different types of seeing are involved here: seeing after noticing an aspect and seeing before noticing the aspect (Budd 2). Drawing our attention to the famous duck-rabbit figure, he illustrates this likeness. “Seeing as” presupposes a seeing. It is epistemologically a relevant matter that “seeing as” is a perception since there is involvement of thought in it. Religious belief, taken as picture, has a noticing aspect other than what is pictured. For example, the creation story depicted by Michelangelo has an aspect of Divine creative energy other than what is just seen. The Biblical stories also have these types of aspects (Barrett, *Ethics and Religious Beliefs* 134-135).

The logic of “seeing as” is very much connected with religious belief in Wittgenstein, though it is further developed by John Hick (Heaney 189). The capacity to be struck by a change of aspect underlies the possibility of human language, so too, aspect blindness. As humans are trained to learn different aspects of the world through perception, likewise they may learn to overlook aspect blindness. Both aspect seeing and aspect blindness are natural to humans (Day 206). What Wittgenstein calls aspect blindness is something very relevant for our discussion. Somebody may see a divine or a supernatural aspect behind every picture or story. He sees religious significance for every event that takes place in the world. However, someone else, for example a nonbeliever, may not see this aspect.

Two persons see the same picture or world in two different ways. Who actually suffers from aspect blindness? Can we blame the nonbeliever for not seeing the aspect which the believer sees? He may be incapable of seeing what the believer sees due to a variety of reasons – upbringing, his way of life or context. Both are justified on account of the disagreement between them (Barrett, *Ethics and Religious Beliefs* 143-144). The noticing aspect very much depends on how he is trained to see. It depends very much on the worldview he has. This worldview is the result of training and social life (Miller 132).

Symbolic and Expressive Nature of Religious Beliefs

Philosophers of religion interpreted Wittgenstein's thought about religion focusing around the language-game and form of life even before some of his notes on religion were published. Wittgenstein's "Remarks on Frazer's *Golden Bough*" is crucial for an understanding of his philosophy of religion, along with *Culture and Value* and *Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief*. Wittgenstein, after reading James George Frazer's *Golden Bough* which accounts for myth, magic and religion, wrote a series of comments on it. He criticized Frazer's explanation of myth, magic and religion and offered his own conceptual account of myth, magical and religious practices. Here is an attempt to expose Wittgenstein's thoughts on religion based on his criticism of Frazer. Frazer had a conceptual and instrumental view of religion along with magic and myth where as Wittgenstein exposes a more symbolic and expressive nature of religion. His comments on Frazer elaborate the symbolic nature of religion and the spiritual attitude towards life expressed in these symbols. These symbols which are

expressive are without explanations especially scientific. The symbolic and expressive nature of religion brings us the common spiritual nature of human beings.

As we journey through Wittgenstein's insights on religion from *Tractatus* where it is non-sensical to speak about religion to *Philosophical Investigations* where religion is meaningful only within the limit of the language-game, we come to a broader understanding of religion as symbolic and expressive and the common spiritual nature of human beings.

Frazer in his *Golden Bough* exposes his positivist view of historical progress. Primitive people approached life by reasoning about its underlying causes and trying to manipulate and influence them. This process of reasoning is done by myth, magic and religion. These practices, according to Frazer, are faulty ways of reasoning. "The views of natural causation embraced by the savage magician no doubt appear to us manifestly false and absurd; yet in their day they were legitimate hypotheses though they have not stood the test of experience" (Frazer 62). Such reasoning is done by scientific theories in the modern era. Myth, magic and religion are carried to the modern era because of the superstitions of the people. Frazer had a positivist stand on myth, magic and religion; they are at the first stage of the human search for knowledge, philosophy is at the second and science is at the final stage. Wittgenstein was struck by Frazer's crude assumption that the religious activities of ancient people were primitive forms of scientific endeavor - misguided attempts to influence the outcome of natural events (Burley, *Religious Forms of Life* 12). However, Wittgenstein has a strong criticism on this point and concludes error and progress are not features of magic and religion but of science. "The distinction between magic

and science can be expressed by saying in science there is progress, but in magic there isn't. Magic has no tendency within itself to develop" (PO 141). Science and technology, which are based on instrumental practice, intellect and reasoning tend towards progress and development. Religion, magic and myth are not of this kind. One prays not because the prayer is based on a proven theory, nor does one abandon an old prayer due to lack of explanation. For Wittgenstein, religion, magic and myth are beyond intellectual reasoning and conceptual explanation that calls for development and progress.

Myth, magic and religion are expressive and symbolic; they emerge from cultural rituals, metaphors and symbolic narratives. Since they are expressive, they differ from instrumental practices such as cooking or building huts. Being symbolic, they differ from non-symbolic expressive practices, such as playing music. As symbolic and expressive, they are more akin to ritualistic practices and these symbolic and expressive practices cater to the human spirit. The conceptual features that make these practices spiritual are the promotion of an attitude of wonder at the mysterious nature of life, the manner in which they express symbolic actions, poetic language, powerful images, and finally the deep existential concerns of human beings. These features make myth, magic and religion, transforming them into inspiring a spiritual attitude towards life (Lurie, *Human Spirit* 161).

Wittgenstein places prime importance on action rather than doctrine concerning the spiritual nature of religious practices. Waismann records Wittgenstein's remark regarding his view on religion.

I can well imagine a religion in which there are no doctrinal propositions, in which there is thus no talking. Obviously, the essence of religion cannot have anything to do with the fact that there is talking, or rather: when people talk, then this itself is part of a religious act and not a theory. Thus it also does not matter at all if the words used are true or false or nonsense. (Waismann, *Conversations* 117)

There are other occasions where Wittgenstein strongly argues that ritualistic practices and deeds gain priority in religious beliefs. In *Culture and Value*, we learn "the origin and the primitive form of the language game is a reaction; only from this can more complicated forms develop. Language - I want to say - is a refinement, 'in the beginning was the deed'" (31). While quoting Goethe, Wittgenstein is not simply referring to the historical origin of the development of language but, what lies at the bottom rather than how things were in the beginning. What lies at the bottom is not propositions but actions (Cockburn 307). "Giving grounds, however, justifying the evidence, comes to an end; - but the end is not certain propositions striking us immediately as true, i.e., it is not a kind of seeing on our part; it is our acting, which lies at the bottom of the language-game" (*OC* 204). What lies at the grounds is acting and reacting not propositions even in religious beliefs. Wittgenstein is offering primacy of acting and reacting in religious beliefs over and above language that is used in celebrations.

Wittgenstein here is imagining a pure ritualistic type of religion not supported by doctrinal propositions. Doctrinal principles are often theological

worldviews to support the rituals practiced. Wittgenstein imagines a religion without such theological and metaphysical support to the rituals. The language used in rituals is not part of doctrinal principles; however, it is symbolic and expressive which is to be distinguished from the language used to ascertain theological claim. Therefore, there is no reason to find foundations for religious practices on any doctrinal or theological propositions, since they are expressions and promotions of a personal spiritual attitude towards life. Wittgenstein is not totally eliminating theological principles from religious practices; however, he makes a clear distinction between the language used in religious practices and the language used in doctrinal principles to assert those rituals. Religious practices are ritualistic, and they are symbolic. The expressive use of symbols is an important characteristic of religious practices as distinct from the instrumental use of signs (Lurie, *Human Spirit* 161). Wittgenstein's point here is that rituals are not based on any proven theory or beliefs. However, one can well understand a ritual in terms of a theory (Clack, *Wittgenstein, Frazer and Religion* 134).

The key to understanding Wittgenstein's account of rituals lies in his idea that they are rooted in instincts. The natural disposition of human beings to react in an expressive way and to create and observe rituals that can symbolically express the existential concern of human beings serves as the foundation of religious symbols. Wittgenstein describes

When I am furious about something, I sometimes beat the ground or a tree with my walking stick. But I certainly do not believe that the ground is to blame or that my beating can help anything. 'I am

venting my anger'. And all the rites are of this kind. Such actions may be called Instinct-actions.... (*RFGB* 137-138)

Wittgenstein stresses the spontaneity of ritual action as the natural behavior of a ceremonial animal. This particular passage elicited some misunderstandings of Wittgenstein's thought about rituals. Some reduced his thought to a mere expressivist account ascribing no meaning beyond the secondary function of venting emotion to rituals. "Wittgenstein's point is not that all rituals are automatic or of one kind, but that all meaningful rituals have some basis in our natural way of seeing and reacting to the world. Ritual and ceremony - along with song, dance panting and countless other forms of expressions are natural ways of responding to aspects of the world that are meaningful and important to us" (Hoyt 176). A meaningful ritual is one that brings new and significant aspects of life and the world to light, and thus helps a person to reorient his own life.

Religious rituals come out of the natural inclination to express our concerns, not out of reasoning about cause and effect. They are created in relation to the primitive natural expression of human existential concerns. In *Philosophical Investigations* Wittgenstein expresses a similar concern regarding sensation words as they are connected to primitive natural expressions of sensations. "Words are connected with the primitive, the natural, expressions of the sensation and used in their place" (*PI* 89). It is the cultural community that creates the rituals. Human beings have a natural disposition to create and observe rituals that can express their everyday concerns. Hence, humans create symbolic practices that can express their concern as for instances, anger, friendship etc. A right ritual can evoke in a

participant spiritually edifying way of birth, death, sex, love, other infinite number of occasions that are deeply important to humans. Wittgenstein is not bringing forth a formula for distinguishing meaningful rituals from meaningless rituals. The meaning of rituals depends on the apt use of it in Wittgenstein's broader context of his later philosophy (Hoyt 180).

By including the natural inclination and disposition feature into the rise of religious rituals, Wittgenstein wanted to confront Frazer's claim that myth, magic and religion are practices based on theoretical and instrumental ways of reasoning. Wittgenstein ruled out Frazer's claim that religious rituals arise from erroneous reasoning which is overcome by science in the historical advancement. The practices based on theoretical reasoning are not symbolic and expressive according to Wittgenstein. He labels such an explanatory theory opinion. Opinion is not the foundation of any religious practices but attitudes. "No opinion serves as the foundation for a religious symbol. And only an opinion can involve an error" (*RFGB* 123).

Primitive people did not act from opinions but from attitudes. Even though they had opinions and sometimes acted upon them, these practices are not symbolic as in the case of religious rituals which are symbolic and expressive. "I believe that the characteristic feature of primitive man is that he does not act from opinions" (*RFGB* 137). The primitive form of language games is not based on theoretical reflections or opinions. "The origin and the primitive form of the language-game is a reaction; only from this does the more complicated form grow. Language-I want to say-is a refinement, in the beginning was the deed" (*CV* 31).

Wittgenstein makes a clear distinction between opinion and attitude. "What is the difference between an attitude and an opinion? I would like to say: the attitude comes *before* the opinion" (*RPP* 38).⁵⁸ Opinions come out of reasoning and reflections. They are rational and based on good reasoning. One could be able to give solid philosophical or rational explanation to an opinion that one holds. People may differ in opinions according to the rationale behind them. They are open to discussion and debate. However, attitudes pertain to life and concern living experiences. "Attitudes are related to ways of seeing and experiencing various aspects of things, to desires, feelings, concerns, likes and dislikes. They are ways in which we grasp the meaning of things that make up our lives in a very personal, basic, immediate, and non-inferential fashion" (Lurie, *Human Spirit* 176). The rich content of attitudes can be expressed in beliefs and accompanying feelings and thoughts. "Isn't belief in God an attitude? (*RPP* 38). Faith in God, that pivotal part of religion and religious belief, can be meaningfully understood as an attitude. This attitude of belief in God is supported later by rational thinking and theological formulations. Attitude and opinion are mostly related to one another in human life. Wittgenstein wanted to show that religion along with magic and myth arises out of attitudes concerning human life not from opinions. Faith in religion is to have faith in what religion symbolizes through ritual practices. This faith has the ability to transform existential concerns into inspiring spiritual concerns. The effect of faith in spiritual or religious practice is different from faith in instrumental practices. Wittgenstein points to this difference; "I read among similar examples of a rain-king

⁵⁸ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology*, ed. G. E. M. Anscombe, Heikki Nyman and G. H. Von Wright (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1980) 38. Abbreviation *RPP* will be parenthetically cited within the text hereafter.

in Africa to whom the people pray *when the rainy period comes*. But surely that means that they do not really believe that he can make it rain, otherwise they would do it in the dry periods" (*RPP* 137). "Kissing the picture of one's beloved. That is *obviously not* based on the belief that it will have some specific effect on the object which the picture represents. It aims at satisfaction and achieves it. Or rather: it *aims* at nothing at all; we just behave this way and then we feel satisfied" (*RFGB* 123). The point Wittgenstein makes is that religious practices are immune to error, since they are different from other kinds of cultural or social practices which may have an instrumental purpose. Religious practices are purely spiritual, and they do not have any instrumental purpose. That is why people hold on to the primitive ritualistic practices even when it does not fulfill any instrumental purposes (Clack, *Wittgenstein, Frazer and Religion* 62).

Wittgenstein, commenting on Frazer's intellectualistic, rationalistic and scientific approach to the ritualistic practices, claims some sort of emotive and expressive aspect of ritualistic practices. Some of the readings from his remarks on Frazer allude to this claim.

Burning an effigy. Kissing the picture of one's beloved. That is obviously not based on the belief that it will have some specific effect on the object which the picture represents. It aims at satisfaction and achieves it. Or rather, it aims at nothing at all; we just behave this way and then feel satisfied. But I certainly do not believe that the ground is to blame or that my beating can help anything. I am venting

my anger. And all rites are of this kind. Such actions may be called instinct-actions. (*RFGB* 123)

There is no instrumental purpose behind the act of burning an effigy or kissing the photograph of a beloved one. They simply satisfy an urge or instinct. In that sense, they are non-cognitive. These analogies that Wittgenstein uses are parallel to the formation of pain behavior as he explains how human beings learn meaning of the word pain. "Here is one possibility: words are connected with the primitive, natural expressions of sensation and used in their place. A child has hurt himself and he cries; then adults talk to him and teach him exclamations and, later, sentences. They teach the child new pain-behavior" (*PI* 244). Crying out in pain is non-cognitive. If one genuinely is in pain then, the crying is not purpose directed. In a similar way, we shout 'come here'. The language of pain is said to develop out of instinctual, non-linguistic behavior. Similarly, the language we use in religion - the expression of religious beliefs, is an extension of certain primitive reactions that is to say a natural expression of wonder or fear (Mcghee 109). The kissing of a photograph of a loved one is an expression of love and burning an effigy is an expression of hatred. These acts are not purpose-driven and do not to have any effect on the person in the case. This is as opposed to the instrumentalist understanding where burning an effigy for example is to effect some harm to the persons involved (Burley, *Religious Forms of Life* 22). The satisfaction derived from the performance of the rituals does not arise from the belief. The action affects the objects represented in it.

Yuval Lurie, while commenting on Wittgenstein's remarks on ceremonies and rituals in *Philosophy of Psychology*, makes the following statement:

Myth, magic, and religion are inspired symbolic expressions of existential concerns, promoting and enriching shared spiritual attitudes toward life. They manifest our common human nature, which gives rise to such concerns, as well as our natural human tendency to channel these concerns into expressive rituals that transforms them into inspiring spiritual attitudes toward life. (*Human Spirit* 179)

Anthony O'Hear asserts that Wittgenstein emphasizes the expressive and emotive aspects of primitive religion as religious beliefs accompany ritualistic practices that express and evoke deep needs and emotions (11-12).

The expressive and symbolic interpretation of religious rituals leads to a non-cognitive understanding of religious belief in Wittgenstein. Religious rites are expressive and celebratory, none of which are performed to bring out anything. The theological function emphasized by Frazer is sidelined here in Wittgenstein's explanation. Wittgenstein urges us to see that religious rites need not be understood as purpose-driven at all. The rituals express something; however, what is expressed cannot be logically separated from the ritual itself. What is expressed in the celebration of rituals cannot be described without reference to the form of the ritual itself (Burley, *Religious Forms of Life* 20).

Towards a Common Spiritual Nature of Human Beings

Wittgenstein's criticism of Frazer on the conceptual nature of religion as it is based on reasoning and theoretical foundation point to another important aspect: There is a common underlying spiritual nature to human beings in all cultures. Wittgenstein imagines a religion without doctrines; however, he could not imagine a culture without some sort of religion. In every culture, there is a common spiritual nature that inspires humans to perform symbolic and expressive practices that relate to existential concerns without being founded on any theoretical principles, adapted in the course of time to support such practice.

Frazer traces several religious practices along with myths and magic in several cultures in the ancient world due to historical influences. Wittgenstein, by criticizing this historical explanation to various rituals in different cultures, describes that these cultures manifest a common spirit. It is the common spirit or spiritual inclination that enables human beings to create and practice religious rituals and give expressive meaning to them. In many different cultures, human beings give symbolic expression of common existential concerns through religious practices. "All these different practices show that it is not a question of the derivation of one from the other, but of a common spirit. And one could invent (devise) all these ceremonies oneself. And precisely that spirit from which one invented them would be their common spirit" (*RFGB* 151).

Wittgenstein criticizes Frazer's attempt to trace the similarity of different rituals due to historical influence and the failure to acknowledge the common spirit. These practices derive from the common spiritual nature manifesting human

existential concerns (Lurie, *Human Spirit* 188). Our understanding of the expressive meaning of religious rituals can be articulated in meaningful and expressive language.

'Man as a ceremonial animal' (*RFGB* 129) has a mysterious life which is brought about by the symbolic and expressive rituals. The common spiritual nature of human beings has to be understood by the very self that performs the rituals and makes research about the common spiritual nature. The focus should be on the primitive nature of the self with its instincts and urges instead of primitive distant societies. Wittgenstein's method seems to reduce the unfamiliarity between oneself and an alien culture by prompting us to see that certain practices performed in other cultures stem from the same primitive urge and instinct out of which certain rituals are practiced in our own culture. Foreign culture and rituals originated in other cultures are made more familiar and understandable. Seeing our humanity reflected in rituals and practices of other people help us to see the familiarities and strangeness and ultimate inexplicability of our own human nature (Burley, *Religious Forms of Life* 25). Wittgenstein's purpose is to show that people's behavior is manifested through its religious beliefs which are expressed in the practices ceremonies. The communal religious practices make manifest the values, ideals and concepts which lie at the heart of their culture. Rituals are mirrors that reflect human nature (Mcghee 111).

Conclusion

Wittgenstein, in his later philosophy, has developed a new theory of meaning - meaning as use is sufficiently supported by his idea of the language-game, family

resemblance and form of life. Language is compared to a game which is played in accordance with certain rules and a patterned order. These rules are mastered by constant practice, and it is very much embedded in daily life. Language-games are based on the form of life which provides ample context for any game. The rules of all language-games are meaningful within their internal boundary. Since they have their own patterned order and social nature, they go beyond individual freedom either to create or choose the rules to be applied. Here reconciliation is attempted between the language-game as a rule-bound activity and the role of human freedom within the language-game on the basis of form of life.

Rules are not abstract, transcending the ordinary life experience of the individual. Rules are closely related to experience. "It can seem as if the rules of grammar are in a certain sense an unpacking of something we experience all at once when we use a word" (qtd. in Park 14).⁵⁹ Rules are very much permeated with the concrete life experience of individuals in the historic community. Communal context and cultural background provide ample room for reconciliation of the rule and the application of rule-following.

According to Wittgenstein, language-games are played according to specific rules. Each game has its own rules, and individuals cannot change or manipulate such rules. For any understanding of the game, the rules of the game should be mastered. If such is the case, the language-games we play in our lives are determined by a certain set of rules, and human freedom is questioned to a certain point. The role of rules in the language-game restricts human freedom in rule-

⁵⁹ See Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Grammar* 12.

following. However, the rule itself is restricted to its own boundary of the language-game. Rules are valid only within the boundary of each language-game. The same type of restrictions is applied to human freedom. Rules in it are not meaningful since rules acquire meaning only when it is used by individuals in its proper context. In Wittgenstein's philosophy, meaning is not something abstract which is determined by some abstract rules, but it is the application of the rules that is important in determining the meaning. The agent of application is the individual; therefore the individual plays a vital role in determining meaning. The meaning is guarded by the historical community of users of which the individual is a member.

Wittgenstein's philosophy is an attack on the essentialist view that essence precedes existence. In the essentialist view, a rule is conceived as something abstract, and the application of a rule is something concrete. The application is controlled and directed by the abstract norms and rules. This Platonic essentialism is questioned by Wittgenstein in his interpretation of rule-following as one activity. The Platonic idea of internalized mental structure as determining and justifying our linguistic action is refuted here (Crary and Read 66-67). Wittgenstein sidelines any concept of the abstract idea of rule or any mental structure which can determine our linguistic activity by removing the gap between the rule and application. Wittgenstein's understanding of rule-following is an attack on Platonic idealism and essentialism.

At a certain point, Wittgenstein's idea of freedom matches Sartre's understanding of consciousness as self-consciousness always self-creating and self-determining. It can have no essence preceding its existence. Sartre's principle that

existence precedes essence became the hallmark of Existentialism. Man exists, encounters himself and defines himself. Man is nothing but what he makes of himself (*Existentialism and Humanism* 28). Though Wittgenstein never uses the formula existence precedes essence, he maintains the same idea in his philosophy of language at the later stage. The essence of language no way transcends its existence. The meaning of language is never determined by an abstract essence but by the use of words in the concrete life of the individual. Though a rule does not transcend the action of it, an application by an individual is only in the medium of a community of other would-be rule followers that an individual's action can be a rule-following at all. There is no supra-concept outside the language-game to determine its course of action – existence.

The understanding of rule and following as one activity emerges from Wittgenstein's insight into the meaning of language as use in his new theory of meaning. The concept of abstract meaning is brought down to the realm of concrete life – form of life. The new theory of meaning is expounded on the basis of the language-game which is founded on form of life. The idea of form of life has come to the center in solving the problem involved in rule-following. In following a rule, the fundamental thing is not a transcendent rule which determines one's action, but the fundamental in rule-following is one's action. As meaning does not transcend the use, the rule does not transcend the action. The individual plays a vital role in action. It is not the internalized mental structure that determines human action; the human action itself determines its existence. If all steps are already taken, there is no freedom for the individual. However, in rule-following humans are condemned to

freedom. The decision or choice and implementation are one. It is impossible to have an intermediary between rule and following. Decision and implementation are made possible by Wittgenstein's concept of form of life. Therefore, there is scope for individual freedom in rule-following in his concept of the language-game.

Wittgenstein's new understanding of meaning as use has far reaching implications in religion and religious belief. The meaningfulness of language does not depend on the referent but on the actual use of it in the human context. The variety of language uses makes religious language legitimate, and the social character of language makes clear the role of training in religious belief. The characteristic features of religious belief can be summarized as follows: It is an unshakable commitment devoid of evidences and arguments, and it is reasonable only within its framework and grounded on the religious form of life. The rituals that are part of religious beliefs are symbolic and expressive. The existential concerns of human beings reveal a common spiritual nature enabling us to understand other religions and cultures as mirrored in our own humanity.

CHAPTER 4

TOWARDS A MEANINGFUL TALK ABOUT RELIGION

Abraham Vettiyolil. "Towards a meaningful talk about religion- prospects and problems of Ludwig Wittgenstein's philosophy of religion" Thesis. Department of Philosophy, University of Calicut, 2015

CHAPTER FOUR

TOWARDS A MEANINGFUL TALK ABOUT RELIGION

Introduction

An investigation into the philosophy of Ludwig Wittgenstein makes it clear that he was not an acknowledged follower of any established religion. When it came to participation in any organized religion, his knees were too stiff to kneel and pray (CV 63). At the same time, he was not totally alien to religion or religious belief. In his own words, "I am not a religious person, but I could not help seeing every problem from a religious point of view" (Drury, "Some Notes" 79). Wittgenstein was never exclusively concerned about the study of religion. In fact, an exclusive study in this field is not possible in the larger context of his later philosophy, since religion is a feature of human life that cannot be separated altogether. What Wittgenstein brought to the study of religion was a vibrant attentiveness to the religious use of language and the need for considering those uses in their proper context. Wittgenstein was trying to liberate religion and religious belief from the mould of abstraction to the level of the everydayness of human life. After going through some of his important philosophical themes and their implications for religion and his scattered notes on religious beliefs, one would be tempted to 'look and see' resisting the craving for generality. The prime importance is given to particulars that are understood in their proper context. Therefore, this is an attempt to understand Wittgenstein's position on religion and religious belief from a socio-cultural context and letting the multi-cultural and multi-religious context remain as it

is. His remarks on religious belief do not spring from any systematic thinking but from everyday practices of human beings. Here we attempt to see them from a pragmatic point of view. Religious beliefs are inevitably related to different aspects of human life. Rituals, which play an important role in religious beliefs, have considerable influence in the life of believer. Therefore, Wittgenstein's insight in the field of religious belief can also be seen from an ethical point of view.

Here we evaluate the contribution he makes to the philosophy of religion by his pluralistic and dynamic understanding of religion and religious belief and, in doing so, try to understand the relevance of his philosophy today in revitalizing religious language. His profound thoughts on religious belief, I think, are very suitable and relevant to the present day scenario. They serve as pillars to support a pluralistic understanding of religion and religious belief in today's world.

4.1. Towards an Eastern Approach

Wittgenstein's early philosophy really contributes to the philosophy of religion. His understanding of the mystical is very much in keeping with an Eastern approach. It enriches those religious traditions which are institutionalized and dogmatized. A meaningful talk about religions and religious belief with propositional language, which pictures reality, is not possible at the early stage of his thinking.

The Splendor of the 'Simple'

The transcendental nature of the "Divine" is common to almost all religions of the world. An understanding of early Wittgenstein's linguistic analysis makes it

clear, beyond doubt, that what can be articulated in words are facts of the world. All values – religious, ethical and aesthetical ones – go beyond human language (propositional language). The last verse of *Tractatus* characterizes these as the realm of ‘silence.’ This is the realm where words fail to articulate the reality. There is a definite boundary for what can be said by scientific language. Religious language is one which is used by humans to satisfy their natural urge to go beyond the natural boundary of language. Therefore, people use religion and religious language to reach the ultimate and find self-realization. The ultimate reality for Wittgenstein is not absolute but absolutely ‘simple,’ in the sense it cannot be articulated in human language. Any attempt to articulate the ‘simple’ will make it complex. The ultimate is simple in the sense that it is that what there ‘*is*.’ Propositions express how things are in the world, but prior to this, there is something that *is*. That primordial is something inexpressible or which cannot be said. It is not how things are in the world that is mystical, but that the world exists (*TLP* 6.44). This realm cannot be articulated in words. Humans try to articulate this in religious language, but for Wittgenstein this is something beyond the realm of language. However, what is beyond expresses itself or shows itself. “There are, indeed, things that cannot be put into words. They *make themselves manifest*. They are what is mystical” (*TLP* 5.22).

Experience of the Divine

The realm that is beyond language is not beyond the reach of human experience, but it cannot be formulated in meaningful propositions. Wittgenstein makes a difference between the experience *that* something *is*, and the experience of *how* something *is*. Experience in the normal sense is not experience *that* something

is, but experience of *how* something *is*. Compared to the ordinary understanding of experience as *how* something *is*, the experience of something *is*, is not an experience, but it is a different type of experience. This realm which is beyond language can be experienced and comprehended. We fail at the linguistic level but not in the experiential level. Whatever the name we give for this realm it is a projection of our linguistic limitation. The attempt to name the experience of what is beyond – that it exists or something *is*, what Wittgenstein calls the mystical – cuts short the perfection of the reality.

Wittgenstein seems to have realized the authentic spirit of religion in his *Tractatus*, though it is fully accomplished in his later philosophy. The experience of what there *is*, is mystical. Religious experience, according to him, is so sublime that it cannot find full expression in words. The transcendental nature of religion places it beyond the reach of propositional language. Any attempt to articulate this experience in words falls short of perfection, and the articulation will be what Wittgenstein calls nonsensical. The last sentence of *Tractatus* reminds us of his preference for silence in what is beyond and what we call religion and religious experience. “What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence” (*TLP* 7).

De-dogmatization of Religion

Though language in his early philosophy was more deterministic and static, there is room for advancement and improvement in his thought. At the end of the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein speaks against the deterministic tendency in philosophy. Propositions are used as steps (as a ladder) to climb up beyond; it is to be thrown away after climbing. I think this can be applied to religion for better understanding.

Philosophers of religion speak of the proofs for the existence of God and theories concerning his presence in the world and life after death. These proofs and theories are finished products, established for once and all. Wittgenstein, by advocating silence towards religious language, poses a challenge to traditional dogmatized religions which use scientific and propositional language to establish religious truth. This makes human life static and devoid of dynamism. This can lead to fanaticism and fundamentalism at large. The purpose of language is to convey information and picture facts. Religious language is beyond this scope since it is nonsense. The language of religion has no place in human life.

Religious teachings should be updated and should even give way to new ones in the course of time. Wittgenstein raises serious challenges to established and institutionalized religions that consider themselves a set of doctrines and dogmas that cherish a tendency that may lead to exclusivism and intolerance. This dynamic nature of religious belief is more expressed in his later philosophy which will be discussed later in this chapter.

Towards a “Wordless Faith”

Wittgenstein seems to have advocated a religion of speechless faith in his early philosophical career. Religion is seen as a way of life – a way of acting out rather than talking about. He was all against the doctrinization of any religious tradition. Paul Engelmann rightly points out that “any doctrine uttered in words is the source of its own misconstruction by worshipers, disciples and supporters” (133). The divine is simple, and any attempt to doctrinize it will make it

complicated. The doctrine itself becomes a source of misconstruction and misinterpretation.

“Wordless faith,” which Paul Engelmann attributed to Wittgenstein’s understanding of religion, can be understood in different ways, in line with his later understanding of religion as a way of life. Wittgenstein is all against giving scientific proofs and historical evidence for religious beliefs. In another sense, action is more important than word in religion as a way of life. What is important is not the articulation of experience but the experience itself that something exists. It is either an experience of ‘wonder’ or it can be interpreted as silent listening to the primordial saying and a response in silence.⁶⁰ This new way of understanding religion as a way of doing rather than talking may bring about reconciliation between conflicting ideologies and religious traditions. We cannot fully agree with the followers of Wittgenstein who condemn all doctrines as sources of misconstruction, since we know from our everyday experience that the articulation of certain experiences and actions may be guidelines for better human behavior.

His preference for silence in the matters of the Divine and whatever we call religious is one thing which is very much appreciated and loved by Eastern thinkers; they consider silence as the best way of articulating the Divine, and the best method of expressing religious experience. Silence as the way to experience the Divine as well as to convey one’s inner experience of the Divine has been adopted by almost all world religions especially those of the East, where we have Buddha and the sages

⁶⁰ Here Wittgenstein's ideas are more in line with Martin Heidegger. According to him humans respond to the primordial language by corresponding, listening, and attuning to the tune of primordial language in silence. See Martin Heidegger, *On the Way to Language* 134.

who loved silence so much. We can find some similarities between Wittgenstein's later philosophy and the teachings of Zen Buddhism. Language is normally understood as an expression of thought. It is the bridge between the thought of the one who speaks and the one who hears. Zen Buddhism argues that understanding is possible even without thought. This is what they call 'just doing.' Wittgenstein's use of mystical in his philosophy is in the sense that it is a matter of practice not of words and thought (Canfield, "Wittgenstein and Zen" 383-884). "Don't think, but look." Thinking will distort the perception of reality. Practice, which Wittgenstein advocates, and the Buddhist view of 'just doing' is somewhat similar. The same view is postulated when Wittgenstein said: "I could well imagine a religion in which there are no doctrines, so that nothing is spoken. Clearly, then, the essence of religion can have nothing to do with what is said – rather: if anything is said, then that itself is an element of religious behavior, and not a theory" (qtd. in Janik and Toulmin 407-408). In this sense, Wittgenstein's understanding of mystical is somewhat parallel or complementary to Eastern approach to religion and religious matters as against the Western tendency of conceptualizing the Divine.⁶¹ There is certain similarities between Wittgenstein and Taoist thinkers on that there are realities that cannot be expressed in language (Tominaga 137). However, conceptualization is a part of human activity but really a second order activity.

Religion belongs to the realm of transcendence since it remains inexpressible and belongs to the realm of showing. Language fails to express what is beyond the

⁶¹ Wittgenstein seems to have been influenced by eastern thought, especially, Indian through the mediation of Arthur Schopenhauer, who influenced Wittgenstein in his early stage of philosophizing. Schopenhauer claimed that he inherited a culture which is moulded in the platonic, Kantian and Upanisadic tradition. See Veerendrakumar 19.

boundary of language. Transcendence in Wittgenstein is not only inexpressible in language but also incomprehensible. This understanding of transcendence is much closer to the notion of Absolute in *Advaita Vedanta*.⁶² The Ultimate Reality cannot be described in language since language can describe only empirical reality. In this sense, Wittgenstein's understanding of religious transcendence has a striking similarity with that of Sankara. Wittgenstein's concept of transcendence is absolutist transcendence since it is both beyond cognition and beyond experience. It is indescribable and incomprehensible.

4.2. Towards Religious Pluralism

Wittgenstein, in his personal life, had very positive approach to the plurality of religious traditions. "All religions are wonderful, even those of the most primitive tribes. The ways in which people express their religious feelings differ enormously" (Drury, "Some Notes" 102). Wittgenstein's talk about religion and religious belief can be traced back to the 1933 lectures where he features religious beliefs with varieties of the grammar of religious utterances. The use of words like "God," "souls" etc. are with various grammars. The possibility of singular grammatical usage for religious utterances is ruled out in his later thought. Wittgenstein is concerned about the variety of ways words are used in religious settings and the variety of roles that religious beliefs play in the life of people.

Wittgenstein's later understanding of language has far-reaching implications in the philosophy of religion. The linguistic analysis based on the language-game

⁶² According to *Advaita Vedanta*, the absolute is beyond cognition since He is beyond description. The best way to describe the absolute is to employ negative terms like, "not this" "not that." He is beyond experience since we are unaware of what He wills. See K.C. Panday, *Religious Beliefs, Superstitions and Wittgenstein* 39.

and form of life has a wide range of possibilities. Language is a collection of language-games, and language-games are collections of customs and institutions in which words play their role in their unique contexts. Words enjoy countless heterogeneous roles in the language-game. This legitimizes linguistic pluralism as well as religious pluralism. This later linguistic view applied to religion and religious belief can explain or give a sound basis for the reality of manifold religions existing in the world.

Wittgenstein, a Challenge to Religious Exclusivism

Wittgenstein in his linguistic analysis, has presented the plurality of language by the notions of the language-game and family resemblance. As we have seen in the previous chapter, these notions have played a vital role in his understanding of language. In its application to religious belief, it has a wide range of implications. What is common to different religious traditions? What we do have between the different religious traditions is nothing but family resemblance. At the surface level, there seems to be some commonality. There are some similarities and resemblances comparable among family members. So the multiple religions existing in the world are seen as members of the same family. However, Wittgenstein asserts that there is nothing common among them. The multiple language-games we play in our lives are distinct and different from another in their nature. Even though all the games we play fall under the name 'game,' none of them exhausts the meaning of the word 'game' is. For Wittgenstein, none of the religious traditions can fully exhaust what is meant by religion, nor can a particular religion explain what religion is. This notion of family resemblance is really a challenge to the exclusivist and inclusivist

understanding of religion which is basically founded on mono-foundationalistic epistemology, which presupposes common bedrock of religious practices. No particular religion can contain religion as a whole, but it is part of religion. It cannot be reduced to any particular religion. Each of the religious traditions comes within the definition of religion without exhausting the whole of the definition (D'Souza 265).

The notion of family resemblance is useful not only among different religions but also among different traditions within a religion. Besides inter-religious relations, Wittgenstein's philosophy promotes intra-religious relations. There is possibility of a variety of religious experience and religious traditions within the same religion. His philosophy really poses a challenge to the modern tendency to look for the commonality among different religions or at least different traditions in the same religion, especially in India where the *Hindutva* force is trying to homogenize the diverse traditions of India.⁶³

The co-existence of diverse religions and religious beliefs is supported by a later entry of Wittgenstein. His introduction of the notion of incommensurability helps to safeguard the uniqueness of each religion without contradicting each other. A believer is normally one who accepts the main doctrines of a religion and participates in the activities related to rituals and worship. Conversely, an unbeliever

⁶³ *Hindutva* is a movement which claims that all religions within Hinduism are one. Actually Hinduism is not one religion, but a collection of religions. Each religion has its own tradition and way of life and doctrines. We cannot trace the commonality of these religions. There is only one thing we can say in general about Hinduism is that but there is nothing general in it. At the surface level all religions of Hinduism seems to have common characteristics there is nothing at the deeper level. The fundamentalist attitude of this movement is politically motivated. Without politics it cannot survive. They want to build a strong nation-state based on the spirit of homogenized Hinduism. See Pathak 14.

is one who does not accept those particular doctrines and participation in the religious practices which a believer does. The meaning of believer and unbeliever depends on the context in which it is used. For Wittgenstein, the meaning of a word emerges from the use of it in particular contexts. A Christian may be a believer in the context of Christianity, but he may be an unbeliever in the context of Hinduism. An unbeliever is not an atheist in all the cases; he may be a follower of a different religious tradition. Thus the disagreement between a believer and nonbeliever has various dimensions (Chaturvedi 176).

Based on the doctrine of incommensurability, one can argue that an unbeliever cannot contradict the religious belief of a person. The believer and the unbeliever are using different pictures. The particular picture used by the believer does not play any significant role in the life of the unbeliever. One who follows a particular religion cannot contradict the follower of another religion. Therefore, there is no point in excluding other religions or making a claim of the sole possession of the truth. One religion cannot claim superiority over another because both are using different pictures. There is nothing common between them at the depth level, but there exists some sort of similarity. Both are using a picture, but they are using different pictures differently. Therefore, the uniqueness of each religious tradition is safeguarded.

Religious fundamentalism and religious exclusivism have become major evils in our religiously pluralistic world. Even though the universality of truth is taken for granted, the knowledge of this truth may not be universal. It is not relative though the knowledge of the truth can be relative. Religious exclusivism is the

attitude in which a religion or religious tradition claims the absolute monopoly of knowledge of the ultimate reality. There are different religions existing in the world with a variety of knowledge claims. The problem is who is correct? Historical research would show the barbarous and brutal intolerance of one religious tradition towards other religious traditions. This, beyond doubt, is the result of religious exclusivism. Cardinal Newman has rightly commented on this, “Oh, how we hate one another for the love of God” (qtd. in Jurji 21). Religious tolerance means to accept one’s right to hold a particular religious belief. It does not mean to accept the content of that particular belief (Netland 80).

Wittgenstein is really posing a challenge to the tendency of exclusivism and inclusivism. The essentialist position that all religions are essentially one and the differences are accidental is untenable for Wittgenstein, since it destroys the uniqueness of each religion. Wittgenstein safeguards the uniqueness of each religious tradition by his notions of family resemblance and incommensurability. His position is helpful for inter-religious relations as well as intra-religious relations – relations within the same religion. Wittgenstein is really a challenge to the exclusivist tendency which has shed much blood in the name of religion in history, and to the fundamentalist attitude, which is really untenable in a pluralistic society.

Religious inclusivism is another matter of attention here which also is a stumbling block to inter-religious relations. Religious inclusivism is a position in which one holds that one’s religion has the sole possession of the knowledge of the ultimate reality and other religions are included in it as subsidiaries, as something incomplete. This position also is not a healthy one. I think Wittgenstein’s linguistic

philosophy in its religious application contributes to inter-religious relations. It can serve as a basis for understanding religious plurality. His philosophy paves the foundation for an attitude of appreciation, respect and love for others' religious beliefs.

Wittgenstein's followers have different views regarding whether we can consider religious belief as a language-game. D. Z. Phillips is one of those who uphold the view that religious belief can be considered as a distinctive language-game. There are many who think that we cannot consider religious language or belief as a distinctive language-game on the basis that religious belief may look like hobbies and something with which men occupy themselves on weekends. They also criticize on the suspicion that religious belief is placed outside any possible criticism (Phillips, *Wittgenstein and Religion* 57). Besides, Wittgenstein's family resemblance theory may lead to absolutizing of one's own position, and that is as equally dangerous as exclusivism or reductionism.

Even before *Philosophical Investigations* one could trace Wittgenstein's remarks regarding the varieties of religious beliefs and utterances in his 1933 lectures. Grammatical and logical varieties of religious utterance and beliefs are expressed in his lecture on religious beliefs. Wittgenstein's remarks on the varieties of the grammar of religious beliefs states that the word 'God' is used in multiples ways. There is no uniform grammar for the word God. "I have always wanted to say something about grammar of ethical expressions, or e.g. of 'God'./..../Now: use of such a word as 'God'./ It has been used in many different ways: e.g. sometimes for something very like a human being - a physical body. There are many

controversies about meaning of 'God', which could be settled by saying 'I'm not using the word in such a sense as that you can say' (Wittgenstein, *Lectures: Cambridge* 5:1). The use of word the 'God' does not have a uniform grammar. Varieties of grammatical usages make religious utterance complex.

These grammatical usages are not only various but also mixed and indeterminate. They do not have a simple set of rules that govern a particular utterance. The expression, theology as grammar, has a broad meaning understood in the context of the grammatical analysis of language and the new understanding of meaning as use. It is this grammatical variety of religious language that makes pluralistic understanding of religion and religious belief possible. A meaningful talk about religion and religious belief is not only possible but also possible in variety of a ways.

Autonomy and Inter-religious Dialogue

As we have seen, the notion of the language-game and form of life play a central role in the philosophy of Wittgenstein. Language is seen as an activity that derives its meaning from its use in particular contexts. Wittgenstein's notion of meaning as use is in the background of the analogy of the language-game and allows for the multiplicity of language-games. Are these language-games distinct in themselves? What type of interconnections do they have among themselves? If they are distinct, what is the status of religion and religious beliefs? Are religious beliefs distinct language-games? Wittgenstein himself has made no comment that religious beliefs are distinct language games as cut off from other language-games. It is some of the Wittgensteinians who have considered religious beliefs as distinct language-

games with their own rules and regulations and also call for no external justification and explanations. The language-game of religious belief is autonomous. This approach led Wittgenstein's thoughts on religious beliefs to fideism. Fideism is widely criticized and not accepted. Fideism may lead to serious consequences since Wittgenstein's insight about religious beliefs are affiliated with ethics. It can lead to ethical devaluation and religious fundamentalism.⁶⁴ Therefore, defending Wittgenstein against fideism is needed in the present day scenario.

As we have seen in the previous chapter, there are different categories of language-games that Wittgenstein acknowledges: pure and impure, religious and non religious, real and imaginary. The autonomy of the language-game has been acknowledged by Wittgenstein, but autonomy is limited to a certain category of the language-games. Ordinary games can be autonomous to a certain extent, since they are artificially combined and intended to be self-contained. A builder's game, as in Wittgenstein's example, can be conceptually autonomous if the participants know no other games. A strict autonomous status cannot be claimed by any language-game, since there are inter-dependence and inter relatedness.

Moreover, language-games which are dependent on any other language-games, as on imaginary language-game which is based on a real language-game, can never be autonomous. Also, a religious language-game which is our concern here claims no autonomy or very restricted autonomy as it purely depends on other aspects of human life. The meaningfulness of a religious language game is derived

⁶⁴ Religious fundamentalism Caputo conceives as "the passion for God gone mad." See John Caputo, *On Religion* (London: Routledge, 2001) 107 as quoted in Bob Plant, "Wittgenstein, Religious "Passion" and Fundamentalism" 295.

from and depended on concepts of ordinary discourses. Thus the language-game of religious belief claims no absolute autonomy. However, religious language-games can claim a restricted autonomy.

The restricted autonomy of the language-game can be comprehended by the relationship between the language-game and form of life. A comprehensive understanding of the language-game includes the notion of form of life. The language-game is the linguistic aspect and form of life is the extra-linguistic aspect. The language-game cannot be cut off from form of life, because form of life is the agreement among the inhabitants of the community of gamers.

Every religious tradition could be treated as a form of life with specific activities of its own. The nature of the form of life is actually determined by the activity of that particular group of people. Each religion, with its particular behavior, could be termed a game. Each religious tradition has its own beliefs and laws that have meaning and validity only within its context. Context plays a vital role in the determination of meaning in Wittgenstein's linguistic analysis. Every belief presupposes a system of beliefs; it is actually the system of beliefs that determines the meaning. Every religious belief presupposes a context in which it finds its meaning. A particular belief may be a blunder out of its context or form of life. It is the context that gives meaning and life to religious beliefs. Since the meaning of language is occasion-sensitive, the language used in religious beliefs and practices is meaningful within the context of its use.

Is religion a form of life? There are different answers to this. Wittgenstein never applied form of life to religion. It is Norman Malcolm who first applied this

concept to religion (Malcolm, *A Memoir* 72). Later D. Z. Phillips and others developed it further. There are others who say that religion is not a form of life, but religion is one with different forms of life. They say religion includes several forms of life (Sherry, "Form of Life" 161). However, believers play the language-game of religious belief within a particular situation that makes it meaningful. The autonomy of language-games is a very provocative and at the same time a crucial idea in Wittgenstein's philosophy. The autonomy of language indicates that grammar or linguistic rules, which constitute our conceptual schema, is arbitrary. This is a strong weapon that Wittgenstein uses against linguistic foundationalism. It goes against his earlier philosophy where language is considered a mirror image of reality. Wittgenstein describes language as self-contained with its grammar and as not responsible to any extra-linguistic reality. His understanding of the language-game with its own rules indicates the autonomous nature of language (*PG* 184-185). Not only is language autonomous of reality, but also each language-game has its own autonomy since the rules of one game cannot be applied to another. The rules or grammar of a particular language-game cannot be suitable for another one, and one language-game cannot be justified on the basis of the rules and grammar of another. This means that while a belief can be justified within a language-game, the language game as such cannot be brought into question.

When this is applied in the case of religious belief, it becomes a little complicated. If we accept religious belief as a distinctive language game, we must agree that it has its own rules, justifiable within the language-game of religion; however, religion itself cannot be questioned. Though we can hold that religious

belief can be justified in itself, we cannot forget the mutual influence of different language-games. The distinctiveness of religious language-games depends on their being conceptually related to other beliefs and not cut off from their situations (Harvey 98). Religious belief, taken as a distinctive language-game, has its own rules and grammar which reveal the sense of religious belief. The grammar of a particular religious belief is different from that of another. Just as it is not possible to evaluate a particular language on the basis of the grammar and rules of another language, we cannot do it with religious belief either.

Religious belief, as a distinctive language-game and religion as a distinct form of life, can be viewed and understood as autonomous only in a limited or restricted sense. Religious language, the expression of human attitudes and rituals as symbolic expressions of human nature and man's everyday dealings such as birth, sex, death etc., cannot be separated and viewed from an isolated point of view.

Myth, magic and religion are expressive and symbolic; they emerge from cultural rituals, metaphors and symbolic narratives. Since they are expressive, they differ from instrumental practices. Being symbolic they differ from non-symbolic expressive practices such as playing music. As symbolic and expressive, they are more akin to ritualistic practices, and these symbolic and expressive practices cater to the human spirit. The conceptual features that make these practices spiritual are promoting an attitude of wonder at the mysterious nature of life, the manner in which they express symbolic actions, poetic language and powerful images and finally the deep existential concerns of human beings. These features transform

myth, magic and religion, inspiring a spiritual attitude towards life (Lurie, *Human Spirit* 161).

It is the cultural community that creates the rituals. Human beings have a natural disposition to create and observe rituals that can express their everyday concerns. Hence, humans create symbolic practices that can express their concerns such as anger and friendship. A right ritual can evoke in a participant a spiritually edifying way of birth, death, sex, love, and other occasions that are deeply important to humans. Wittgenstein does not bring forth a formula for distinguishing meaningful rituals from meaningless rituals. The meaning of rituals depends on the apt use of it in Wittgenstein's broader context of his later philosophy (Hoyt 180). Though one could read a naturalistic and instinctive approach in Wittgenstein towards religion and religious rituals, his whole approach cannot be reduced to naturalism in religion.

Moreover, being defensive of Wittgenstein's approach to religious belief, any attribution of absolute autonomy to the religious language-game is not appreciated. If we consider religion as an autonomous and a distinctive form of life in Wittgenstein's philosophy, inter-religious relations and dialogue are problematic. From the new theory of meaning proposed by the later Wittgenstein, one may assume that there is no scope for absolute values. Every religious tradition is a humanly constructed autonomous system of tradition. Therefore, there are no objective criteria for evaluating the meaningfulness of the system. Though Wittgenstein's family resemblance theory explains the phenomenon of pluralistic religious tradition, it blocks the way for mutual criticism and dialogue. There is

nothing common to the divergent phenomena of religions; what we have are only some similarities. I can know only what is within my religious tradition, since I cannot go beyond the boundary of my tradition. This may lead to absolutizing one's own religious tradition as in the case of the essentialist position.⁶⁵ There is no scope for criticism and dialogue across religious traditions. In Wittgenstein's philosophy, there is no fundamental unity behind religions.

Then the question arises: What is it that makes a belief religious? Is there anything common to different religions that make them religious? Wittgenstein's family resemblance theory answers this question in a negative way. We cannot find something that is common to all religions to make them religious. Wittgenstein seems to deny the fundamental unity among different religions, and once it is denied, there is no scope for inter-religious dialogue. Each religion is autonomous in its own position. I think it is a serious drawback in Wittgenstein's family resemblance theory in its application to religion. This theory cannot be accepted as such, since inter-religious dialogue is an imperative for harmonious coexistence and the enrichment of religious traditions. However, among different religions there is resemblance – family resemblance that may help them to accept the uniqueness of each religion which is the aim of dialogue. However, if we think beyond the resemblance there is nothing common among them. This may lead to absolutize one's own religion. However, a serious question arises: Is there any point in

⁶⁵ The essentialist position is one which holds that all religions are essentially the same and the plurality is something accidental. Religion has an unchanging essence, which is applicable to all religions, and all the religions are equally good. And this position is also known as reductive pluralism, since this plurality can be reduced to one. This understanding of religious pluralism is one which is found in India. This may result in absolutizing one's own religion. See Karuvelil, *Epistemology, Metaphysics, and God* 34-36.

dialogue? In the context of Wittgenstein's insights on religion, there is no need for a dialogue among religions. It allows sufficient space for each religion with its own task to perform and context to exercise.

The reality of the plurality of world religions raises different questions. Are all of them addressing the same reality? A positive answer will not do justice to Wittgenstein's later philosophy. There exist similarities only at the surface level. At the bottom, there is nothing common. However, from a pragmatic point of view which is a prime concern and approach in his later philosophy, one could approach the world religions as we approach world languages, as we understand them across traditional linguistic barriers (Gill, "World Religions" 355). From a functional point of view, the meaning of language is seen in the function or use of it in various contexts. Language is used to accomplish varied but specific tasks. The various speech acts in different world religions occurs in its specific context. Languages including religious language are occasion-sensitive. Therefore, to understand any speech act of any religious tradition depends on the task it accomplishes in the context of its language-game and its boarder context of form of life.

A strict autonomy of the religious language-game can call for serious issues in the present day religiously plural world. An unquestionable stand of any religion may lead to religious fundamentalism and religious intolerance. Religious fundamentalists are those who believe in the fundamentals of their faith considering themselves to be the exclusive possessors of religious truth, demanding unconditional obedience to the revelation of God, refusing to compromise their deeply held principles, dividing the world into good and evil, and being suspicious

of the secular knowledge (B. Plant "Religious 'Passion' and Fundamentalism" 298). Wittgenstein's understanding of religious belief offers a challenge to this fundamentalist view. Even in the light of Wittgenstein's understanding of religion as a matter of heart or passion, the fundamentalist view is seen as 'passion for god gone mad'. In each of these stages, fundamentalism cannot be accommodated in Wittgenstein's religious point of view.

In Wittgenstein's linguistic analysis, there are many languages according to the cultures and forms of life. Every language is autonomous, and the one who participates in it becomes a prisoner to it. The linguistic situation constitutes a person's horizon. However, this philosophical analysis fails to acknowledge that this horizon is open and can interact with other horizons. This interaction and interfacing are imperative for revitalization.

4.3. A Dynamic Approach to Religion

Wittgenstein's conception of language is very much dynamic in his later thought as we have seen. There is the possibility of a new language-game coming into being in the course of time while the existing one may be forgotten and vanish (*PI* 23). Since the language game itself is founded on the form of life, language by its nature is dynamic. The unpredictable nature of the language-game reveals the dynamic and creative nature of language. What is meaningful for some may not be meaningful for others. This unpredictable nature gives us divergent possibilities. When this is applied to religious life, it is easy to grasp the dynamic nature of religious belief. There are various religions evolving from time to time and some lose their significance. Therefore, Wittgenstein proposes some sort of change even

within religion. Religious belief is part of human activity. Therefore, there is scope for growth and development in religious beliefs and religious language.

Considering the life of modern men and women, the dynamic nature of religious belief allows describing and deciding upon an action. The problems and questions which people face differ from age to age. This sort of dynamic and creative understanding can answer the problem of the people of our age since belief is rooted in life. The dynamic understanding of religious belief permits one to be involved in the life of the people in contrast to the static and dogmatized understanding of religious belief.

The dynamic approach to religious beliefs comes out of Wittgenstein's understanding of grammatical variety and its arbitrariness. Various grammars can be mixed in the utterance of another sentence. If a sentence is grammatically various, its utterance in two different instances have different grammars and utterance of the same in a third context may have an indeterminate grammar between the earlier utterances. Therefore it is difficult to prescribe a unique grammar for each utterance. Language can be grammatically fluid since certain grammar can change over the course of time (Citron, "Simple Objects" 22). Wittgenstein's remarks on such a change in language game are significant here. "Language-game does change with time" (*OC* 256). This change takes place at the level of concept formation. "If I have made the transition from one concept-formation to another, the old concept is still there in the background" (*RFM* IV: 30). The arbitrariness of grammar is understood in terms of variety, indeterminacy and fluidity. This grammatical variety and fluidity offers a dynamic concept of language; however, religious language which describes

religious beliefs in various religions tend to be fluid and indeterminate and can lead to its negative effect in practice (Citron, "Simple Objects" 25). The dynamic understanding, which allows much flexibility, is well appreciated, but over flexibility may result in fundamentalism in the case of religion. Religious fundamentalism occurs with the feeling that a particular religious tradition loses its grip, or, in psychological terms, arises from some sort of insecurity complex. "Extremely militant fundamentalism may be the result of an unconscious process. It may arise out of latent feelings of inferiority and insecurity and may reflect an uncompromising attitude and an over-zealous attempt for self-defense" (Thadavanal 154). If religious beliefs keep on changing according to the interests of the people and circumstances, this may lead some to hold a fundamentalist attitude and may harm a peaceful co-existence among different religions.

4.4. Religion as a Social Phenomenon

The social character of the language-game implies a role of training in language mastery. When this understanding of language is applied to religious belief, it becomes a matter of training. A person's belief is surrounded by a set of beliefs, which is acquired by practice. Thinking along these lines, religious belief is man-made. or constructed in human society by constant practice. Religion, understood as a form of life, is a social phenomenon. "Why am I a Christian?" "Why am I still a Christian?" These are two different questions and should be answered differently. I am a Christian because I was born and brought up in a Christian family and a Christian tradition. I could very well be a Hindu or Muslim. Most people, except those who accept a particular religion at a later stage of life, follow their

religion due to sociological reasons.⁶⁶ There may be different answers to the latter question other than sociological reasons. Human beings are born and brought up in a social situation where each one learns beliefs by constant practices. In the pragmatic approach to religious belief, Wittgenstein emphasizes the importance of training. The technique of using religious belief as a picture, is acquired by practice and training. Wittgenstein's emphasis on the worldview is important. The worldview is really created by constant training. Human beings are linguistic animals, insofar as they are linguistically trained, and they are religious animals insofar as they are religiously trained.

However, this understanding reduces religion to a mere matter of training and totally human construction. I find it difficult to reconcile this view of Wittgenstein's with that of the early phase, where there is a more sublime view of religion as mystical. The mystical is that which cannot be articulated in words. Religious values explained with the doctrine of silence are sublime and appreciated in many religious traditions especially of the Eastern traditions. Another difficulty is that if religion is something social and secular, how is it differentiated from other social institutions? We cannot find that distinguishing factor in Wittgenstein's philosophy of religion. If so, religious beliefs would be reduced to hobbies. This would result in a naturalistic or socialistic reduction of religion, which is not tenable. Moreover, this socialistic understanding of religion could lead to religious

⁶⁶ Here we are not denying the fact of conversion to one religion at a later stage of life. This may be motivated by some other sociological or financial factors or even political factors. Since it is a human endeavor, it is all the more possible. An example will clarify this: Kamala Das, a renowned poet and writer in English and in Malayalam, was converted to Islam recently, and named Suraiya Begum. This widow claims that she embraced Islam because she was in need of protection. A woman in burqa is respected and protected in society. She could not find this protection in Hinduism, where more freedom is given. See K. N. Pandey 2.

fundamentalism at the depth level, though it is appealing at the peripheral level. Religious fundamentalism is often interpreted as a reaction to secularism (Sondhi 44).

4.5. A Crusade against Scientism⁶⁷

The pragmatic criterion of meaning in Wittgenstein's later philosophy implies that it is not the referent that gives meaning to a word, but its function in different contexts. Wittgenstein's pragmatic attitude really shows itself in his lecture on religious belief. As we have seen, a belief becomes religious not because it is supported by historical evidence and scientific proofs, but because it has a role in the life of the person. It has a regulatory function. Scientific indubitability is not enough to make change in the person's life. Wittgenstein started a war against those who try to give a scientific footing to religious belief. In reality, religious belief is not in need of such footing. It is really rooted in the activities and lives of persons. A person holds a religious belief not as an outcome of any scientific proof, but because he is born and brought up in such a situation. He holds the belief because of its role in his life. It is a present day tendency to see science and religion within the same mould. Wittgenstein is really at war with this tendency of scientism. The rationality of religious belief is seen within the purview of religion. It is not to be evaluated by scientific standards. However, this understanding of religious belief may result in the oversimplification of religious faith and may lead to the rise of religious fundamentalism.

⁶⁷ This title is taken from an article by Laxman Kumar Tripathy. See L. K. Tripathy 1.

Wittgenstein seems to undermine the role of reason in religion. However, I think we cannot ascribe so-called ‘fideism’⁶⁸ to him. He was against evidentialism which claims that religious beliefs can be rationally accepted only if they are supported by one’s total evidence. Wittgenstein’s position is that religious belief is beyond scientific evidence and proofs. He also believes that the rationality of religious belief is more relative. Within the form of life or the language-game, religious belief is called for justification; but the language-game itself is not called for justification. It is there as is our life.

When understood in a proper way, we cannot give ground even for our ordinary experience. It will end up in an ungrounded way of acting (*OC* 110). This is where explanations come to an end. This is why Wittgenstein prefers rather a descriptive approach. All explanations come to an end in the ungrounded way of living. I think it is a turning away from the traditional view that everything is grounded on science and scientific explanation to the description of what happens in the actual life of humans in everyday life. In responding to *Frazer’s ‘Golden Bough,’* Wittgenstein accuses Frazer of his obsession with explanation. Frazer commits an error when he looks for an explanation of the religious beliefs of primitive people. Since every explanation is a hypothesis for him, what we can do is to describe. Human life is like that. We cannot call the belief of primitive people superstitious, since we cannot see their belief through our scientific worldview.

⁶⁸ Fideism is a claim that one’s fundamental religious convictions are not subject to independent rational assessment. Proponents of religious fideism include Kierkegaard, Tertullian, and Karl Barth. And Kai Nielsen ascribes Fideism to the Wittgensteinians, such as Peter Winch, Norman Malcolm and D.Z. Phillips. See Nielsen, “Wittgensteinian Fideism” 237-253.

Can we take the life-regulating character of religious belief as its distinguishing factor? It may be right that certain religious beliefs regulate the life of the person. However, there are people who raise objections to Wittgenstein's claim that religious belief regulates one's life.⁶⁹ I think life and belief somewhat merge and influence each other. However, this is not an exclusive characteristic of religious beliefs. There are beliefs, other than religious beliefs, that guide people's lives. We know that there is a connection between what we believe and the life we live. Another problem is why a person holds religious belief. Is it because it regulates his life, or is he trained in such a way as to believe? Does reason play any role? I think all these elements – training, guidelines and reason play important roles in human life. Human beings, as rational beings, try to integrate the social, normative and rational elements into life. The unshakable nature which Wittgenstein ascribes to religious belief can also be questioned in the light of some recent studies.⁷⁰

We can very well acknowledge that religious life regulates the life of the believer, and his unshakable belief is not based on proofs. It is not logical to conclude that proofs and evidence are irrelevant to the second order activity of philosophizing from the fact that unshakable religious commitment which is a first order activity is not based on evidences. "It fails to distinguish between a first order activity of adherence to religious beliefs and a second order philosophical activity of examining the warrant for those beliefs" (Karuvellil, "Epistemology of Religion" 125). Even a believer faced with a challenge could engage in justifying and finding

⁶⁹ Some sociologists of religion pointed out that many modern believers compartmentalize their belief from life, so that the belief has no impact on their life. See M. Martin 373.

⁷⁰ To a certain extent religious belief is a matter of education. Michael Martin suggests from his own experience as a teacher that people gave up their faith in Christianity when exposed to evidences of which they were not previously aware. See M. Martin 373.

evidence for what he believes even if his belief is not an outcome of any such evidences. This is a second order activity of philosophizing. Besides, religion as an unshakable commitment may lead to absolutizing one's religion and religious belief. This may lead to a reductionist or essentialist position, which is not tenable as we have seen.

4.6. Varieties of Understanding of Religion and Religious Belief

In Wittgenstein's philosophy, there is a possibility of varieties of understanding of religion from different perspectives. From the beginning to the end of his philosophical career, Wittgenstein was concerned with religious beliefs. A serious investigation into his religious thought provides us with the varieties of understanding of religion and religious beliefs in his approaches. Wittgenstein approaches religion from different points of view: religious, cultural, pragmatic and ethical. An attempt to understand religion and religious belief in a variety of ways can construe the meaning of religious belief and express it in meaningful talk.

A Religious Point of View

Wittgenstein extensively covered vast varieties of philosophical topics during his career. In his writings, the philosophy of religion was not a central concern. However, religion and religious matters are pervasive throughout his writings. Though Wittgenstein was not a religious man he could see every problem from a religious point of view. "I am not a religious man: but I cannot help seeing every problem from a religious point of view" (Rhees, *Personal Recollection* 79). He may not have subscribed to any particular religion or religious creed. However, it

is not necessary to practice religion in order to discuss a religion. Rather, it would be helpful to describe a practice to discuss about religion (Labron 61). His early work was preoccupied with religion as the "mystical": that which is higher and transcendental. Wittgenstein was serious about religion and religious beliefs and committed to do them "wordlessly." Thus, *Tractatus* has a religious point of view which cannot be expressed in words. There is no space for meaningful talk about religion at this stage.

Though his later work, *Philosophical Investigations*, has no direct assertions about religious beliefs some sort of religious point of view can be attributed by the application of some of his philosophical notions to religious beliefs and religion. When applied to religion, the notion of the language-game and form life in his understanding of meaning, becomes distinct. Religion as form of life with its restricted autonomy is mostly hailed by Wittgensteinians, such as Winch, Clark and D.Z. Philips. In the later philosophical notes, *Lectures on Religious Belief*, *Remarks on Frazer's Golden Bough* and *Culture and Value*, Wittgenstein has a mature description of religious beliefs and religion. From a religious point of view, his remarks on religious beliefs indicate a passionate commitment, detaching from any sort of historical evidence or scientific proofs. From this perspective, religious beliefs gained the status of a special category pointing out Wittgenstein's departure from dogmatic and institutionalized religion. From this perspective, religious beliefs are a matter of passion, fear, trust and awe not of proof and evidence. It is a matter of heart and soul not of reason and intellect. Wittgenstein was, therefore, able to view the problems from a religious point of view.

A Pragmatic Point of View

Wittgenstein's reflection on the domain of religion and religious belief echoes the position of pragmatic philosophers. The pragmatic aspect of Wittgenstein's religious thought takes its root in different directions and culminates in all directions in the form of life. Wittgenstein's *Lectures on Religious Belief* establishes a fundamental relationship between religious belief and the form of life. Later in his notes, *Culture and Value* and *Remarks on Golden Bough*, the relationship between religious belief and form of life becomes deeper. At this stage, Wittgenstein insists that religious belief should not be viewed from a theoretical or an intellectual point of view. Though Wittgenstein insists on a religious point of view, such a domain is very much rooted in the culture and shared practices of a community. This is a realistic approach to the relation between religious belief and communal practices. Religious faith and religious rituals express the existential concern of the participating community. The link between religious belief and form of life confirms the pragmatic point of view. Religious belief bases its certainty and justification on the form of life, totality of shared beliefs and not on theoretical and scientific bases.

Any speech act in religious discourse is an expression of the existential concern of the partakers of religious beliefs. On the one hand, the gap between what they believe and what they live is reduced to the minimum in the pragmatic approach of Wittgenstein. On the other hand, the effects of the belief in the life and conduct of the believer is important. Religious belief has the power to regulate the believer's life. In Wittgenstein's philosophical and religious thought, action has an

important role. Theological demands for the proof of God's existence have little value in religion. The role of deeds and the importance of changing one's life gain emphasis in his philosophy. "For Wittgenstein, the essential thing in a religious life was not the acceptance of doctrines or creeds but works. To Drury, Wittgenstein has said that his belief was that "only if you try to be helpful to other people will you find your way to God" (Malcolm, *A Religious Point of View?* 20). In the later philosophical period, the main current of his thinking is his insistence that our every day concept requires a basis of acting and doing.

Wittgenstein places a greater emphasis on the role of action in his later philosophy. Though every action takes place in the background of system of beliefs, Wittgenstein suggests that action precedes thought in his remarks *On Certainty* (411). Action and thought are intertwined in his later philosophy. His thoughts outlined in *On Certainty* are shaped within the framework of *Philosophical Investigations*. Language comprises of language-games which are complicated forms of life including building, praying, telling jokes, reporting and playing games (*PI* 23). Wittgenstein maintains that the ground or the end is not some proposition but acting. Our actions form the background against which the language-games take place (Goodman, *Wittgenstein and William James* 34).

Wittgenstein, in his later thought, leans more towards a pragmatic philosophy. "So I am trying to say something that sounds like pragmatism" (*OC* 422). His pragmatic thought that is rooted in action and use of words, applied to religion and religious beliefs, helps us understand the meaning of such usage. The usage of words like "God" or "soul" do not lead us to the questions of "does God

exist?" or "What is the mode of God's existence?" It is rather how the words "God or "soul" are used and how they are useful in the lives the people who use those or similar words in particular contexts.

The pragmatic point of view can be understood in the convergence of culture and the shared practices of a community of believers. "In Wittgenstein's thought, the anthropological and existential viewpoints combine in the link that unites belief with a form of life- i.e. with a pattern of conduct and a context made of rules and shared practices" (Cometti 19). Religious beliefs, their utterance and ritual forms culminate in the lives of the people who collectively share the same mode of life patterns. Religious beliefs have their origin in the collective and shared practices of the community or culture on the one hand, and their effect in the life of the believer on the other. The former is communitarian or cultural and the latter is more subjective. However, the latter has a communal effect in a larger perspective. A picture of religious belief is similar to holding up a mirror to reflect our own nature. Wittgenstein's pragmatic approach to religious beliefs offers a more coherent understanding of religious beliefs. The possibility of varieties of understanding of religious beliefs is offered in a religiously pluralistic world without contradicting each other.

A Cultural Point of View

Wittgenstein, in his later thought has a very pessimistic attitude toward culture. It seems that he was heavily influenced by Oswald Spengler's *The Decline of the West*. Wittgenstein had a very pessimistic attitude about the contemporary culture. Perhaps he expressed a doubt because his thought on religion would be

misunderstood in the darkness of this time. The spirit of his philosophy was against the spirit of the time. Wittgenstein claims that his philosophy is opposed to cultural decline. However, there is no such mention of cultural decline in the *Philosophical Investigations*. The cultural decline is internally connected to his views on religious decline (DeAngelis 3). Wittgenstein could see the religious beliefs from a cultural point of view. Religious beliefs and practices expressed the spirit of the culture. This is declining and, therefore, what is expressed in ritualistic practice is a declined cultural perspective. His pessimistic attitude to the possibility of religious expression in language emerged from his singular understanding of language at the early phase of his philosophy. However, his pessimistic attitude, though not severe as in the early phase, is linked to the emergence of modern civilizations.

In the background of the decline of culture, it is impossible to express religious beliefs. Wittgenstein shared Spengler's idea of obstacles to artistic expression due to cultural decline. Religion undergoes the fate as art. Religious inexpressibility, in later Wittgenstein, is connected to his cultural concerns. When the cultural setting is in its proper place, religious expressions become meaningful. The cultural surrounding necessary for religious expressions is disappearing due to cultural decline. From a cultural point of view present cultural context is not suitable for expressions of religion. The meaning of religious expressions is bound up with social surroundings and cultural settings (DeAngelis 116-18).

An Ethical Point of View

Wittgenstein, throughout his philosophical career, maintained some sort of affinity between religion and ethics. An attempt to understand the relevance of

Wittgenstein's philosophy unveils its relation to human life. His philosophy, in general, and the philosophy of religion, in particular, is dependent on human existential dealings. In his early writings, Wittgenstein insists that religious beliefs along with ethical values are transcendental. Religious assertions are as inexpressible as ethical values. Religion and ethics do not belong to the world of facts. Values along with religious belief cannot be said but only shown. Ethics and religion converge at the point that it is transcendental and any attempt to express that which is transcendental will result in nonsense. In his *Lectures on Ethics*, Wittgenstein links the inexpressibility of ethical values and inexpressibility of religious values. He makes a distinction between relative value and absolute value. He claims that statements of relative value can be expressed in factual statements, and statements of absolute value cannot be expressed in factual statements (38-39). The inexpressibility of ethical or absolute value also applies to religious value in his lectures. Wittgenstein continued this approach even in his later remarks. "What is Good is Divine too. That, strangely enough, sums up my ethics" (CV 5).

Wittgenstein was inspired to identify values with the mystical and excluded values from the intelligible world. He was able to integrate value into the life flow of human life (Litwack 8). The meaning of life - not in the sense of the purpose of life - is the sense of the world that belongs to the outside of the world. He makes a distinction between two godheads; the world, on the one hand, with its factuality, and independent I, on the other hand, with meaning of life and God. It is the "independent I" that is the basis of a good and happy life. Thus the "independent I"

has an important role in the mystical thought of Wittgenstein. Interestingly, Wittgenstein was reported to have said that the purpose of *Tractatus* is ethical.

Wittgenstein's talk about the religious terms like "god," "soul" and "immortality of soul" seems to be equated with ethical expressions even during the later stage of his philosophy. "I have always wanted to say something about (the) grammar of ethical expressions, or e.g. of God" (qtd. in Citron, "Religious Language" 27). Wittgenstein's conversation on 25 December 1944 stresses the affinity between religion and morality (Rhees, "On Religion" 411).

Wittgenstein's understanding of religious life as a picture that regulates the life of the believer has many ethical implications. The purpose of religious belief, though not expressed in propositions, is ethical. Religious beliefs serve as guiding principles and standing right in front of human beings. Religious beliefs have an important role in forming a moral conscience and regulating man's actions which involve moral standards. Thus, religious beliefs have a considerable influence on the moral behavior of human beings. However, an over emphasis on the moral perspective can reduce Wittgenstein's view on religion to mere morality. Morality is an element in religious life. The presence of various rituals and the existence of various sacred scriptures help to shape moral responses and religious forms of life. It is within the religious forms of life that moral responses are formulated (Hodges and Aikin, "Possibility of Religion" 15). Though Wittgenstein linked ethics and religion tightly, it is not right to consider his thinking as a reductive view of religion (Hare 393). In the reductive view, religion is simply viewed as morality associated with

certain emotions and narratives. Wittgenstein is far distanced from such a consideration.

A Non-Metaphysical Point of View

Wittgenstein has influenced the discipline of philosophy as well as its subsidiary fields including the philosophy of religion. He has produced two different philosophies yet equally brilliant and mainly centered on the philosophy of language with a non-metaphysical approach. Wittgenstein tried to avoid metaphysical concerns from the beginning. Any metaphysical reflection is inseparable from metaphysical anxiety. Freedom from metaphysical anxiety and overcoming misery are achieved through living the presence. "I cannot bend the happenings of the world to my will. I am completely powerless. I can only make myself independent of the world, and so in a certain sense master it, by renouncing any influence on happenings" (*NB* 11.6.16). Those who accept the world as it is live without fear and hope (Worthington 483). His non-metaphysical approach is much more evident in his later writings. "What *we* do is to bring words back from their metaphysical use to everyday use" (*PI* 116). Wittgenstein has made an attempt to bring religious beliefs and discourse to their original home, centered on the life of the community of believers. This approach is exposed by exploring the meaning his parenthetical remark, "Theology as Grammar" (*PI* 373) based on his new approach to the theory of meaning.

Wittgenstein's renewed approach to language and religious belief has a significant influence on the traditional Judeo-Christian approach to religious belief which is highly metaphysical. Traditional religious beliefs are highly metaphysical

with their doctrinal and dogmatic character. After Wittgenstein, there was a change in the approach and in the application of religious belief, a change from theory to practice. The grammar of religious belief changed from abstract and systematical theories to the simple everyday life of human beings. The meaning of religious language was divorced from its doctrinal footings and found its meaning in ordinary life situations, where one used them in religious celebrations and ritual practices (Wittgenstein 6). Wittgenstein's remarks on religion and religious belief associated with the language-game and form of life are beyond explanation since they do not rest on any metaphysical or doctrinal foundation. They do not need any ground or rationalization. Any metaphysical or scientific grounding is incoherent in religious beliefs for Wittgenstein. However, Wittgenstein is not moving to an irrationalism or rejecting any creeds or doctrines in religion. What is important in religion is a commitment and a way of acting that requires the reorientation of one's life. A system of beliefs is inescapable in any religion. A commitment to that system of belief gains priority in genuine religious belief. The non-speculative aspects of religion as a way of life are more attractive for Wittgenstein. For him, religious beliefs are matters of heart and soul not of speculative intelligence (*RPP* 33).

Conclusion

Wittgenstein's profound thought had rich implications regarding religious belief and religion. In his early philosophy, silence occupies a central place to articulate what is beyond the boundary of language. Silence overcomes the limits of human language. In his later philosophy, religious language and different religious languages are legitimized by the multiple uses of language. An evaluation of his

linguistic philosophy and its application in religious belief reveals that in spite of the limitations of his philosophy, Wittgenstein has enriched the contemporary philosophy of religion.

Wittgenstein seems to have realized that religion cannot be dismissed to the realm of silence later in his philosophical career. The claim at the concluding verse of *Tractatus* whatever we cannot speak we must pass over in silence implies that religious discourse is at the realm of the mystical or the inexpressible. However, religious discourse abounds and people live by this. The tendency to seek explanation and justification corrupts religious thoughts and discourses. Hence, in the light of his new theory of language and meaning, Wittgenstein sought to cleanse religious language by his notions of the language-game and family resemblance. In *Philosophical Investigations*, a meaningful talk about religion is made available to us to understand religious language as a distinct language-game with its limited autonomy and religion as a form of life. The transcendence of religious language is brought to the daily use of ordinary language. To certain extent, Wittgenstein's adoption of a descriptive approach ruled out the explanations and justifications regarding religious beliefs. Allowing space for the plurality of world religions accomplished this task. However, his insight into religious utterance and rituals was only brought to light in the later periods of his life. Those insights are available to us in the forms of notes and remarks and in *Lectures on Religious Beliefs, Culture and Value and Remarks on Frazer's Golden Bough*.

A meaningful talk about religion, religious speech acts and religious rituals is possible in the later understanding of religious domain. The varieties of

understanding of religious belief are made available in Wittgenstein's later insights. Though Wittgenstein was not a religious man, he saw things with a religious point of view. His insight on religious belief can be seen from different perspectives. From a pragmatic perspective, religious language is very much tied up with the form of life. It emerges from the everyday shared practices of the community of believers. Religious beliefs have their effects on the believer in a subjective and communal level by directing and regulating their lives. Religious language and religious rituals express the very existential concern of the believers, requiring no theoretical or scientific explanations. From a spiritual point of view, religious beliefs are seen as passion and trust without having the ground of reason or historical evidence, and without slipping back to fundamentalism and terror. At this stage, actions speak louder than words. In a way, Wittgenstein is returning to the mysticism of his early philosophy.

Viewing Wittgenstein's thoughts on religious beliefs from different angles enables us to speak of religion and religious beliefs more meaningfully. Though any talk on religion and religious matter is nonsense, it became important nonsense in his later philosophy, with its ability to manifest itself in human life and center on the important aspects of human life. Religious thoughts became humanistic, able to find their expression meaningfully in human life and not necessarily in words.

CONCLUSION

Abraham Vettiyolil. "Towards a meaningful talk about religion-prospects and problems of Ludwig Wittgenstein's philosophy of religion" Thesis. Department of Philosophy, University of Calicut, 2015

CONCLUSION

Ludwig Wittgenstein has influenced the discipline of philosophy as well as its subsidiary fields including the philosophy of religion. He has produced two different philosophies, both equally brilliant and mainly centered on the philosophy of language with a non-metaphysical approach. His novel and sublime insights into religion and religious beliefs contribute to the contemporary philosophy of religion revitalizing itself. I have attempted to expose his descriptive, pragmatic and non-metaphysical method of looking at religion and religious beliefs. The central theme of his philosophy at every stage of his career is focused on language and meaning. Wittgenstein has not produced any systematic theories of religion in his philosophical career. Rather, he has expressed a persisting tendency to doubt the possibility of meaningfully expressing religion and religious beliefs in language. In spite of his doubt about the meaningful expression of religion in language, can one find any traces of meaning in religious utterances? Is there a space for a meaningful talk about religion and religious beliefs in Wittgenstein's philosophy at its various stages? A positive answer to the question can be arrived at after surfing his philosophy.

Wittgenstein, in his linguistic analysis, focuses on the theories of meaning at both phases of his philosophy. *Tractatus Logico Philosophicus*, which represents his early thought, brings forth the picture theory of meaning where the structure of language reveals the structure of reality, and language is founded on the bedrock of reality. At this stage, there is not much room for any meaningful talk about religion and religious belief, since they come outside the boundary of language. The purpose

of his philosophy is served by setting boundary to the expression of thought; that is, language which describes the facts of this world. Any attempt to trespass the boundary results in nonsense. Since religion and religious belief fall beyond the boundary of language, any statement on religion becomes nonsense. That is the realm of silence.

However, in his later work, *Philosophical Investigations*, there is a decisive change in his philosophical reflection on language and meaning based on his new philosophical methodology of the language-game. The language-game can be seen as an analogy to describe language. His linguistic analysis based on the language-game and form of life has contributed to different issues in the philosophy of religion and the epistemology of religious belief. The dynamic and pluralistic understanding of language and religious beliefs has rich implications in today's world to deconstruct the dogmatic and fundamentalist attitude of religions. From this, we can understand that Wittgenstein had a respectful attitude toward religion and religious belief, though he presented himself as a non-believer. Religious belief is taken out from the upper chamber of conceptualization and dogmatization to the real life of humans, where it finds its meaning. Religion is that realm where belief and life merge together. A meaningful talk about religion is possible within the boundary of language-game.

Philosophy is conceived as a critique of language in both phases of Wittgenstein's philosophy. Philosophy starts with puzzlement; philosophical problems cannot be solved, but they dissolve. They are compared to a mental cramp, and a person caught up in philosophical perplexity is compared to one who is caught

in a room and wants to go out but doesn't know the way, or a fly caught in a bottle. The function of philosophy is to show a way out. "Philosophy is a battle against the bewitchment of our intelligence by means of language" (*PI* 109). Therefore, the function as well as the method of philosophy is the same in both phases of Wittgenstein's philosophy. The function is therapeutic; the method linguistic. However, the linguistic method he employs differs in the two stages of his philosophy. In his early philosophy, logical form was the concern, whereas linguistic function was given the top priority in his later philosophy. For Wittgenstein, the therapeutic function of philosophy is proper linguistic analysis. The role of language in human life is a running theme of Wittgenstein's philosophical analysis. Problems start when language goes on holiday.

For Wittgenstein, philosophy aims at the logical clarification of thought and proposition. It aims at settling the controversies about the limits of natural science by drawing the boundary of what can be said or by setting a limit to language. Language articulates the facts of the world with clarity and precision. Language is capable of depicting the reality or the world. The world is a totality of facts. In fact, the world is divided into facts, and facts uniquely determine what the world actually is. A fact is a set of the state of affairs and that state of affairs is a combination of objects. A fact is not itself some kind of object but objects combined in a specific way give rise to a 'fact.' Language describes the essence of reality in the form of propositions. Hence to know the structure of language is to know the structure of propositions. *Tractatus* gives a clear analysis of the structure of propositions. A proposition is essentially an assertion about a fact or state of affairs. It can also be

analyzed into its component propositions until a proposition is reached which cannot be further analyzed. This unanalyzable proposition is called an atomic or elementary proposition. Language is powerful enough to contain reality.

However, Wittgenstein brings out a realm that cannot be articulated by language. The explication of the mystical – that which is outside the boundary of human language is that realm. Human language fails to reveal the realm of what is beyond, where we have to resort to silence. Ethical, aesthetical and religious values cannot be articulated in propositions, since language is not reference-free in the first phase of Wittgenstein's philosophy. Religion and what we call religious are beyond human language. A sentence from the preface of *Tractatus* distinguishes the areas where language can articulate and where it cannot articulate. "What can be said at all can be said clearly and what we cannot talk about we must pass over in silence." This sublime understanding of the mystical which he describes with his 'doctrine of silence,' revitalizes religions that try to prove and conceptualize divine existence.

Wittgenstein, in his later linguistic analysis, also aims at dissolving problems by rearranging what we already have. Here the aim and method of philosophy remain the same. However, he shifts the emphasis from logical form to linguistic function. This results in a new philosophy of language. This is done with a new understanding of language analysis with the help of the language-game and form of life. In language, words are used with their own grammar in specific contexts. A word finds its meaning in its use. The different uses in different settings legitimize the plurality of language. The logical form of the *Tractatus* is replaced by linguistic function.

Philosophical method is like the treatment for some illness. In Wittgenstein's philosophical methods, he describes different linguistic therapies. Therapy is used according to the nature of the illness and the person afflicted. The power of the word to heal is better elucidated by his new theory of meaning. Meaning depends on the use of the word in its context. Therefore, meaning depends on the activity of use and context of its use. The meaning of language is explicated in connection with action rather than reference. The meaning of the word evolves from the mould of activity. Justification is possible only within the language-game. The language-game itself is not called for justification.

Language enjoys its meaning in religious discourses; this is in sharp contrast with Wittgenstein's early understanding of language. The variety of language uses makes religious language possible. Language used within the religious setting is meaningful within the language-game of religion. The meaningfulness of language used in religious surroundings is tested only within the language game, which is not called for justification. The rationale of language used in religion and religious belief is found only within the setting of religion. The multiple uses of language also legitimize the plurality of religious traditions and religious languages. Language employed in religious settings enjoys its sense within its boundary. There is nothing common between different religious traditions. There exist some similarities and relationships which Wittgenstein calls a family resemblance. Commonality cannot be found at the depth level. The sense of religious language operates within its setting. Therefore the meaningfulness of each religious belief is to be sought only

within its context; it operates within the purview of those believers who follow that particular belief.

In Wittgenstein's later philosophy, language fails to give ample proofs and evidences for religious belief. It fails to articulate a firm ground for religious belief by way of evidence. Propositional proofs and scientific evidences do not support religious belief. The use of language in relation to religion is not meaningful in the sense that religious belief is groundless. It is groundless in the sense that it is not grounded on any scientific proposition, but rather a way of life. "The end is not an ungrounded presupposition: it is an ungrounded way of acting" (*OC* 110). Propositions cannot safeguard religious belief. It is grounded on the way of life that is acquired through constant practice. A belief is based on a system of beliefs, which is taken for granted. We acknowledge and trust that system of beliefs, which is there as is our life. Here it is the sphere where action dominates. Language is not something essential to religion. If it occurs, it is part of religious behavior.

In Wittgenstein's meta-philosophical project, traditional philosophical theories give way to descriptive linguistic method where philosophical problems are due to confusions in the linguistic usage. Philosophy practiced not by formulating theories about phenomena, but rather by describing. Wittgenstein remarks: "philosophy simply puts everything before us and neither explains nor deduces anything" (*PI* 126). The traditional view of solving philosophical problems by providing scientific theories and metaphysical explanations are untenable in his philosophical project (Hansen 1013). Wittgenstein is not in favor of a traditional and theoretical approach - construction and defense of philosophical theories - to solve

philosophical problems. Rejecting the traditional and theoretical approach, Wittgenstein never proposed an alternative theory. His approach is therapeutic. This unorthodox method can be seen in his remarks on religion and religious beliefs. The traditional view of having a cosmological understanding of God - God as creator of this universe and looking for solid evidence to prove and formulate sophisticated theories to support such proofs are not in Wittgenstein's project of doing philosophy.

One could meaningfully talk about religion in Wittgenstein's philosophy without metaphysical commitment. His remarks about religion point to the fact that one can meaningfully engage in religious practices without committing to any doctrinal and dogmatic system. Wittgenstein's treatment of the language-game and its relationship to form of life reveals the connection between human behavior and the language they use. A philosophical investigation, which is primarily grammatical, leads to the depth grammar which is the language situation. A study of the grammatical situations of religious language finds its footings in the ceremonies and rituals performed by human beings. Therefore, the connect between linguistic use and function is important in Wittgenstein's philosophy.

Wittgenstein always wanted to see the connections - connections between the different elements of the language-game. In order to understand a clear view of any language-game every element of language-game needs to be seen in its entirety. At the depth grammatical level the philosopher sees the connection among the different elements of the language-game and among different language games. Grammatical investigations lead one to specific language situations. In specific language situations - as in the case of religious language situations - the connections existing

among different objects used in language can be seen. The kinds of objects like God, suffering, salvation, and sin are to be understood in relation to the occasion in which they are used.

Wittgenstein's philosophical project is centered on the philosophy of language with a non-metaphysical approach. Wittgenstein claimed "what we do is to bring words back from their metaphysical use to everyday use" (*PI* 116). Wittgenstein's renewed approach to language and religious beliefs significantly influenced the traditional Judeo-Christian approach to religious beliefs which is highly metaphysical with its doctrinal and dogmatic character. After Wittgenstein, there was a change in the approach and application of religious belief, a change from theory to practice. The meaning of religious language is divorced from its doctrinal footings and finds its meaning in ordinary life situations, where one uses them in religious celebrations and ritual practices. Theological discourses, like god-talk, are brought down to their 'original home' which consists of religious practices, rituals and human existential situations. The grammar of theology is the grammar of practice for Wittgenstein.

This non-metaphysical approach is exposed by an investigation into the grammar of language. As we have discussed last section of third chapter, depth grammar is concerned with a wider domain of language used mainly as an integration of speech with other human activities as opposed to the surface grammar which corresponds to the syntactic form of expression. A context-sensitive or occasion-sensitive aspect of language use is taken into consideration in depth grammar (Travis 100). Occasion-sensitive grammar would specify occasion specific

rules for the purpose of a particular occasion of utterance, a correct use of an expression. The sentence can have multiplicity of occasion-sensitive grammars depending on the occasion in which it is used.

Grammar is essential for Wittgenstein in describing language; a description of grammar is a description of essence. Wittgenstein claimed that "Essence is expressed by grammar" (*PI* 371). He makes it clear that the essence of language, that is its function, is linked to everyday thoughts and linguistic practices. Wittgenstein's claim that "Grammar tells what kind of object anything is" (Theology as Grammar) (*PI* 373) is seen in an interpretative manner, in the background of the stated claim that grammar expresses essence. Looking at the use of words within its surroundings is the best way to find the meaning of words. Theological discourses, like god-talk, are brought down to their 'original home' which consists of religious practices, rituals and human existential situations. The grammar of theology is the grammar of practice for Wittgenstein.

Wittgenstein's non-metaphysical approach to religious beliefs takes place in two distinct directions: one in the direction of the referents of language used within the setting of religion, and another in the direction of scientific and historical evidence to support religious beliefs.

Grammatical remarks like "What is God?" or "How does God communicate," are to be looked at by how they are used in their grammatical situation (Wittgenstein, *Zettel* 717). Concepts like God, love and sacrifice used in theology are to be understood in the context of their use in celebrations, festivals and conventions (Bell, "Theology as Grammar" 310). These concepts are used in a

particular way by the believer and gain meaning. These words gain meaning not because of any object referring to them outside language but because of words related to the people who use them individually or collectively.

Another important point Wittgenstein makes is that grammar which expresses the *kind* of objects in all religious utterances is not uniform. Grammar of religious utterance is complex, various, and mixed. The use of the analogy of the language game and form of life shows the complexity of language and its close relationship with people and their lives. Wittgenstein's remarks that "If we look at the actual use of a word, what we see is something constantly fluctuating..... If for our purposes we wish to regulate the use of a word by definite rules, then alongside its fluctuating use we set up a different use by codifying one of its characteristic aspects" (*PG 77*). There is no uniform grammar for the word 'God' since it is used in multiple ways. "I have always wanted to say something about the grammar of ethical expression, or e.g. of 'God.' Now: use of such a word as 'God'. It has been used in many different ways: e.g. sometimes for something very like a human being - a physical body" (Wittgenstein, *Lectures 1932-1935 5.1*). Varieties of grammatical usage make religious utterance complex and are not limited to a single set of rules that governs it.

The *kind* of objects used in religious beliefs need not to be justified by the referent or by any rational or historical evidence. For Wittgenstein, religious beliefs are not based on any scientific or historical evidence: "We don't talk about hypothesis, or about high probability or about knowing" (Wittgenstein, *Lectures 57*). Religious beliefs are not factual beliefs; however, religious beliefs involve certain

factual beliefs: beliefs about the occurrence of certain historical events. For Wittgenstein, historical narratives or stories are occasions for believing.

The total character of religious belief is not the result of good evidence. This system of beliefs does not rest upon any evidence, but is there like our lives (Bell, "Theology as Grammar" 310). For Wittgenstein, "the end is not ungrounded presupposition: it is an ungrounded way of acting" (*OC* 110). For him, that God exists or not is not the problem, but what is important is what is meant by the word 'God.' The believers believe not on the basis of the proof for the existence of God. Religious belief itself is not an outcome of any intellectual enterprise. Religious discourse neither justifies nor explains religious practices. To adopt religious talk is to express one's commitment to a certain way of life (Harre 231). Penetrated into the depth grammar, religious language does not give an explanation of supernatural entities as natural science describes and explains natural entities and facts. The significance of religious expression is not its referent but its function in a person's life. Therefore, it is neither a referent nor scientific or historical evidence to support such a belief that makes the use of language meaningful in religion.

Wittgenstein's discussion on the symbolic and expressive nature of religion gives some footing for a meaningful talk about religion in his later thought. Religion is expressive and symbolic; it emerges from cultural rituals, metaphors and symbolic narratives. The symbols, which are expressive, are without scientific explanations. For Wittgenstein, error and progress are not features of religion but of science. Science and technology are based on instrumental practice; intellect and reasoning tend toward progress and development. Religious beliefs are not of this kind. One

prays, not because the prayer is based on a proven theory, nor does one abandon an old prayer due to a lack of explanation. Wittgenstein proposes an anti-intellectualist approach to matters of religion and religious beliefs. As symbolic and expressive, they are more akin to ritualistic practices. Wittgenstein places prime importance on action rather than doctrine concerning the spiritual nature of religious practices: "I can well imagine a religion in which there are no doctrinal propositions, in which there is thus no talking (Waismann, *Vienna Circle* 117).

The natural disposition of human beings to react in an expressive way and to create and observe rituals that can symbolically express the existential concern of human beings serves as the foundation of religious symbols. They are created by cultural communities in relation to the primitive natural expression of human existential concerns such as anger, friendship, love, birth, death and other occasions deeply important to humans. Religious beliefs are meaningfully understood as attitudes that pertain to life and concern living experiences. Wittgenstein's understanding of religious beliefs as ritualistic does not totally neglect the theological worldviews that support ritualistic practices. However, such worldviews that are systematically presented are not essential feature of religious beliefs for him. He makes a clear distinction between the language used in religious practices and the language used in doctrinal principles to assert those rituals. Religious practices are ritualistic and symbolic. The expressive use of symbols is an important characteristic of religious practices as distinct from the instrumental use of signs. Wittgenstein's point is that rituals are not based on any proven theory; however, one can well understand a ritual in terms of a theory.

In Wittgenstein's view, faith in God that pivotal part of religion and religious belief can be meaningfully understood as an attitude. This attitude of belief in God can be supported later by rational thinking and theological formulations. Wittgenstein is against holding any instrumental purpose behind religious practices as in the case of the act of burning an effigy or kissing the photograph of a beloved one. They simply satisfy an urge or an instinct. In that sense, they are non-cognitive.

There is a possibility of religion in Wittgenstein. There is a possibility of a meaningful talk about religion even if not in the traditional philosophical way. In his project there is a naturalistic and pragmatic tendency which surpasses the space for any superseding supernatural beings and any dogmatic and doctrinal proofs to support such a being. It is pragmatic in the sense that it is rooted not in doctrines but in actions, and that religious beliefs are capable of guiding one's life. Religious talk, insofar as it is considered as a religious act, can be accommodated in the philosophical understanding of Wittgenstein. What is important for him is not the words but the role of the words in the life of the believer. It is practice that gives the word its meaning. Wittgenstein, in his understanding of meaning as use, is also consistent in its application to religious belief. Religious language is part of religious activity; therefore, as religious behavior it gains meaning. Penetrated into the depth grammar, religious language does not give an explanation of supernatural entities as natural science describes and explains natural entities and facts. Religious assertions are not fact statements (Clack, *Wittgenstein, Frazer and Religion* 55). The significance of religious expression is not its referent but its function in a person's

life; one can meaningfully engage in traditional religious practice without metaphysical commitments.

Wittgenstein had a descriptive method in dealing with religion and religious beliefs as in the case of all philosophical subjects. He never claimed to be the author of any particular theory of religion. Wittgenstein had made several remarks about God; however, he was not favoring a cosmological understanding of God as in any Abrahamic religion of the world. Wittgenstein conceived religious belief more as attitudinal than cognitive. It is a deeper and comprehensive worldview. A belief in God is the effect of such a worldview. Wittgenstein anticipated some sort of religious atheism reflected in the contemporary writers on religion.⁷¹ He was able to see the world from a religious point of view. His religious point of view at its depth view permeates everything pertaining to human life. A metaphysical and scientific approach to religion is incoherent in Wittgenstein's view. However, the rejection of a metaphysical approach seems to amount to a kind of naturalistic tendency in religion.

Wittgenstein has influenced the discipline of philosophy as well as its subsidiary fields including the philosophy of religion. His novel and sublime view on religion and religious belief enriches the contemporary philosophy of religion. His profound thoughts on religion and religious belief are based on his different understanding of language and meaning. Wittgenstein's new approach to the philosophy of language has considerably influenced his philosophy of religion. This

⁷¹ Ronald Dworkin in his recent book claims that religion is not restricted to theism. There is a possibility of being religious without believing in any god. He seeks a possibility of religious atheism since he considers religion as an interpretative concept. See Dworkin 14.

non-metaphysical approach has brought religious discourse back to the life of the community of believers. Theology after Wittgenstein⁷² becomes the grammar of practice surpassing the priority of doctrines. This pragmatic approach is explained by the analysis of his parenthetical remark, theology as grammar, based on his new approach to the theory of meaning in his later philosophy. The religious celebrations and ritualistic practices of the believers find meaning without scientific and historic evidences. A meaningful talk about religion and religious beliefs is made possible in pragmatic contexts without scientific and doctrinal justifications.

⁷² Kerr argues that theology has become a matter of practice with Wittgenstein's considerable influence in philosophy as well as theology in his recent work *Theology after Wittgenstein*. See Kerr 140.

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APPENDIX

Abraham Vettiyolil. "Towards a meaningful talk about religion-prospects and problems of Ludwig Wittgenstein's philosophy of religion" Thesis. Department of Philosophy, University of Calicut, 2015

APPENDIX

List of Publications

1. Vettiyolil, Abraham. "WITTGENSTEIN ON THE GRAMMAR OF RELIGIOUS BELIEFS." *International Journal of Philosophy and Theology* Vol. 2. No. 2 (June, 2014): 1-12.
2. Vettiyolil, Abraham. "TOWARD AN ONTOLOGICAL AESTHETICS: AN INQUIRY INTO THE AESTHETIC MODES OF THE SUBLIME IN BURKE AND WONDER IN HEIDEGGER." *Research Scholar An International Refereed e-journal of Literary Explorations* Vol. 2, Issue 2 (May, 2014): 484-491.
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