CHAPTER 3

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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, Philosophy 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,” 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? 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. 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

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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.
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 Nesher has compiled this definition out of various statements of *Philosophical Investigations* such as nos. 559, 139-142. See Nesher 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.”

**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’ 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

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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

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.  

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.

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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 spatio-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

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.\footnote{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.}

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
‘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\textsuperscript{41} regarding rules. For

\textsuperscript{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).

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

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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" \( (P I \ 243) \). 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

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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: 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 forth 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. 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

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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).  

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

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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 weltenschauung – 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?” 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. 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

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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 evolvement 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-syntatic* use of words of *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein describes use as an activity of speaking with words in the context of extra-linguistic activities. The *Logico-syntatic* 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 surview 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 portraits 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 essen
cing 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
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. 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

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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 (\textit{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 (\textit{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 (\textit{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.\textsuperscript{53} The believers do not

\textsuperscript{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; \textit{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, \textit{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 expresses one’s commitment to a certain way of life (Harre 231).
Influenced by Tolstoy, 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

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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*. 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.'

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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.

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). 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.

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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 hypothesize 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 defer 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 \textit{before} the opinion" (\textit{RPP} 38). 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, \textit{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? (\textit{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

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 an 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 points 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). 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-

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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.