CHAPTER 4

TOWARDS A MEANINGFUL TALK ABOUT RELIGION

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Introduction

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

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

4.1. Towards an Eastern Approach

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

The Splendor of the ‘Simple’

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

**Experience of the Divine**

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

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

**De-dogmatization of Religion**

Though language in his early philosophy was more deterministic and static, there is room for advancement and improvement in his thought. At the end of the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein speaks against the deterministic tendency in philosophy. Propositions are used as steps (as a ladder) to climb up beyond; it is to be thrown away after climbing. I think this can be applied to religion for better understanding.
Philosophers of religion speak of the proofs for the existence of God and theories concerning his presence in the world and life after death. These proofs and theories are finished products, established for once and all. Wittgenstein, by advocating silence towards religious language, poses a challenge to traditional dogmatized religions which use scientific and propositional language to establish religious truth. This makes human life static and devoid of dynamism. This can lead to fanaticism and fundamentalism at large. The purpose of language is to convey information and picture facts. Religious language is beyond this scope since it is nonsense. The language of religion has no place in human life.

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

Towards a “Wordless Faith”

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

“Wordless faith,” which Paul Engelmann attributed to Wittgenstein’s understanding of religion, can be understood in different ways, in line with his later understanding of religion as a way of life. Wittgenstein is all against giving scientific proofs and historical evidence for religious beliefs. In another sense, action is more important than word in religion as a way of life. What is important is not the articulation of experience but the experience itself that something exists. It is either an experience of ‘wonder’ or it can be interpreted as silent listening to the primordial saying and a response in silence.\(^6\) This new way of understanding religion as a way of doing rather than talking may bring about reconciliation between conflicting ideologies and religious traditions. We cannot fully agree with the followers of Wittgenstein who condemn all doctrines as sources of misconception, since we know from our everyday experience that the articulation of certain experiences and actions may be guidelines for better human behavior.

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

\(^6\) Here Wittgenstein’s ideas are more in line with Martin Heidegger. According to him humans respond to the primordial language by corresponding, listening, and attuning to the tune of primordial language in silence. See Martin Heidegger, *On the Way to Language* 134.
who loved silence so much. We can find some similarities between Wittgenstein’s later philosophy and the teachings of Zen Buddhism. Language is normally understood as an expression of thought. It is the bridge between the thought of the one who speaks and the one who hears. Zen Buddhism argues that understanding is possible even without thought. This is what they call ‘just doing.’ Wittgenstein's use of mystical in his philosophy is in the sense that it is a matter of practice not of words and thought (Canfield, "Wittgenstein and Zen” 383-884). “Don’t think, but look.” Thinking will distort the perception of reality. Practice, which Wittgenstein advocates, and the Buddhist view of ‘just doing’ is somewhat similar. The same view is postulated when Wittgenstein said: “I could well imagine a religion in which there are no doctrines, so that nothing is spoken. Clearly, then, the essence of religion can have nothing to do with what is said – rather: if anything is said, then that itself is an element of religious behavior, and not a theory” (qtd. in Janik and Toulmin 407-408). In this sense, Wittgenstein's understanding of mystical is somewhat parallel or complementary to Eastern approach to religion and religious matters as against the Western tendency of conceptualizing the Divine. There is certain similarities between Wittgenstein and Taoist thinkers on that there are realities that cannot be expressed in language (Tominaga 137). However, conceptualization is a part of human activity but really a second order activity.

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

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61 Wittgenstein seems to have been influenced by eastern thought, especially, Indian through the mediation of Arthur Schopenhauer, who influenced Wittgenstein in his early stage of philosophizing. Schopenhauer claimed that he inherited a culture which is moulded in the platonic, Kantian and Upanisadic tradition. See Veerendra Kumar 19.
boundary of language. Transcendence in Wittgenstein is not only inexpressible in language but also incomprehensive. This understanding of transcendence is much closer to the notion of Absolute in *Advaita Vedanta*. The Ultimate Reality cannot be described in language since language can describe only empirical reality. In this sense, Wittgenstein's understanding of religious transcendence has a striking similarity with that of Sankara. Wittgenstein's concept of transcendence is absolutist transcendence since it is both beyond cognition and beyond experience. It is indescribable and incomprehensible.

**4.2. Towards Religious Pluralism**

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

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

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62 According to *Advaita Vedanta*, the absolute is beyond cognition since He is beyond description. The best way to describe the absolute is to employ negative terms like, "not this" "not that." He is beyond experience since we are unaware of what He wills. See K.C. Panday, *Religious Beliefs, Superstitions and Wittgenstein* 39.
and form of life has a wide range of possibilities. Language is a collection of language-games, and language-games are collections of customs and institutions in which words play their role in their unique contexts. Words enjoy countless heterogeneous roles in the language-game. This legitimates linguistic pluralism as well as religious pluralism. This later linguistic view applied to religion and religious belief can explain or give a sound basis for the reality of manifold religions existing in the world.

**Wittgenstein, a Challenge to Religious Exclusivism**

Wittgenstein in his linguistic analysis, has presented the plurality of language by the notions of the language-game and family resemblance. As we have seen in the previous chapter, these notions have played a vital role in his understanding of language. In its application to religious belief, it has a wide range of implications. What is common to different religious traditions? What we do have between the different religious traditions is nothing but family resemblance. At the surface level, there seems to be some commonality. There are some similarities and resemblances comparable among family members. So the multiple religions existing in the world are seen as members of the same family. However, Wittgenstein asserts that there is nothing common among them. The multiple language-games we play in our lives are distinct and different from another in their nature. Even though all the games we play fall under the name ‘game,’ none of them exhausts the meaning of the word ‘game’ is. For Wittgenstein, none of the religious traditions can fully exhaust what is meant by religion, nor can a particular religion explain what religion is. This notion of family resemblance is really a challenge to the exclusivist and inclusivist
understanding of religion which is basically founded on mono-foundationalistic epistemology, which presupposes common bedrock of religious practices. No particular religion can contain religion as a whole, but it is part of religion. It cannot be reduced to any particular religion. Each of the religious traditions comes within the definition of religion without exhausting the whole of the definition (D’Souza 265).

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

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

63 Hindutva is a movement which claims that all religions within Hinduism are one. Actually Hinduism is not one religion, but a collection of religions. Each religion has its own tradition and way of life and doctrines. We cannot trace the commonality of these religions. There is only one thing we can say in general about Hinduism is that but there is nothing general in it. At the surface level all religions of Hinduism seems to have common characteristics there is nothing at the deeper level. The fundamentalist attitude of this movement is politically motivated. Without politics it cannot survive. They want to build a strong nation-state based on the spirit of homogenized Hinduism. See Pathak 14.
is one who does not accept those particular doctrines and participation in the religious practices which a believer does. The meaning of believer and unbeliever depends on the context in which it is used. For Wittgenstein, the meaning of a word emerges from the use of it in particular contexts. A Christian may be a believer in the context of Christianity, but he may be an unbeliever in the context of Hinduism. An unbeliever is not an atheist in all the cases; he may be a follower of a different religious tradition. Thus the disagreement between a believer and nonbeliever has various dimensions (Chaturvedi 176).

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

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

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

Religious inclusivism is another matter of attention here which also is a stumbling block to inter-religious relations. Religious inclusivism is a position in which one holds that one’s religion has the sole possession of the knowledge of the ultimate reality and other religions are included in it as subsidiaries, as something incomplete. This position also is not a healthy one. I think Wittgenstein’s linguistic
philosophy in its religious application contributes to inter-religious relations. It can serve as a basis for understanding religious plurality. His philosophy paves the foundation for an attitude of appreciation, respect and love for others' religious beliefs.

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

Even before *Philosophical Investigations* one could trace Wittgenstein’s remarks regarding the varieties of religious beliefs and utterances in his 1933 lectures. Grammatical and logical varieties of religious utterance and beliefs are expressed in his lecture on religious beliefs. Wittgenstein's remarks on the varieties of the grammar of religious beliefs states that the word 'God' is used in multiples ways. There is no uniform grammar for the word God. "I have always wanted to say something about grammar of ethical expressions, or e.g. of 'God'./../Now: use of such a word as 'God'./ It has been used in many different ways: e.g. sometimes for something very like a human being - a physical body. .... There are many
controversies about meaning of 'God', which could be settled by saying 'I'm not using the word in such a sense as that you can say' (Wittgenstein, Lectures: Cambridge 5:1). The use of word the 'God' does not have a uniform grammar. Varieties of grammatical usages make religious utterance complex.

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

**Autonomy and Inter-religious Dialogue**

As we have seen, the notion of the language-game and form of life play a central role in the philosophy of Wittgenstein. Language is seen as an activity that derives its meaning from its use in particular contexts. Wittgenstein's notion of meaning as use is in the background of the analogy of the language-game and allows for the multiplicity of language-games. Are these language-games distinct in themselves? What type of interconnections do they have among themselves? If they are distinct, what is the status of religion and religious beliefs? Are religious beliefs distinct language-games? Wittgenstein himself has made no comment that religious beliefs are distinct language games as cut off from other language-games. It is some of the Wittgensteinians who have considered religious beliefs as distinct language-
games with their own rules and regulations and also call for no external justification and explanations. The language-game of religious belief is autonomous. This approach led Wittgenstein's thoughts on religious beliefs to fideism. Fideism is widely criticized and not accepted. Fideism may lead to serious consequences since Wittgenstein's insight about religious beliefs are affiliated with ethics. It can lead to ethical devaluation and religious fundamentalism. Therefore, defending Wittgenstein against fideism is needed in the present day scenario.

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

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

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

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

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

Is religion a form of life? There are different answers to this. Wittgenstein never applied form of life to religion. It is Norman Malcolm who first applied this
concept to religion (Malcolm, *A Memoir* 72). Later D. Z. Phillips and others developed it further. There are others who say that religion is not a form of life, but religion is one with different forms of life. They say religion includes several forms of life (Sherry, “Form of Life” 161). However, believers play the language-game of religious belief within a particular situation that makes it meaningful. The autonomy of language-games is a very provocative and at the same time a crucial idea in Wittgenstein’s philosophy. The autonomy of language indicates that grammar or linguistic rules, which constitute our conceptual schema, is arbitrary. This is a strong weapon that Wittgenstein uses against linguistic foundationalism. It goes against his earlier philosophy where language is considered a mirror image of reality. Wittgenstein describes language as self-contained with its grammar and as not responsible to any extra-linguistic reality. His understanding of the language-game with its own rules indicates the autonomous nature of language (*PG* 184-185). Not only is language autonomous of reality, but also each language-game has its own autonomy since the rules of one game cannot be applied to another. The rules or grammar of a particular language-game cannot be suitable for another one, and one language-game cannot be justified on the basis of the rules and grammar of another. This means that while a belief can be justified within a language-game, the language game as such cannot be brought into question.

When this is applied in the case of religious belief, it becomes a little complicated. If we accept religious belief as a distinctive language game, we must agree that it has its own rules, justifiable within the language-game of religion; however, religion itself cannot be questioned. Though we can hold that religious
belief can be justified in itself, we cannot forget the mutual influence of different
language-games. The distinctiveness of religious language-games depends on their
being conceptually related to other beliefs and not cut off from their situations
(Harvey 98). Religious belief, taken as a distinctive language-game, has its own
rules and grammar which reveal the sense of religious belief. The grammar of a
particular religious belief is different from that of another. Just as it is not possible to
evaluate a particular language on the basis of the grammar and rules of another
language, we cannot do it with religious belief either.

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

Myth, magic and religion are expressive and symbolic; they emerge from
cultural rituals, metaphors and symbolic narratives. Since they are expressive, they
differ from instrumental practices. Being symbolic they 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
promoting an attitude of wonder at the mysterious nature of life, the manner in
which they express symbolic actions, poetic language and powerful images and
finally the deep existential concerns of human beings. These features transform
myth, magic and religion, inspiring a spiritual attitude towards life (Lurie, *Human Spirit* 161).

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

Moreover, being defensive of Wittgenstein's approach to religious belief, any attribution of absolute autonomy to the religious language-game is not appreciated. If we consider religion as an autonomous and a distinctive form of life in Wittgenstein’s philosophy, inter-religious relations and dialogue are problematic. From the new theory of meaning proposed by the later Wittgenstein, one may assume that there is no scope for absolute values. Every religious tradition is a humanly constructed autonomous system of tradition. Therefore, there are no objective criteria for evaluating the meaningfulness of the system. Though Wittgenstein's family resemblance theory explains the phenomenon of pluralistic religious tradition, it blocks the way for mutual criticism and dialogue. There is
nothing common to the divergent phenomena of religions; what we have are only
some similarities. I can know only what is within my religious tradition, since I
cannot go beyond the boundary of my tradition. This may lead to absolutizing one’s
own religious tradition as in the case of the essentialist position.\textsuperscript{65} There is no scope
for criticism and dialogue across religious traditions. In Wittgenstein’s philosophy,
there is no fundamental unity behind religions.

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

\textsuperscript{65} The essentialist position is one which holds that all religions are essentially the same and the
plurality is something accidental. Religion has an unchanging essence, which is applicable to all
religions, and all the religions are equally good. And this position is also known as reductive
pluralism, since this plurality can be reduced to one. This understanding of religious pluralism is
one which is found in India. This may result in absolutizing one’s own religion. See Karuvelil,
\textit{Epistemology, Metaphysics, and God} 34-36.
dialogue? In the context of Wittgenstein's insights on religion, there is no need for a dialogue among religions. It allows sufficient space for each religion with its own task to perform and context to exercise.

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

A strict autonomy of the religious language-game can call for serious issues in the present day religiously plural world. An unquestionable stand of any religion may lead to religious fundamentalism and religious intolerance. Religious fundamentalists are those who believe in the fundamentals of their faith considering themselves to be the exclusive possessors of religious truth, demanding unconditional obedience to the revelation of God, refusing to compromise their deeply held principles, dividing the world into good and evil, and being suspicious
Wittgenstein's understanding of religious belief offers a challenge to this fundamentalist view. Even in the light of Wittgenstein's understanding of religion as a matter of heart or passion, the fundamentalist view is seen as 'passion for god gone mad'. In each of these stages, fundamentalism cannot be accommodated in Wittgenstein's religious point of view.

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

4.3. A Dynamic Approach to Religion

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

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

The dynamic approach to religious beliefs comes out of Wittgenstein's understanding of grammatical variety and its arbitrariness. Various grammars can be mixed in the utterance of another sentence. If a sentence is grammatically various, its utterance in two different instances have different grammars and utterance of the same in a third context may have an indeterminate grammar between the earlier utterances. Therefore it is difficult to prescribe a unique grammar for each utterance. Language can be grammatically fluid since certain grammar can change over the course of time (Citron, "Simple Objects" 22). Wittgenstein's remarks on such a change in language game are significant here. "Language-game does change with time" (OC 256). This change takes place at the level of concept formation. "If I have made the transition from one concept-formation to another, the old concept is still there in the background" (RFM IV: 30). The arbitrariness of grammar is understood in terms of variety, indeterminacy and fluidity. This grammatical variety and fluidity offers a dynamic concept of language; however, religious language which describes
religious beliefs in various religions tend to be fluid and indeterminate and can lead to its negative effect in practice (Citron, "Simple Objects" 25). The dynamic understanding, which allows much flexibility, is well appreciated, but over flexibility may result in fundamentalism in the case of religion. Religious fundamentalism occurs with the feeling that a particular religious tradition loses its grip, or, in psychological terms, arises from some sort of insecurity complex. “Extremely militant fundamentalism may be the result of an unconscious process. It may arise out of latent feelings of inferiority and insecurity and may reflect an uncompromising attitude and an over-zealous attempt for self-defense” (Thadavanal 154). If religious beliefs keep on changing according to the interests of the people and circumstances, this may lead some to hold a fundamentalist attitude and may harm a peaceful co-existence among different religions.

4.4. Religion as a Social Phenomenon

The social character of the language-game implies a role of training in language mastery. When this understanding of language is applied to religious belief, it becomes a matter of training. A person’s belief is surrounded by a set of beliefs, which is acquired by practice. Thinking along these lines, religious belief is man-made, or constructed in human society by constant practice. Religion, understood as a form of life, is a social phenomenon. “Why am I a Christian?” “Why am I still a Christian?” These are two different questions and should be answered differently. I am a Christian because I was born and brought up in a Christian family and a Christian tradition. I could very well be a Hindu or Muslim. Most people, except those who accept a particular religion at a later stage of life, follow their
There may be different answers to the latter question other than sociological reasons. Human beings are born and brought up in a social situation where each one learns beliefs by constant practices. In the pragmatic approach to religious belief, Wittgenstein emphasizes the importance of training. The technique of using religious belief as a picture, is acquired by practice and training. Wittgenstein’s emphasis on the worldview is important. The worldview is really created by constant training. Human beings are linguistic animals, insofar as they are linguistically trained, and they are religious animals insofar as they are religiously trained.

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

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66 Here we are not denying the fact of conversion to one religion at a later stage of life. This may be motivated by some other sociological or financial factors or even political factors. Since it is a human endeavor, it is all the more possible. An example will clarify this: Kamala Das, a renowned poet and writer in English and in Malayalam, was converted to Islam recently, and named Suraiya Begum. This widow claims that she embraced Islam because she was in need of protection. A woman in burqa is respected and protected in society. She could not find this protection in Hinduism, where more freedom is given. See K. N. Pandey 2.
fundamentalism at the depth level, though it is appealing at the peripheral level. Religious fundamentalism is often interpreted as a reaction to secularism (Sondhi 44).

4.5. A Crusade against Scientism

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

This title is taken from an article by Laxman Kumar Tripathy. See L. K. Tripathy 1.
Wittgenstein seems to undermine the role of reason in religion. However, I think we cannot ascribe so-called ‘fideism’\(^{68}\) to him. He was against evidentialism which claims that religious beliefs can be rationally accepted only if they are supported by one’s total evidence. Wittgenstein’s position is that religious belief is beyond scientific evidence and proofs. He also believes that the rationality of religious belief is more relative. Within the form of life or the language-game, religious belief is called for justification; but the language-game itself is not called for justification. It is there as is our life.

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

\(^{68}\) Fideism is a claim that one’s fundamental religious convictions are not subject to independent rational assessment. Proponents of religious fideism include Kierkegaard, Tertullian, and Karl Barth. And Kai Nielsen ascribes Fideism to the Wittgensteinians, such as Peter Winch, Norman Malcolm and D.Z. Phillips. See Nielsen, “Wittgensteinian Fideism” 237-253.
Can we take the life-regulating character of religious belief as its distinguishing factor? It may be right that certain religious beliefs regulate the life of the person. However, there are people who raise objections to Wittgenstein’s claim that religious belief regulates one’s life.\(^{69}\) I think life and belief somewhat merge and influence each other. However, this is not an exclusive characteristic of religious beliefs. There are beliefs, other than religious beliefs, that guide people's lives. We know that there is a connection between what we believe and the life we live. Another problem is why a person holds religious belief. Is it because it regulates his life, or is he trained in such a way as to believe? Does reason play any role? I think all these elements – training, guidelines and reason play important roles in human life. Human beings, as rational beings, try to integrate the social, normative and rational elements into life. The unshakable nature which Wittgenstein ascribes to religious belief can also be questioned in the light of some recent studies.\(^{70}\)

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

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

\(^{70}\) To a certain extent religious belief is a matter of education. Michael Martin suggests from his own experience as a teacher that people gave up their faith in Christianity when exposed to evidences of which they were not previously aware. See M. Martin 373.
evidence for what he believes even if his belief is not an outcome of any such evidences. This is a second order activity of philosophizing. Besides, religion as an unshakable commitment may lead to absolutizing one’s religion and religious belief. This may lead to a reductionist or essentialist position, which is not tenable as we have seen.

4.6. Varieties of Understanding of Religion and Religious Belief

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

A Religious Point of View

Wittgenstein extensively covered vast varieties of philosophical topics during his career. In his writings, the philosophy of religion was not a central concern. However, religion and religious matters are pervasive throughout his writings. Though Wittgenstein was not a religious man he could see every problem from a religious point of view. "I am not a religious man: but I cannot help seeing every problem from a religious point of view" (Rhees, Personal Recollection 79). He may not have subscribed to any particular religion or religious creed. However, it
is not necessary to practice religion in order to discuss a religion. Rather, it would be helpful to describe a practice to discuss about religion (Labron 61). His early work was preoccupied with religion as the "mystical": that which is higher and transcendent. Wittgenstein was serious about religion and religious beliefs and committed to do them "wordlessly." Thus, Tractatus has a religious point of view which cannot be expressed in words. There is no space for meaningful talk about religion at this stage.

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

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

Any speech act in religious discourse is an expression of the existential concern of the partakers of religious beliefs. On the one hand, the gap between what they believe and what they live is reduced to the minimum in the pragmatic approach of Wittgenstein. On the other hand, the effects of the belief in the life and conduct of the believer is important. Religious belief has the power to regulate the believer's life. In Wittgenstein's philosophical and religious thought, action has an
important role. Theological demands for the proof of God's existence have little value in religion. The role of deeds and the importance of changing one's life gain emphasis in his philosophy. "For Wittgenstein, the essential thing in a religious life was not the acceptance of doctrines or creeds but works. To Drury, Wittgenstein has said that his belief was that "only if you try to be helpful to other people will you find your way to God" (Malcolm, *A Religious Point of View?* 20). In the later philosophical period, the main current of his thinking is his insistence that our every day concept requires a basis of acting and doing.

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

Wittgenstein, in his later thought, leans more towards a pragmatic philosophy. "So I am trying to say something that sounds like pragmatism" (*OC* 422). His pragmatic thought that is rooted in action and use of words, applied to religion and religious beliefs, helps us understand the meaning of such usage. The usage of words like "God" or "soul" do not lead us to the questions of "does God
exist?" or "What is the mode of God's existence?" It is rather how the words "God or "soul" are used and how they are useful in the lives the people who use those or similar words in particular contexts.

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

A Cultural Point of View

Wittgenstein, in his later thought has a very pessimistic attitude toward culture. It seems that he was heavily influenced by Oswald Spengler's The Decline of the West. Wittgenstein had a very pessimistic attitude about the contemporary culture. Perhaps he expressed a doubt because his thought on religion would be
misunderstood in the darkness of this time. The spirit of his philosophy was against
the spirit of the time. Wittgenstein claims that his philosophy is opposed to cultural
decline. However, there is no such mention of cultural decline in the *Philosophical
Investigations*. The cultural decline is internally connected to his views on religious
decline (DeAngelis 3). Wittgenstein could see the religious beliefs from a cultural
point of view. Religious beliefs and practices expressed the spirit of the culture. This
is declining and, therefore, what is expressed in ritualistic practice is a declined
cultural perspective. His pessimistic attitude to the possibility of religious expression
in language emerged from his singular understanding of language at the early phase
of his philosophy. However, his pessimistic attitude, though not severe as in the
early phase, is linked to the emergence of modern civilizations.

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

**An Ethical Point of View**

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

Wittgenstein was inspired to identify values with the mystical and excluded values from the intelligible world. He was able to integrate value into the life flow of human life (Litwack 8). The meaning of life - not in the sense of the purpose of life - is the sense of the world that belongs to the outside of the world. He makes a distinction between two godheads; the world, on the one hand, with its factuality, and independent I, on the other hand, with meaning of life and God. It is the "independent I" that is the basis of a good and happy life. Thus the "independent I"
Wittgenstein's talk about the religious terms like "god," "soul" and "immortality of soul" seems to be equated with ethical expressions even during the later stage of his philosophy. "I have always wanted to say something about (the) grammar of ethical expressions, or e.g. of God" (qtd. in Citron, "Religious Language" 27). Wittgenstein's conversation on 25 December 1944 stresses the affinity between religion and morality (Rhees, "On Religion" 411).

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

A Non-Metaphysical Point of View

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

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

Conclusion

Wittgenstein’s profound thought had rich implications regarding religious belief and religion. In his early philosophy, silence occupies a central place to articulate what is beyond the boundary of language. Silence overcomes the limits of human language. In his later philosophy, religious language and different religious languages are legitimized by the multiple uses of language. An evaluation of his
linguistic philosophy and its application in religious belief reveals that in spite of the limitations of his philosophy, Wittgenstein has enriched the contemporary philosophy of religion.

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

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

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