D Z PHILLIPS
and
THE WITTGENSTEINIAN GRAMMAR
of
‘GOD is LOVE’

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A thesis submitted for the degree
Doctor of Philosophy
in the Faculty of Arts
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D S HILDEBRAND
and
THE WITTGENSTEINIAN CRITIQUE
of
God, Love,
and the Good

Peter C. Hughes
PhD, MA

A thesis submitted for the degree
Doctor of Philosophy
in the Faculty of Arts
Australian National University

December 2009
This thesis is my own work.

Peter C Grundy
This work is mindful of the many who have striven with me to talk of God.
And it is especially dedicated to the faithful congregation of St Andrew's Wamboin NSW.
ABSTRACT

A disguised (Wittgensteinian) nonsense can persist beyond falsehoods, even ridiculous falsehoods. In order to avoid one kind of disguised nonsense, it is necessary not to confuse language-game rules (like 'I can't imagine the opposite of this') with descriptions of reality. While various locutions function only as rules, Wittgenstein considered that their surface grammar could mislead by giving the appearance of description. And drawing the distinction between rules and descriptions is one role of depth grammar.

Some locutions, then, are language-game rules *simpliciter*. By way of (non-Wittgensteinian) example, 'bishops are diagonal movers' whether or not chess has ever been played. Nevertheless, descriptions believed true might also be used normatively in language-games: in the Anglican Communion, for instance, as both definition and description, 'Bishop Rowan is progressively orthodox'. That is, appropriate locutions might be used (sequentially) as both rule and description. But, it is critical to draw the description/rule distinction because Wittgensteinian nonsense threatens any grammatically misconceived attempt to identify a rule *simpliciter* as a description. Accordingly, this thesis contemplates readings of Wittgenstein that provide the description/rule distinction. In that event, certain locutions may be denied the status of descriptions and be identified as rules *simpliciter*. If that can be achieved, then the particular Wittgensteinian characterisation of 'God is love' given by Dewi Zephaniah Phillips is available in principle.

That said, consideration of the grammar by which the description/rule distinction may be applied discloses that, for some locutions, the Wittgensteinian distinction may be unstable. Indeed, and as Wittgenstein suggested in *On Certainty*, the same locution may be used at one time as a rule, and at another as a description. Importantly, the 'fluidity' of appropriate locutions has been taken as a ground for Phillips' Wittgensteinian opponents (identified, ironically, by Phillips as the 'friends'
of religion) to propose that ‘God is love’, while clearly normative in religious language-games, might also be a description.

Now, it was on the ground of Wittgensteinian grammar that Phillips sought to establish that the locution ‘God is love’ cannot be a description. However, given instability in the description/rule distinction to the point where sequential choice of rule and description was permitted, Phillips would be unable to deny orthodox religion’s claim that ‘God is love’ presents description unless his grammatical argument disallowing God as existent was persuasive. God must be disqualified as the subject of description. Unless that were achieved, Phillips would be in difficulty in rejecting the approach to ‘God is love’ available to the Wittgensteinian ‘friends’ of religion: _mutatis mutandis_, a locution can be rule and description sequentially. There Phillips is vulnerable.

Even were Phillips to be unconvincing in disallowing ‘God is love’ as description, however, the interests of the ‘friends’ of religion would not be vindicated _ipso facto_. Unless grammar can show how instability in the description/rule distinction may be exploited, then where (in their interests) they must depend upon that distinction to identify rules that are also descriptions (believed true), or rules _simpliciter_, the Wittgensteinian ‘friends’ also cannot identify disguised nonsense in religion. Problematically, grammar in Wittgensteinian exegesis is somewhat unclear. Without an adequate understanding of grammar and an articulation of grammar’s function for the purpose, drawing the description/rule distinction is problematic. Where that is the case, that distinction cannot be utilised with confidence. In which event nonsense may not be discriminated either by Phillips or the ‘friends’ of religion.
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Faith in God is widely experienced across the human condition. And, like baldness, faith is no respecter of age, status or intelligence. From prison cells to doctors' surgeries, from university common rooms to children's nurseries, from beauty parlours to racetracks, faith in God is endemic. Indeed, the faith experience is personal and profound. But even if, as Ludwig Wittgenstein (PI 654) would suggest, religious language-games are played, because it is frustratingly difficult articulate talk about God is much less ubiquitous than religious faith. And second order questions arise in such talk. As philosophers pursue the interrogation of religious language-games, they reveal vulnerabilities in theistic belief and expose their own.

Among contemporary philosophers of religion in the Western analytic tradition, few would be more forthcoming than the late D Z Phillips; his publication record is prolific. Articulate Wittgensteinian description of religious language-games was his life project. And his work invites reflection and criticism. So, in the interests of furthering discourse about Phillips' philosophy of religion, this thesis submits considered comment. But, in honouring the ideal that the discourse continues, it does so mindful of Phillips' eminent status.

What follows is the consequence of a number of unsolicited privileges. The first to be acknowledged is the invitation to participate in the Philosophy program of the Faculty of Arts at the Australian National University. The Reader in Philosophy, Jeremy Shearmur, was instrumental in that invitation for which I am profoundly

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grateful. Further, my candidature was blessed by the astute, uncompromising yet wonderfully convivial supervision both of Jeremy Shearmur and Brian Garrett. While this work, with all of its shortcomings, is my own, I acknowledge the significance of their contribution to my education in Philosophy and thank them for it. I also acknowledge my adviser, Scott Cowdell, a theologian and fellow priest. And Kaye Malins was helpful beyond measure at St Mark's Library.

Finally I should note that while, as C S Lewis has confirmed, there are no ideal circumstances for academic writing, there must be leisure for intellectual work. In that regard I thank Kerrie Grundy for her patience, kindness and encouragement.

Acronyms for Significant References

Publications by Ludwig Wittgenstein


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<td>Z</td>
<td>Zettel</td>
<td>Basil Blackwell Oxford</td>
<td>1967</td>
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**Publications by Dewi Zephaniah Phillips**

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<tr>
<td>CP</td>
<td>The Concept of Prayer</td>
<td>Routledge &amp; Kegan Paul</td>
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**PCP**  *Philosophy’s Cool Place*  Cornell University Press 1999.


For some time, an enthusiastic and controversial industry has applied Wittgensteinian ordinary language philosophy to religious discourse. Indeed, although the post-*Tractatus* position articulated by Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951) is now long debated, it is still regarded by some as the state (or at least the most significant source) of play in current philosophy of religion. So:

... it is rare to find a philosopher of religion who does not define her own position, at least in part, by specifying the nature of and the grounds for her rejection of work carried out under the Wittgensteinian banner.

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1 Insole C. Book Review of Rush Rhees on Religion and Philosophy (ed by Phillips D Z and von der Ruhr M) in *The Heythrop Journal* April 1999 Vol 40 No 2, p.224. Religion is notoriously difficult to define. Nevertheless, the religion in question here is Judaeo-Christianity. And strictly for convenience, it can be said that religion of that sort is grounded in its canonical scriptures and expressed systematically in its historic creeds.

2 Cf. Nicholson M W. ‘Abusing Wittgenstein: The Misuse of the Concept of Language Games in Contemporary Theology’ in *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 39/4 December 1996, p.617: For the past two decades the concept of language games, developed by linguistic philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein, has been appropriated more and more in theological discussions and proposals, particularly in the areas of hermeneutics and the nature of religious language.

Notably, the ‘Swansea Wittgensteinians’, centred on the University of Wales have been influential in such work. Rush Rhees (1905-1989), a pupil, friend, philosophical associate and literary executor of Wittgenstein, was responsible for much of the initial discussion.\(^5\) Significant themes were subsequently developed by others including Norman Malcolm, Peter Winch and Gareth Moore. But it was Dewi Zephaniah Phillips (1934-2006) who assumed Rhees' mantle at Swansea.\(^6\) And this thesis centres on Phillips.

D Z Phillips first published an article in philosophy when ‘Philosophy, Theology and the Reality of God’ appeared in *The Philosophical Quarterly* Vol 13, 1963. His publications in philosophy of religion subsequently proved prolific. Further, at the time of his death on 25 July 2006, Phillips was Professor Emeritus and Rush Rhees Professor Emeritus at the University of Wales. He also held the Danforth Chair in Philosophy of Religion at Claremont Graduate University, California. Phillips, then, enjoyed a long and distinguished career in the philosophy of religion; significantly, he did so as a convinced Wittgensteinian. What, then, have been the features of Phillips' work that have attracted empathy if not support?

An answer to that question may be derived from remarks made by Andy Sanders (CPR 1) in his introduction to a collection of essays by philosophers 'sympathetic' to Phillips to a greater or lesser extent.\(^7\) Those essays show the differences between Phillips' ‘contemplative’ philosophy of religion and the metaphysical theism of his opponents. Phillips' contemplative convictions and the theism of his

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6. An early (1965) acknowledgement of Phillips' indebtedness to Rhees is expressed in *CP* vii; typical later tributes appear at *RRC* 43 (originally 1995) and *PCP* ix, 163 (1999).
7. Many philosophers are empathetic, if not sympathetic, with Phillips. For example, and in regard to one volume of essays, Andy Sanders (CPR 1) has identified the following as 'to a greater or lesser extent sympathetic': Stephen Mulhall, Mario von der Ruhr, Tage Kurten, Walter van Herck, Ingolf Dalferth and Henk Vroom. There are many others, some of whom might be numbered among Phillips' former colleagues at Claremont Graduate University California; Randy Ramal would be one.
opponents will be of concern as this discussion progresses. At this stage, however, it might be noted that Sanders considers that a major difference between Phillips and the metaphysical theists is that Phillips’ contemplative philosophy distances itself from the quest for justification by jettisoning the often tacit assumption about the aim of philosophy of religion: the defence of theology in philosophical terms and by philosophical means. By contrast, and in Sanders’ explanation (CPR 1):

... the aim of Phillips’ philosophy of religion is to do conceptual justice to religious life in all its variety and to give a ‘perspicuous’ representation of it.

This is a somewhat problematic description in that Phillips may not have aspired to contemplate religious life ‘in all its variety’. Nevertheless, Phillips certainly sought to provide a perspicuous representation of the religious in his particular contemplation of it. And, for him, that involved a rejection of metaphysical realism.

Now it might here be noted that, in rejecting metaphysical theism, Phillips’ position reflects back to Socrates' question about the nature of reality: if there is a measure for our knowledge of Reality, be it water for Thales or atoms for Democritus, the problem arises how the measure itself is to be measured (BR 18; PCP 3). Phillips observed that the Sophists considered that conundrum unresolvable. And Phillips (PCP 11) set out the question which presented the ground for his contemplative conception of philosophy:

How can philosophy give an account of reality which shows that it is necessary to go beyond simply noting differences between various modes of discourse, without invoking a common measure of ‘the real’ or assuming that all modes of discourse have a common subject, namely Reality?

So, and in Hugo Meynell’s account:

Phillips sees many of the reflections of Wittgenstein, whose 'cool' stance for philosophy was a matter of contemplating the world without meddling in it, as bearing on this basic philosophical question and responding to it in the manner of Socrates ...

Phillips' position, then, was to challenge any who conceived of Reality to make sense of it; it was also to adopt what he considered a Wittgensteinian contemplative response to the Socratic conundrum.

That said, Phillips (RWL 1) acknowledged that there are many different readings of Wittgenstein. Indeed, ongoing argument over the meaning of Wittgenstein's work testifies to his significance if not brilliance. While clever, and although brief, the Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus (1921) is nevertheless dense and obscure. And understandably, with a thesis as lengthy, difficult and incomplete as the Philosophical Investigations (1953), together with the other post-Tractatus documents including those dictated by Wittgenstein and recorded by others (such as Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief), there is considerable room for interpretation. That the vast bulk of his work including the Tractatus and the Investigations was originally written in German compounds the scope for interpretation by English-speaking philosophers. So, there are varieties of Wittgensteinianism.

Even among Wittgensteinians, then, and as would be reasonable to expect given the variations in Wittgensteinianism, assessments of Phillips' significance have varied. It would be peculiar, however, were that the case as a consequence of the religious orientation of his work. Numerous diversely persuaded modern philosophers have professed religion. Some are among the first rank in the discipline. Recent examples include Elizabeth Anscombe, Richard Braithwaite, Peter Geach, Richard Hare, Marilyn McCord Adams, Alvin Plantinga and Richard Swinburne; each of those philosophers has achieved an entry in The Oxford

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Nevertheless, Phillips' position would not be regarded by many, including Swinburne, as an orthodox religious posture. Phillips has claimed (RWE 148) that 'God', in the context of locutions (linguistic acts) about days being the gift of 'God':

... is not the name of an individual; it does not refer to anything.

Or, as Phillips (RRC 3) much later confirmed against those he took to consider themselves the 'defenders' of religion:

To mark the difference between our talk of physical objects and our talk of God, it may be said that the word 'God' does not refer.

Further, and to confirm the approach that Phillips took about the ways in which he differed from Swinburne, note might be taken of Phillips' characterisation (FAF 4; RRC 63, 64) of Swinburne as the Cleanthes of believers. Or, more recently, in expressing his rejection of truth claims in religion, Phillips (RFF 68) quoted Swinburne in relation to the reality of God. Swinburne had written:

... if, in fact, there is no God, it is good that some shall help others to a right view ...

In his preceding paragraph, Swinburne had considered:

... the need for philosophical theism is great – if in fact there is a God.

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12 Cleanthes, a converted boxer, believed that God is not separate from the universe but is a material constituent of the cosmos. Cf: Kenny A *Ancient Philosophy* Volume 1 Clarendon Oxford 2004, p.98.
Phillips' objection to Swinburne centred on Swinburne's consideration whether the preponderance of evidence is in favour of belief in God \textit{qua} existent. And contrasting with his characterisation of Swinburne as the Cleanthes of believers, Phillips (\textit{FAF} 4) considered J L Mackie (as will be discussed) as the Cleanthes of unbelievers.

So, in order to comprehend Phillips' position against theistic philosophers like Swinburne (and atheists like Mackie), and in addition to reviewing Phillips' wide corpus, regard must be had to the sustained attention that he paid to Wittgenstein, the particular interpretations of Wittgenstein that Phillips entertained, and Phillips' fascination with the phenomenon of religion. The point is that any assessment of Phillips' understanding of religion should involve exegesis and analysis of Wittgenstein. Such analysis would reveal the nature of readings or understandings of Wittgenstein, including that given by Phillips. The interest here is not to determine Wittgensteinian orthodoxy (\textit{per impossible}) so much as to demonstrate that some significant readings of Wittgenstein might support Phillips while others would hold him to account. That is, credible Wittgensteinian alternatives may raise difficulties for Phillips' particular reading of Wittgenstein on religion.

But here let me be quite clear. Some philosophers have examined actual religious locutions in consideration of these matters. O K Bouwsma, as will be discussed, came under Phillips' consideration (\textit{RWE} 179ff etc) in this regard. Similarly, over a period of up to twenty years, Phillips (\textit{FAF} 146, 216, 218; \textit{WR} 17; \textit{RRC} 216; \textit{RHC} 95) repeatedly expressed his conviction about the Johannine (1 John 4.8,16) locution 'God is love'.

Because (among many other locutions) it is seminal to the Christian religion, and as a consequence of the insistent treatment that he gave it, my interest is in Phillips' attention to that locution. It will be argued that, whatever else may be said about Phillips' Wittgensteinianism, there is an exegesis of Wittgenstein that provides the ground on which Phillips relied in contemplation of 'God is love'. That is, while I eventually raise Wittgensteinian problems for Phillips' particular characterisation of that locution, I argue that the ground of his contemplation is
certainly Wittgensteinian. And in order to do so, I will provide an initial exegesis of Wittgenstein in Phillips’ interests. As indicated, however, while Phillips has Wittgensteinian ground for his characterisation of ‘God is love’, that does not mean that his particular characterisation ultimately should be accepted. Indeed, there is Wittgensteinian scope for Phillips’ opponents, those he called (with deep irony) the ‘friends’ of religion (RFF passim) for reasons that will become clear, to propose their own characterisation. Nevertheless, I will not argue in favour of Phillips’ Wittgensteinian opponents despite the fact that readings of Wittgenstein can be found to assist them. I will conclude that the ‘friends’ of religion have their own profound Wittgensteinian difficulties. That is, I am pointing to the need for the Wittgensteinian ‘friends’ to address the concerns that I have raised for their project. They cannot presume Wittgensteinian legitimacy simply on default grounds, Phillips’ approach being rejected.

In interim summary, then, and his Wittgensteinianism notwithstanding, Phillips undeniably ranks among prominent contemporary philosophers of religion. More particularly, and despite his recent passing, he continues a distinguished figure in the company of those Wittgensteinian philosophers who discuss religious belief, and one of the most published. At the very least, his contribution to the discussion of religion from the perspective of contemporary Western philosophy deserves comprehensive and continuing review in philosophy of religion. Indeed, he has been described by Raimond Gaita as:

... one of the most important philosophers of religion and morality in the English-speaking world and in parts of Europe sympathetic to the analytical tradition in philosophy.

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14 This is widely recognised. The range of reviews of Phillips’ publications in leading journals of philosophy attest to his significance. And the Oxford Companion to Philosophy op. cit., p. 916 advises ‘Noteworthy applications of Wittgenstein’s ideas to ... philosophy of religion [have been made] by D Z Phillips’.

The research represented by this thesis has been conducted in that conviction. Having identified Phillips' significance and his orientation as Wittgensteinian, we now might proceed by way of introducing Phillips' philosophy and religion.

**Phillips' Philosophy and Religion**

*Phillips' Position*

Phillips' particular inheritance, derived from his teacher Rush Rhees at Swansea, was religious Wittgensteinianism. And ever since Phillips' earliest account, for him religion is religious 'discourse'. For instance *(CP 50)*:

> What I am suggesting is that to know how to use this language is to know God.

Indeed *(WR 4)*:

> One cannot have religion without religious discourse. ... theology decides what it makes sense to say to God and about God. In short, theology is the grammar of religious discourse.

And, there would appear to be a symbiosis between discourse and belief. For Phillips *(WR 31 fn 2)*, religious discourse is characterised by the (Wittgensteinian) language-games that comprise religious belief:

> Religious belief involves many language-games.

Phillips is conspicuously Wittgensteinian by virtue of the way in which he employed these Wittgensteinian notions of 'grammar' *[Grammatik]* and 'language-game'
The next two chapters will take up consideration of those seminal concepts in Wittgenstein and Phillips. Nevertheless, some initial explanation might be provided here; and Wittgenstein is the primary focus.

As Anthony Kenny\textsuperscript{17} has pointed out, for the Wittgenstein of the \textit{Tractatus} the apparent form of a proposition need not be its logical one; its surface grammar may not be the same as its logical grammar (\textit{TLP} 3.325, 4.0031). And it can be said that in contrast with the (surface) grammar of language, the later Wittgenstein (\textit{PI} 664) considered that grammatical contemplation of another sort (depth grammar) could further reveal a locution's meaning, the way in which it was being used.\textsuperscript{18} Moreover, for the Wittgenstein of the \textit{Investigations}, language is employed in ways that can be characterised in terms of games. Indeed, Michael Forster has explained the link between grammar and language-games: in Wittgenstein's characterisation of linguistic practices as language-games, grammar plays the role of the rules which govern these games in contrast with the moves that are made within them (\textit{PG} 23; \textit{LC} 48ff; \textit{BT} 138-39; \textit{OC} 95).\textsuperscript{19} Critically, moves in language-games are grounded in grammar and its rules; and moves are made consistently with game rules or in disregard of them. So there are language-games with varying rules and approaches to rules. Importantly for this discussion of Phillips, and as will be explained, the game's grammar discloses (by grammatical rule) whether a locution is a game rule \textit{simpliciter}.

Phillips' various assurances (\textit{WR} 31, fn 2; \textit{PCP} 49) aside, it is debatable whether Wittgenstein allowed for many religious language-games or only one; and whether, however many religious language-games there are, religious language-games are characterised by an appropriate 'form of life' (\textit{PI} 19). Consistently with the approach that he took in avoiding direct exegesis from Wittgenstein, and quite deleterious to his case, Phillips did not publish an overt exegesis of these concepts. On language-games and forms of life, Phillips' reticence to exegete directly from Wittgenstein's published texts was noticed quite early: Klinefelter D S 'D Z Phillips as Philosopher of Religion' \textit{Journal of the American Academy of Religion} Vol 42 No 2 (June 1974), p.321.


\textsuperscript{17} Henceforth, unless otherwise noted, 'grammar' in this thesis embraces the 'depth grammar' about which Wittgenstein was concerned.

While elementary, that is a characterisation of the ground for religious Wittgensteinianism (disclosed by grammar) that Phillips exploited. For Phillips (RWE 148), to know the grammar of religious language is to appreciate that it cannot be used to refer to God. Critically, however, Phillips (RRC 2) rejected the view that unless 'God' refers in the way in which 'table' refers, then 'God' is meaningless. He pointed out that there was no similarity between those terms, yet locutions containing the term 'God' can be meaningful. So:

... I attempted to emphasise, in my early essays, that reflecting on the reality of God is not like reflecting on the existence of this or that physical object.

For Phillips, this applies to the locution of central interest here: 'God is love'. Religion being about religious locutions for Phillips, when locutions present the word 'God', Phillips (RRC 50) emphasised that a rule is being given for its use:

... so with 'the grace of God' ... We are being given a rule for one use of ...

'God ...'

In regard to 'God is love', and in apparent disclosure of the relevant rule, Phillips (RFF 51) observed:

... 'love' stand[s] to 'God' as 'face', 'hands', 'feet' stand to human being. In neither case does it make sense to postulate a further bearer of what we are talking of. God is love. ... To know this love ... is to know God.

Putting aside the ways in which that claim could be accepted even by Phillips' Wittgensteinian opponents, it is interesting to contemplate how Phillips might have derived his particular religious philosophy from Wittgenstein through Rhees, and how he justified and defended that position. Whatever might be said about that,
and as will be considered, where he needed to claim rule *simpliciter* status for ‘God is love’ he wove throughout his offerings a distinction between rules and descriptions. That is, according to several significant references over many years of publication (*FAF* 146, 216, 218; *WR* 17; *RRC* 216; *RHC* 95), ‘God is love’ is a rule *simpliciter* for Phillips. Its surface grammar notwithstanding, ‘God is love’ is not a description; indeed, as will be explained, the existence of God cannot be questioned, let alone denied. Philosophy’s task, for Phillips (*RWE* 181), is to ‘comment on the character’ of affirmations and denials in locutions about religion. In religion, philosophy’s task is contemplative (*RHC* passim).\(^{20}\) And for Wittgensteinian grammar to be revealed in religion, ‘the hermeneutics [interpretation] of contemplation’ is practised.

This brief and introductory account of Phillips calls for explication. That, of course, is one point of this thesis. Here, however, and by way of introduction, it is emphasised that Phillips employed the Wittgensteinian notion of grammar for his central purpose: understanding the nature of religious belief. Following Wittgenstein, throughout his career Phillips consistently sought to show how the grammar of religious locutions was to be described. For instance, Phillips confirmed (*RHC* 8) in his 2001 publication *Religion and the Hermeneutics of Contemplation* that it is the grammar of prayer which shows what ‘talking to God’ comes to; and he pointed out that this had been a major theme of his 1965 book *The Concept of Prayer*.

Importantly, and having raised the issue of Phillips’ commitment to Wittgensteinian grammar in order to pursue philosophical contemplation, it needs to be confirmed that Phillips considered that the grammar of religious belief is to be articulated in the context of the Wittgensteinian aspiration of ‘leaving everything as it is’ (*PI* 124). And this aspiration, for Phillips (*RFF* 9), concerns the character of the philosophical inquiry, not its results. That is, Phillips contrasted the goal of philosophy with that of science. In science, new data is sought to confirm hypotheses. But in

philosophy, for Phillips, we always have everything we need. So, the philosophical agenda is clarity about what already lies before us.

In this regard, and perhaps in qualification of his assurance about the character of philosophical inquiry, Phillips' approach to philosophy is not intended to take anyone anywhere (PCP 160). Perhaps consistently with that sentiment, Phillips resisted being labelled. It is widely known that he resented (RRC 5) being identified as 'non-realist'.\(^2\) Accordingly, and in deference to Phillips and his acolytes, this thesis will not characterise Phillips by (contentious) terminology but will refer to 'Phillips' position' throughout. Further, in regard to Phillips' theistic opponents, whether Wittgensteinian or not, the thesis will even follow the later (and somewhat ironic) Phillips (RFF passim) in referring to them as the 'friends' of religion. (Of course, theists would be excused if they chose to dissent from that terminology just as Phillips dissented from being labelled either non-realist or non-cognitivist.)

Notably, this raises a significant subsidiary question for Phillips; that is, how religion may be recognised. This is a challenging Wittgensteinian issue. Somewhat obscurely and poetically, Wittgenstein wrote (CV 61) that:

> Religion is as it were the calm sea bottom at its deepest, remaining calm, however high the waves rise on the surface.

Nevertheless, neither Wittgenstein\(^2\) nor Phillips\(^3\) defined religion. While he considered (FPE 6; WR 4) that theology is the grammar of religious discourse, Phillips danced around the point, for example at CP 50, 51 and WR 2, 51. And even if Wittgenstein was tempted to suggest that religion was the grammar of 'God', he did not clearly say so despite PI 373:

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\(^1\) Acknowledged in a letter to the author from Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury, 26.11.07.


\(^3\) In recognising the issue, Phillips (CP 1) gave examples of expressions of religious belief; for instance, at WR 55.
Grammar tells what kind of object anything is. (Theology as grammar.)

To compound the difficulty, Wittgenstein did not specify ways of determining the commencement and termination of any language-game, let alone those that are religious. Phillips (PCP 161) perceived there a Wittgensteinian strength. But while persevering with the same Wittgensteinian uncertainty about the identification of religious language-games, because accepting God as existent Wittgensteinian 'friends' of religion might be more confident about a definition of religion. As Phillips (RRC 64) has made clear, and as will be explained, for his theistic opponents (like Swinburne) religion is about God understood as an existent.

The Diversity of Phillips' Opponents

Given his status, Wittgensteinian commitment and religious distraction, it is quite unremarkable that Phillips attracted a wide range of disputants. As an indication of the scope of complaint against him, we will now recognise the positions adopted by some opponents who may not have had a religious perspective to defend. A few who sought to protect a theistic posture in philosophy of religion can also be identified; of recent note among them, Felicity McCutcheon will receive most consideration as the thesis argument unfolds.


F McCutcheon F Religion Within the Limits of Language Alone Ashgate Aldershot 2001. Textual references to this book will be made as RWLLA followed by the page number.
So this thesis recognises a range of philosophers (beyond the religious) who have taken strong objection to Phillips. They include Anthony Flew\textsuperscript{26} who in 1967 expressed incredulity at Phillips' constant suggestion that there was no room for questions about truth in religion but that questions do arise as to what is truly religious. Also in 1967 Kai Nielsen argued that religious discourse is not something isolated, sufficient unto itself.\textsuperscript{27} Indeed, John Searle\textsuperscript{28} sought to argue in 1987, contrary to the kind of grammar advocated by Phillips, that representation is the essence of language, including religious language. In 1989 Searle's contention drew a robust response from Phillips (WR 22-32) to the effect that Wittgenstein's method avoids 'totalitarian epistemologies' in proceeding 'from conceptual puzzlement to conceptual clarity' (WR 31).

Similarly, Phillips provoked robust dissent from among theistic philosophers. In 1970, in a review of *The Concept of Prayer*, Robert Adams\textsuperscript{29} noted 'an important undeveloped point' in Phillips' position: namely, whether there is some conception of reality common to different language games or whether claims to truth express something only about the attitude of the disputants. Adams considered Phillips' method not clearly explained and likely to be confusing. Further, Adams noted an 'outrageously simplistic argument', based on the problem of evil, against conceiving of God as responsible for any particular fact about how the world is. Indeed:

> At the end of the book he claims that he has not been "*advocating* a certain kind of belief in God" or "*proscribing* some ways of thinking about God" (p.158); but this is hard to believe when he has been calling one kind of

\textsuperscript{26} Flew A  Book Review of *The Concept of Prayer* in *Philosophical Quarterly* Vol 17 No 66 (1967), pp.91, 92.

\textsuperscript{27} Nielsen K  'Wittgensteinian Fideism' in *Philosophy* July 1967; cf WR 56-78.


religious belief "genuine" and "deep" and pinning labels like "fallacy" and "superstition" on other kinds of belief.\textsuperscript{30}

Now, Phillips might have ultimately been able to claim to have considered Adams' point about the nature of reality in his (1999) *Philosophy's Cool Place*. Indeed, and with reference to Feuerbach, in his (2001) *Religion and the Hermeneutics of Contemplation* Phillips addressed himself to the question of reality in religious language-games. But in 2002 Peter Byrne\textsuperscript{31} drew attention to Phillips' reliance on Feuerbach for his argument against 'God is love' as description in religion. (This matter will become increasingly important to this thesis.) In commenting on Phillips' argument that Feuerbach was right to insist that God is not a metaphysical subject in possession of properties like love, Byrne observed:

There seems nothing, outside of Feuerbachian dogma, to stop a theistic thinker affirming both that God is like empirical objects in being subject to predication, but unlike them in possessing all His key attributes essentially.\textsuperscript{32}

If Phillips is right about Feuerbach, then his dismissal of 'God is love' as description can inform his understanding of reality in religion.

But if he is wrong, and contrary to Phillips' argument put as recently as 2001 (*RHC* 87-115) Feuerbach cannot be relied upon, then Phillips' case concerning 'God is love' is undermined, perhaps terminally. And reality in religion may be other than that contemplated by Phillips. Feuerbach will accordingly be of critical interest as this thesis reaches its apogee.

\textsuperscript{30} Adams R M Book Review of *The Concept of Prayer* op.cit., p.284.
Phillips' Characterisation of the 'Friends'

Having arrived at this point in the course of these introductory remarks, it is convenient now to consider Phillips' characterisation of his theistic opponents. One benefit is that Phillips' own religious position may be clarified.

Phillips explained the point of the ironic identification of his theistic opponents as the 'friends' of religion. To that end Phillips considered (RFF 4, 5) that from the last third of the seventeenth century an intellectual mode of thought has dominated that 'obscures our being in the world' with consequences for religion:

Sometimes, the actual role religious beliefs play in people's lives is not affected by the philosophical confusion. A distinction can be made between what religious belief means in a person's life, and the philosophical account given by that person of the grammar of the belief. Sometimes, however, that distinction cannot be drawn, since the philosophical confusion has affected the nature of the belief.

And pursuing his insistence that the character of philosophy properly understood leaves everything as it is, Phillips (RFF 16) considered that:

... with the blurring of the distinction between science and philosophy, philosophers pursued their subject as though it were the means of arriving at substantive, explanatory conclusions. The philosophical friends of religion can be seen as part of this.

Clearly, if religious conviction is taken by the 'friends' of religion to be congruent with beliefs about 'substances' (RFF 3), then a particular kind of dissent from religion is available. That is, if philosophy of religion remains entrenched in an empiricist tradition (RFF 5), however sophisticated the presentation, then the 'friends' of religion are exposed to assault: between the 'friends' and their enemies,
theism and atheism are in contention. But Phillips (RRC xi) proposed an alternative to that impasse: an articulation of religious belief by which the unique sense of religion is apprehended:

It is only when we appreciate the sense of religious beliefs that we can see what calling them true or false comes to.

And any persistence by conventional theists would amount to ‘friendly fire’ against religion properly understood through Phillips’ presentation of the sense of religious belief. In the Preface to the publication of his (1999/2000) Vonhoff Lectures, Phillips (RFF ix) confirmed:

I try to convince [philosophical ‘friends’] of the possibility of friendly fire in the philosophy of religion, that is, the possibility that harm can be done to religious beliefs by the very philosophical analyses which set out to defend them.

Of course, Phillips does not rule out the possibility that there will be among the ‘friends’ of religion those who espouse (an errant) Wittgensteinianism. In pursuit of the sense of religious belief, they too understand the Wittgensteinian significance of grammar, so a characterisation of their particular posture and the ways in which it differs from Phillips’ position needs to be given. While Phillips also argued against non-Wittgensteinians, among the ‘friends’ of religion it is Phillips’ Wittgensteinian opponents with whom I am most concerned because the grounds of this analysis of Phillips are Wittgensteinian.

In such circumstances, seminal convictions facilitate discrimination. And in this regard, we turn to the critical Wittgensteinian contention under consideration for this thesis: that, in Stephen Mulhall’s words, those who hold to religious doctrines do not treat those commitments in the way they would treat an empirical claim:
Indeed, it is well understood that the task of differentiating empirical from religious statements was the essence of Wittgenstein's project in his (1938) Lectures on Religious Belief. As will here be argued, Phillips' particular application of that 'divergence' for the religious locution 'God is love' has been based on what is recognised as the description/rule distinction.

That is, while locutions as descriptions refer, locutions as rules are normative for their language-game. Phillips' own approach, relying on the description/rule distinction in Wittgenstein, argues that rather than comprising description 'God is love' is an indicator of its own significance (qua rule). Importantly, that distinction,

locatable in the *Investigations* (*PI* 248, 251, 295), has been taken by Wittgensteinians to enable the identification of ‘disguised’ (*PI* 464) Wittgensteinian nonsense [*Unsinn*] consequent upon any confusion of descriptions and rules.\(^{36}\) Crucially, it is the description/rule distinction, the ground for Phillips’ contemplation of ‘God is love’, that the thesis will argue (in Phillips’ interests) to be Wittgensteinian.\(^{37}\)

Following Wittgenstein, then, Phillips’ aspiration is the identification of the grammar of religion. But he sought to practise philosophy by persuasion, not prescription. In this regard, it should be noted that Phillips’ position which challenges the Wittgensteinian ‘friends’ of religion (and their atheistic enemies) is not just an alternative view. Genuine religion may suffer ‘friendly fire’ from the ‘friends’ of religion, both Wittgensteinian and otherwise. However, Phillips (*RFF* 13) sought to show the grammatically confused, including Wittgensteinians, that they cannot mean what they want to mean.

**Descriptions and Rules**

**Clarification and Grammar**

Before noting the ways in which Phillips employed the distinction between descriptions and rules, that distinction itself needs to be clarified.

Regrettably, among some other foundational concepts and ideas the description/rule distinction was less than comprehensively expressed by Wittgenstein, let alone by philosophers who have subsequently either depended or

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\(^{36}\) ‘Nonsense’ [*Unsinn*] has now joined ‘language-game’ [*Sprachspiel*] and grammar [*Grammatik*] as seminal Wittgensteinian concepts introduced here in an elementary fashion but with the objective of sustained consideration for the remainder of the thesis.

\(^{37}\) In the notes published as *Wittgenstein’s Lectures*, it is clear that for Wittgenstein (*WL* 153-154) grammatical rules play a role different to that of statements. Cf. Forster M *Wittgenstein on the Arbitrariness of Grammar* op.cit., p.49.
commented upon it.\textsuperscript{38} Nevertheless, it is a Wittgensteinian (PI 133) objective, endorsed by Phillips (FAF 218; WR 77), to aspire to clarity. And clarity about Phillips (and his opponents) concerns grammar. In that regard, for Phillips following Wittgenstein (PI 133), philosophy is neither for nor against religious belief. For Phillips (WR 17):

After it has sought to clarify the grammar of such beliefs its work is over.

It will be argued in clarification, then, that the Wittgensteinian distinction between descriptions of reality and language-game rules is grounded on grammar understood (with Forster\textsuperscript{39}) as consisting of rules which govern the use of words. So, if the distinction between descriptions and rules is to be exploited by Wittgensteinians, it would require a grammatical exploitation: rules of grammar govern locutions as descriptions of reality and rules of language-games. Accepting with Phillips that grammatical clarity is the role of philosophy then, first, the distinction is grounded in grammar and, second, its valid application would need to be disclosed by grammar. In this thesis, the ways in which that is the case for 'God is love' will be considered.

The first matter will receive, as already mentioned, concentrated exegesis from Wittgenstein. That is, Phillips did not exegete the description/rule distinction from the Wittgensteinian textual corpus; on Phillips' behalf, and presuming that it is desirable, this thesis will so do. At this stage it might be noted, concerning the second matter, that Phillips would be considered by 'friends' of religion to have

\textsuperscript{38} In that David Hume drew a distinction between (a) sentences stating facts and (b) disclosures of the speaker’s attitude to what was expressed, Wittgenstein’s ‘distinction’ is considered analogous with Humean analysis. Cf: Kripke S 'Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language' Harvard University Press 1982, pp. 62-68, and Wright C ‘Kripke’s Account of the Argument Against Private Language’ The Journal of Philosophy Vol 81, No 12 (Dec 1984), pp.760-1.

\textsuperscript{39} Forster M 'Wittgenstein on the Arbitrariness of Grammar' op.cit., p.7.
wrongly exploited the distinction for his own grammatical purposes.\textsuperscript{40} That is, given the grammatical distinction between descriptions and rules, unlike the ‘friends’ Phillips has chosen to characterise particular religious locutions as rules and not descriptions. In the case of central interest to this thesis, Phillips argued against the ‘friends’ that description is not disclosed by the religious locution ‘God is love’; rather, it is a ‘grammatical rule in dogmatics’ (RHC 95). At this point we turn by way of introduction to the first question, that concerning the Wittgensteinian background to the description/rule distinction before canvassing, second, Phillips’ use of it in regard to ‘God is love’.

\textit{Wittgenstein’s Approach}

Now, Wittgenstein conceived the description/rule distinction to show by virtue of depth grammar that certain apparent descriptions operate normatively rather than as description. As will be detailed in chapters 2 and 3 below, the origins of that distinction may be identified in Wittgenstein’s \textit{Blue Book} (BB 55); and it can be considered to have been pursued much further in the \textit{Investigations} (PI 248, 251, 295). There, locutions amounting to rules but not descriptions were identified. By way of example, for the Wittgenstein of the \textit{Investigations} (PI 248), the statement ‘One plays Patience by oneself was not a description but was normative. Statements of that kind present rules in particular language-games. Another example that Wittgenstein (PI 251) suggested was ‘I can’t imagine the opposite’. In particular contexts, this is not an admission of limited powers of imagination. Rather, the locution is itself a comment upon the logical status of the subject of consideration: it is not possible to imagine the opposite of what is incapable of an opposite. In those contexts the locution is a language-game rule, not (perhaps despite appearances) a description of reality.

To move beyond Wittgenstein's examples, take the chess rule 'bishops are diagonal movers'. That locution is a rule for the game of chess. Qua rule it does not present a description of empirical reality. While it is true of the game of chess, such a rule (qua rule) does not have descriptive import. It would be a rule simpliciter. And the point here is that both Phillips and the Wittgensteinian 'friends' of religion can exploit the description/rule distinction in consideration of 'God is love'. That is, that distinction is available to them both. As has already been noted, for Phillips 'God is love' is a rule simpliciter. For their part, Wittgensteinian 'friends' would consider it both rule and description in ways soon to be explained. Nevertheless, the distinction between descriptions and rules is not without its difficulties for Phillips and the 'friends' of religion. In an introductory manner we here turn briefly to those difficulties.

It could be argued that Wittgenstein (BB 55) initially employed grammar to cover both the use of locutions as rules or descriptions and as the rules of language-games themselves. But it might be asked, what is the role of grammar beyond the establishment of that distinction itself? To consider a rule simpliciter to be a description would be to make a mistake as a consequence of the locution's grammar being unrecognised. So, absent further reliance upon grammar, the distinction itself would seem to be insufficient for identifying rules and descriptions. Further, if grammar has a critical role in the identification of descriptions and rules, how does it function in the interests of the distinction? That is, is not the apprehension of grammar required in order to determine the categorisation of a locution pursuant to the (grammatically-identified) distinction? And, what is to prevent grammar permitting 'God is love' being both a description and a rule for its language-game? That locution may be taken as a rule in religious dogmatics such that to deny it is to commit an heresy. But to identify 'God is love' as a rule might not ipso facto preclude it also the grammatical status of description. Perhaps Wittgenstein (PI 295) himself struggled with this kind of uncertainty; in regard to the locution 'I know ... only from my own case' Wittgenstein mused:

That is, it is a grammatical rule of the chess language-game that 'bishops are diagonal movers' is a game rule.
... what kind of proposition is this meant to be at all? An experiential one?

No. - A grammatical one?

One answer to those questions, it might be suggested, is that a locution certainly could not be considered both a description and a rule *simultaneously* because description permits the possibility of falsehood while rules, being normative, do not. But, it will be argued, the post-*Investigations* Wittgenstein (OC 98) did confirm that the same locution might be used as description and rule *sequentially*. It is one thing to point out that a rule *simpliciter* is only a rule. It would be entirely another to preclude a different rule from also being used as a description (believed true) in its appropriate language-game.

Here an important clarification should be given. Some may be disposed to think that Wittgensteinian religion can be characterised by this struggle: religion is often comprised of grappling with particular ways of speaking. From a religious if not philosophical perspective it is important to so struggle; it is part of the therapeutic process (*PI* 133). However, to grapple indefinitely would be to risk *Unsinn* nonsense indefinitely. And to be unsure whether ‘God is love’ is a rule *simpliciter* is to flirt with the ‘friends’ of religion, a practice that Phillips would abhor.

*Phillips' Wittgensteinianism*

In resolution of this difference between Phillips and the ‘friends’ of religion, then, it might be put by Wittgensteinians that in each case we need to ‘look and see’

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43 This point has been alluded to by Moyal-Sharrock D *Understanding Wittgenstein's On Certainty* Palgrave UK 2007, p.57.

44 Of course, any locution taken as a description but believed to be false could not be used as a rule of a language-game. Orthodoxy would not admit ‘God is dead’ into the canon of religious language-game rules.
whether a locution is a rule *simpliciter* or both rule and description.\(^{45}\) And in this thesis we are having a 'look and see' concerning 'God is love'. It should be noted, in this regard, that Wittgensteinian looking and seeing is a matter for games (*PI* 66) and their grammar (*PI* 340, 401). And the question (emanating from *PI* 373) is: in our looking, how does grammar tell (disclose) the difference, in language-game contexts and by virtue of the distinction, between rules *simpliciter* and those rules that might also be descriptions (believed true)? Or, given that grammar has that role, how is it exercised? This question informs what follows in this thesis. At this stage it might be noted that, because understanding grammar is not without uncertainties, ways in which grammar might assist in identifying mistakes (characterised as nonsense) within language-games need to be established. Importantly for Phillips, and because his grammatical conclusions need to rely upon the description/rule distinction in regard to the locution 'God is love', there the nature and function of grammar will be central.

It is also important to record here an associated issue that will be significant for the ensuing discussion. In the context of a Wittgensteinian approach, for rules of religious language-games (like 'God is love') also to be considered descriptions an 'instability' of sorts would be necessary in the description/rule distinction. It has been suggested, somewhat vaguely, that the description/rule distinction was 'fluid' from the outset.\(^{46}\) This is misleading to the extent that Wittgenstein (*OC* 96) spoke of certain locutions being 'fluid', not the description/rule distinction. That said, the question of instability in the distinction emerges as an issue that will receive attention in this thesis. In this respect, scientific locutions are notable. For example, in the context of its own language-game certain propositions of contemporary 'string theory' might be considered to be unstable between the rules (laws) of the physics involved, and scientific descriptions of reality. *Prima facie* it would be most hazardous for anyone to demand an uncompromising choice (and exclude the sequential alternative) between rules and descriptions in

\(^{45}\) Cf: Mulhall S *Wittgenstein and the Philosophy of Religion* op.cit., p.108.

comprehending some propositions of 'string theory'. Where in doubt, it may be risky to deny the option of sequential choice. And (of particular relevance to Phillips) this thesis will consider whether the sequential alternative, allowing the relation between certain rules and descriptions (believed true) to be unstable, is Wittgensteinian. Of course, it is another matter again to establish that any particular locution (such as 'God is love') might also be taken sequentially as both description and rule in religious language-games. At this point, however, comment might be limited to the fact that, in apparent exploitation of the distinction, Phillips pressed an uncompromising choice of rule *simpliciter* for the religious locution 'God is love': in regard to that locution at least, the possibility of instability does not trouble Phillips' characterisation. This in application of a general principle: Phillips (*RFF* 13) sought to show the grammatically confused that they cannot mean what they want to mean.

Nevertheless, and as has been indicated, the question remains whether Wittgenstein ultimately permitted applications of the description/rule distinction that might be considered to trouble Phillips' position. That is the essence of this thesis' argument. Again, here let me be clear. While the description/rule distinction is soundly Wittgensteinian, questions arise concerning its grammatical exploitation. There some Wittgensteinian considerations can be brought to bear to show that the distinction may be regarded as unstable in certain circumstances. If so, then the question arises whether there are instances where it may be unstable in religion. And that will be a matter for grammatical determination. That is, if the differences (grounded in the description/rule distinction) between Wittgensteinians about 'God is love' are to be settled, then the argument will be grammatical; and, if it is to be settled, grammar must be competent to settle it. So what did Phillips say?

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Now, it has been noted already that in an early (1976) essay Phillips (RWE 148) considered that ‘God’ does not refer to anything.\(^48\) Further, it has already been mentioned that Phillips (FAF 146, 216, 218; WR 17; RRC 216; RHC 95) recorded his characterisation of ‘God is love’ in several separate cases: he did so (three times) in an anthology of papers published in 1988; and he made the same claim (separately) in 1990 and 1993; indeed, he emphasised it in his 2001 publication Religion and the Hermeneutics of Contemplation. While all are important, given their similarity only the first (FAF 146) of those references\(^49\) need be quoted at this point:

... it still remains that in speaking of God we are not confined to sets of descriptions which approximate to, but never capture, his reality. On the contrary, our talk of God, for example, saying that ‘God is love’, is constitutive of what we mean by divine reality. ‘God is love’ is not a description of God which may be true or false, but a grammatical rule for one use, albeit a primary one, of the word ‘God’. In the mouth of a believer it takes the form of a confession of faith. [emphasis added]

This occurs towards the end of Phillips' essay 'The Hermeneutic Option'. There he considered the task of getting rid of talk of the x which is a table. Phillips argued that when one sits at a table, reference to the table is not reference to a further set of descriptions. To believe otherwise, in Phillips' advocacy (FAF 137, 146), is to be in the grip of a Lockean difficulty. It is this. How can we ever know whether our descriptions are correct? In order to do so, we need to know what it is that they describe. Locke asked: how can we ever know that? Clearly we must dispose of the troublesome x. And, as Ludwig Feuerbach\(^50\) was to confirm, the notion of a


\(^{49}\) For convenience, the other references are quoted in the Addendum to this chapter.

God beyond the divine predicates is similarly troublesome. Relying upon grammatical contemplation and ultimately summoning Feuerbach to that cause (as will be explained), Phillips (RHC 95) has argued that it is not possible to characterise as description a locution containing the term 'God': for the locution 'God is love', then, pursuant to the description/rule distinction the religious language-game rule is a rule simpliciter. Phillips (RHC 94, 95) observed that Feuerbach's argument might be incurred by considering whether the 'is' of 'God is love' is an 'is' of (descriptive) predication. The 'illuminating grammatical alternative' is to consider 'God is love' to be 'a grammatical rule in dogmatics' (RHC 95); earlier Phillips had characterised it as 'a confession of faith' (FAF 146).

So Phillips was provoked, on grammatical grounds and on at least six significant occasions, to argue that 'God is love' cannot be a description of God. And in order to do so, Phillips exploited the Wittgensteinian distinction between rules and descriptions: pursuant to that distinction, 'God is love' must be a rule of its language-game for Phillips. Seemingly, for that religious locution there is no description. Indeed Randy Ramal, in supporting Phillips (from WR 17), has expressed it clearly:

For Phillips, when people say "God is love" they are not giving a description of God, as if the "is" in that proposition is that of predication or, what comes to the same thing, as if 'love' is an attribute of God. Rather, to say "God is love" is to give one rule for the use of the word 'God', or to initiate someone into the religious reality of God.51 [emphasis added]

The last clause of this quote from Ramal is revealing. That is, in Phillips' submission and as will be discussed, to say that 'God is love' gives a normative use for its terms is one thing, but often a religious locution qua rule is taken by Phillips to be a profound way in which to put those words to use, to express their meaning: and therein lies its religious character. This, as will be considered, has been clearly put at length by Phillips in his 2001 publication Religion and the

51 Ramal R "‘Reference’ to D Z Phillips" op.cit., p.40.
Hermeneutics of Contemplation. Indeed, the strength and sophistication of Phillips’ approach will be noted as the issues are canvassed. At this stage, while the sophistication is yet to be demonstrated, it is desirable to record the fact.

While eventually it will be argued that there are Wittgensteinian difficulties for Phillips’ application of the description/rule distinction to ‘God is love’, it should be observed that Phillips effectively imported that Wittgensteinian distinction into philosophy of religion. Notably, its importation was out of general into religious contexts. That is, although the distinction grounded in the Blue Book and developed further in the Investigations concerned a principle against mistaking particular rule statements for descriptions, the facilitation of a means to disclose (with the assistance of grammar) that certain locutions are language-game rules simpliciter has received application in religious contexts by Phillips and other Wittgensteinians concerned with the nature of religious locutions.

To take the matter one step further, the point is that Phillips insisted upon a decision for ‘God is love’, and in so doing presented a Wittgensteinian choice for philosophers of religion. For ‘God is love’, the description/rule distinction (grounded, as will be argued, in the post-Tractatus Wittgenstein) gives rise to the choice facilitated by grammar between descriptions (which, believed true, may also be rules) and rules simpliciter (in whatever way rules simpliciter might be understood and exploited in religious contexts by Phillips).

Now, in summary and although Phillips has not expressed it thus, in the face of the choice that he has advocated concerning ‘God is love’, Wittgensteinian ‘friends’ would have two requirements. First, the identification of an instability in the description/rule distinction which would allow certain locutions to be both rules and descriptions, sequentially; and, second, a rejection of Phillips’ argument (which, in exploiting the operation of grammar, ultimately relied upon Feuerbach) against the acceptance of such locutions as descriptions. For Phillips, by contrast, in principle instability in the distinction between language-game descriptions and rules cannot be brought to bear by the ‘friends’ because he has disallowed description in ‘God is love’ consequent upon grammatical contemplation.
Here, then, in regard to the locution ‘God is love’, Phillips reached a clear conviction. Phillips argued that it makes no sense to entertain ‘God is love’ as a description. For Phillips that religious locution cannot be both a rule and a description, God not being an existent. Accordingly, and from the perspective of the Wittgenstein of the Investigations, ‘God is love’ is grammatically determined to be normative, a rule *simpliciter*, language-game rules being characterised by Phillips in the manner that will be articulated. In characterising the locution ‘God is love’, the proffered Wittgensteinian choice between rules and descriptions is thus resolved.

That, then, is an account of the background for Phillips’ employment of the Wittgensteinian distinction between descriptions and rules, and of its relevance for ‘God is love’. Notably, Phillips’ Wittgensteinian opponents also need to distinguish rules *simpliciter* from locutions that may be both language-game rule and true description. While it is a requirement on the part of the ‘friends’ of religion for ‘God is love’ to be description, some religious locutions may need to be characterised by them as rules *simpliciter* of religious language-games. In which case, and provided the appropriate qualifications for its use are observed, the choice between descriptions and rules should be an important consideration for any Wittgensteinian (including Wittgensteinian ‘friends’) interested in avoiding nonsense.

‘God is Love’: the Description/Rule Choice

*In Principle Choice*

Let me develop a little further what has already been put. For Wittgenstein, the description/rule distinction facilitates identification of disguised nonsense that is the consequence of misunderstood grammar: the disclosures of grammar allow nonsense to be identified in circumstances where a locution, taken to be a
description, is in fact a rule simpliciter.\textsuperscript{52} And, in the same year as Phillips published The Concept of Prayer, George Pitcher conveniently drew these threads of nonsense (\textit{PI} 464) and grammar (\textit{BB} 7, 16; \textit{PI} 90) together:

... much of the nonsense and puzzlement to be found in philosophy is the direct result of one fundamental kind of mistake – namely, that of wrongly treating a word or phrase as having exactly the same kind of function as another word or phrase, solely on the basis of the fact that they exhibit superficial grammatical similarities.\textsuperscript{53}

The Wittgensteinian concern for clarity (\textit{PI} 133) and the identification of nonsense (\textit{PI} 282) has been considered critical in the employment of the distinction between descriptions and rules. To confirm, and for Wittgenstein, unless choice were correctly made between descriptions (that, believed true, might also be rules) and rules simpliciter, disguised nonsense (\textit{PI} 524) would be the consequence. And to facilitate consideration of the position that Phillips published about 'God is love', this thesis is interested in the choice offered between description and rule. This gives rise to questions about the logic of the choice and the possibilities of resolution. The nature of the choice is explained, as are attempts at its resolution.

\textit{Phillips' Choice}

As the matter is presented by Phillips, then, we seem to be offered a choice. Importantly, and unlike the alternatives presented by dilemmas (which according to the \textit{Oxford English Dictionary} are necessarily undesirable and inherently unresolvable) here the Wittgensteinian grammatical choice between alternatives presents at least one prospect of resolution. After all, difficult as the choice may

\textsuperscript{52} Peter Winch has observed that the point of the \textit{Investigations} was to combat metaphysical theories (as nonsense) more effectively than in the \textit{Tractatus}. Cf: Winch P 'Discussion of Malcolm's Essay' in Malcolm N \textit{Wittgenstein: A Religious Point of View?} Routledge London 1993, p.99.

\textsuperscript{53} Pitcher G 'Wittgenstein, Nonsense and Lewis Carroll' \textit{The Massachusetts Review} 1965 Vol 6, pp.592, 607.
prove to be, a choice can be made. And the choice being offered is: grammatically considered, the religious locution ‘God is love’ is either a description (which, believed true, is also a rule) or a rule *simpliciter* in its religious language-games. As already noted, this choice was effectively articulated by Phillips in several instances (*FAF* 146, 216, 218; *WR* 17; *RRC* 216; *RHC* 95) representing a conviction held over almost twenty years including (*FAF* 218):

... ‘God is love’ may mislead us into thinking that it is a descriptive statement rather than a rule for the use of the word ‘God’.

The essential point is that a choice between the alternatives is required by Phillips’ presentations concerning ‘God is love’.

Whether, and under what circumstances Wittgenstein might have allowed that locutions could be (sequentially) both descriptions and rules remains to be argued. However, if ‘God is love’ cannot be both description and rule (that is, if description is not possible for locutions containing the term ‘God’), then that locution can only be a language-game rule by virtue of the choice that Phillips following Wittgenstein has offered. Effectively, and although Phillips will be permitted to make his own case in this regard, two Wittgensteinian principles are relevant to his characterisation of ‘God is love’. First, everything must be left as it is (*PI* 124); and, second, that it is a ‘blunder’ to mistake a rule for a description (*PI* 248, 251, 295).

*Choice by the ‘Friends’*

For their part, Wittgensteinian ‘friends’ of religion would identify ‘God is love’ as both a religious language-game rule and (true) description. That is, Wittgensteinian ‘friends’ might be vindicated if an instability in the description/rule distinction would allow appropriate locutions to be treated as rules and descriptions sequentially: other locutions may be rules *simpliciter*. In regard to ‘God is love’, the ‘friends’ could characterise that locution as both description of God and dogmatic rule. So, in addressing this choice about ‘God is love’, contemporary
Wittgensteinian ‘friends’ of religion might promote an instability in regard to the description/rule distinction, giving the possibility of sequentially embracing both descriptions and rules. If they do, however, then they seem to be challenged by the following.

The ‘friends’ would aspire to regard ‘God is love’ conjunctively as both description and rule. That matter is adjudicated in chapter 7 below. There it is argued that if the distinction is unstable, then, in principle, ‘God is love’ can be description and rule. Even if such an instability in the description/rule distinction can be established in principle, however, it must be argued by the ‘friends’ that there are Wittgensteinian grounds for allowing the particular religious locution ‘God is love’ to be a description of God. That is, there can only be instability (of the kind in question) between rules and descriptions of God if such descriptions are credible. To choose to characterise ‘God is love’ as both description and rule, then, Wittgensteinian ‘friends’ must disarm Phillips’ argument establishing that ‘God is love’ cannot be a description (FAF 146, 216, 218; WR 17; RRC 216; RHC 95). Notably, Phillips must be denied his resort to Feuerbach in that regard. If that can be achieved, then the ‘friends’ would seem entitled to consider Phillips’ Wittgensteinian position to be problematic. As will become clear, however, that is not to allow the Wittgensteinian ‘friends’ their theism by default.

**Thesis Precis**

*Formative Questions*

Let me now conclude this introductory discussion. Given the constraints of a thesis, this one is centred upon an examination of the position put by Phillips in concluding on numerous significant occasions that ‘God is love’ is grammatically determined to be a language-game rule and not a description. The occasions are significant in that Phillips maintained the view across a period of almost twenty years. And the view itself is critically important in that it denies theistic ‘friends’ of religion a seminal belief.
The project has been motivated by four questions concerning the philosophy of religion proposed by D Z Phillips. First, how did Phillips describe his position concerning 'God is love'? Second, is Phillips' contemplation of the grammar of that religious locution credible? Third, and having assumed the onus for this task, did Phillips succeed against the Wittgensteinian 'friends' of religion in regard to 'God is love'? Fourth, if Phillips did not prevail against the 'friends' of religion, is their position acceptable by its own strengths?

Argument

What, then, is the argument? In essence, it will be submitted that Phillips failed to convince about his Wittgensteinian approach to 'God is love'. At the outset, however, and in Phillips' interests, the Wittgensteinian description/rule distinction will be found to ground his position. That is, and significantly, readings of Wittgenstein on grammar can be given that enable Phillips' approach to 'God is love' as a language-game rule. Wittgenstein's description/rule distinction is available, on grammatical contemplation, for 'perspicuous representation' of locutions like 'God is love'.

Nevertheless, warrant is ultimately clear from Wittgenstein himself that the description/rule distinction can be unstable. That is, although the *Investigations* (for instance, *PI* 248) suggested that various locutions may be language-game rules *simpliciter*, by *On Certainty* (for example, *OC* 98) Wittgenstein unmistakably allowed some locutions to be (sequentially) not only rules but also descriptions. While the description/rule distinction persists, a submission has arisen from amongst the Wittgensteinian 'friends': following *On Certainty* there should be no Wittgensteinian insistence about maintaining the distinction without the possibility of instability between rules and descriptions. Critically, in each case it is a matter for a Wittgensteinian to 'look and see' (*PI* 340); and in some cases the distinction may be found unstable because description has not been ruled out.
Where the description/rule distinction is unstable, the choice to which it gives rise is nevertheless soluble. Certain locutions understood as game rules (those that are not rules simpliciter) may be (sequentially) descriptions. In principle, a locution might be characterised as both rule and description (believed true). With respect to Phillips’ position, it needs to be established whether instability in the distinction can apply to ‘God is love’. Of course, instability does not come into consideration where a locution is not ‘fluid’ as rule and description. There would remain only one alternative pursuant to the description/rule distinction: if a rule, that locution is a rule simpliciter.

Accordingly, Phillips had an ambitious case to prosecute. In fulfilment of his project, Phillips needed to establish the function and dividend of grammar. Further, against possible instability in the description/rule distinction, Phillips’ argument would need to show that the grammar of ‘God is love’ cannot be characterised as description. He needed to argue that the grammar of ‘God is love’, just like certain scientific locutions, discloses a language-game rule; but, perhaps unlike many normative scientific statements, grammar does not permit that locution also to be a description. That is, and having subjected it to an extensive ‘look and see’, for Phillips the depth grammar of that articulate religious locution discloses a rule simpliciter. Phillips published argument, ranging in particular from *Faith After Foundationalism* (1988) through *Wittgenstein and Religion* (1993) to *Recovering Religious Concepts* (2000) and culminating (with particular reliance on Ludwig Feuerbach) in *Religion and the Hermeneutics of Contemplation* (2001), to advocate characterisation of ‘God is love’ as rule and not description. And the point of his case is that God cannot be considered an existent.

If Phillips is to be resisted without an attempt at overturning the entire Wittgensteinian inheritance, the central way in which that may be done is to submit that his arguments against God as an existent are inadequate. (And that will be submitted here.) In that event, ‘God is love’ need not be merely normative in religion but, mutatis mutandis, is a candidate for description: the description/rule distinction being unstable, the grammar of ‘God is love’ might disclose not only a religious language-game rule but also a description (believed true). The locution
itself may be ‘fluid’. In seeking to exploit the description/rule distinction in regard to ‘God is love’, then, Phillips addressed two fundamental tasks: to articulate the rule \textit{simpliciter} characterisation; and to demonstrate that God could not be an object of description.

Critically, even if Phillips could rely on Feuerbach against the notion of God as referent and hence a possible object of description, one significant part of the problem that confronts Phillips in seeking the rule \textit{simpliciter} characterisation of ‘God is love’ concerns the justification of such grammatical characterisations. And here the lack of clarity in Wittgenstein’s account of grammar bites Phillips’ project. While some Wittgensteinian scholarship during Phillips’ publication career could be considered to offer assistance on this question, alternative views would leave him in difficulty. For instance, and as will be discussed in chapter 7, some suggestions made in the 1980s appear to assist Phillips. Crispin Wright, for example, confirmed the Wittgensteinian notion that apprehension of the grammar of a locution could be a matter of a ‘cottoning on’, a leap or inspired guess. Indeed, Stanley Cavell had emphasised how precarious this ‘leap’ may be. But correct use then is neither grounded in, nor justified by, other more basic notions such as articulate conventions. This raises profound difficulties for any Wittgensteinian who wishes to argue the significance of any locution taken to be a rule \textit{simpliciter}.

However, and as will be indicated by the close of chapter 7, even were Phillips terminally challenged here, the victory is Pyrrhic for Phillips’ Wittgensteinian opponents, the ‘friends’ of religion. Within Wittgensteinianism, their consequential difficulties are profound. The reason is as follows. Problematically for the philosophy of religion that has followed upon the published Wittgensteinian \textit{corpus}, there is an unstable distinction between rules and descriptions where ‘fluid’ locutions are in consideration. This should trouble Wittgensteinians of any stripe. Why? Whatever their understanding of the notion of grammar, participants in

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{54} Wright C \textit{Wittgenstein on the Foundations of Mathematics} Duckworth London 1980, p.216. 
\item \textsuperscript{55} Cavell S \textit{Must We Mean What We Say?} Charles Scribner’s Sons New York 1969, p.52. 
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
Patience do observe the status of ‘One plays Patience by oneself’. But what, for religious Wittgensteinians, of the status of locutions like ‘Seraphim are six-winged’ (Isaiah 6.2)? The question to be addressed is: if, on the grounds of grammar, Wittgensteinian ‘friends’ advocate that ‘God is love’ can be a description, on what grammatical grounds could they rule out many other locutions (perhaps like ‘Seraphim are six-winged’) as description? If they cannot, they are exposed to the critiques of those who worry about tendencies towards an overpopulated universe.

Clearly, ‘disguised’ Unsinn nonsense is a challenge for Wittgensteinianism where two conditions are satisfied. That is, first, where the distinction between rules and descriptions can be unstable; and, second, where a rule can give the appearance of a description; or a description the appearance of a rule simpliciter. Without the clear disclosures of grammar, rules simpliciter then may be mistaken for descriptions; or descriptions may be mistaken for rules simpliciter. When there is instability in the distinction, the kind of nonsense over which Wittgenstein agonised in the *Investigations* could be liberated amongst the universe of articulate religious locutions. Not only might rules simpliciter (perhaps like those about Seraphim) be mistaken for descriptions; but descriptions (perhaps like ‘God is love’, in the submission of the ‘friends’) may not be recognised. And the Wittgensteinian ‘friends’ of religion would be in as much trouble as Phillips.

Chapter Outline

In order to prosecute its case, and given its significance for Phillips, this thesis will examine what might be taken to be Wittgensteinian grounds for the description/rule distinction. They depend upon not only Wittgenstein’s approach to language, reason and reality but also to grammar, games and rules. That examination is made out in the next two chapters of the thesis.

Chapter 4 then contemplates the implications for religious Wittgensteinianism in general. And it will be considered how the description/rule distinction could facilitate comprehension of Phillips’ Wittgensteinian position concerning the ‘God is
love' locution. Critically, it will be concluded that the description/rule distinction, available to Phillips, is grounded in the post-*Tractatus* Wittgenstein.

In turn, and in order better to contemplate his position, chapter 5 reflects more fully upon Phillips' philosophy of religion in comparison with that of others, in particular R B Braithwaite whom Phillips chose to debate. Chapter 6 then comprehends the significance of the description/rule distinction in the context of a discussion of divine reality against the promise and disclosures of Wittgensteinian grammar.

Chapter 7, however, ponders the difficulties presented for Phillips' position by the later Wittgenstein, in particular where the distinction may be unstable. And chapter 8 makes concluding remarks: in so doing it draws attention to Wittgensteinian difficulties that arise for those ‘friends’ of religion who would need to rely upon the disclosures of depth grammar for identifying religious locutions as descriptions rather than rules *simpliciter*.

**Addendum**

Phillips' religion took as its focus religious locutions in the context of religious language-games. And we are attempting a consideration of Phillips' religion as it bears on his contemplation of 'God is love'. As already noted, Phillips (FAF 146) first asserted his view in a 1988 publication. In that same publication he repeated the description/rule distinction with admirable clarity (FAF 216):

> Consider two uses of 'This is red'. In the first, we are offering a description of a particular object. Someone has asked us what colour it is and we reply 'This is red'. But in the second use of 'This is red', nothing is being described. Rather, we are being given the rule for the use of the word 'red'. ... in saying 'God is love' we are being taught one of the meanings of the word 'God'. [emphasis added]
And he (FAF 218) employed it again, in that same essay:

We may be confused by the surface grammar of a proposition into thinking its logic is quite different from what would be revealed if we examined the actual contexts of its application (its depth grammar). Thus 'God is love' may mislead us into thinking that it is a descriptive statement rather than a rule for the use of the word 'God'. [emphasis added]

He (WR 17) repeated the point in 1990:

God's love is said to be a necessary love. To say that God loves is not to say that he could be malicious but, as a matter of fact, is loving. The 'is' in 'God is love' is not an 'is' of [descriptive] predication. 'God is love' gives us a rule for the use of the word 'God'. [emphasis added]

In 1993 he (RRC 216) endorsed Simone Weil:

Simone Weil is saying with John, in his First Epistle, 'He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love' (1 John 4:8). For her, the 'is' in 'God is love' is not an 'is' of predication. Rather, we are being given a grammatical rule for one use of the word 'God'. This being so, it is not a rule which needs an underpinning by reference to some kind of object, thought of as the bearer of the love in question. [emphasis added]

And, in 2001 Phillips (RHC 95) clearly presented this grammatical conclusion again:

The illuminating grammatical alternative is to see 'God is love' as a grammatical rule in dogmatics: it gives us one use of the word 'God' ... [emphasis added]
There are many aspects of these formulations with which this thesis will be concerned. Among other things, the significance of Phillips' position needs to be discovered. At this point, however, it is emphasised that this is the way in which Phillips presented his published position from 1988 until 2001. These are Phillips' specific characterisations of the grammar of 'God is love' with which this thesis is concerned. So, we progress to Wittgensteinian contemplation of the critical issues: firstly, language, reason and nonsense.
CHAPTER 2
LANGUAGE, REASON and NONSENSE

If we want to study ... the agreement and disagreement of propositions with reality
... we shall with great advantage look at primitive forms of language ... 56

Language and Language-games

Language

Ordinary language is both a useful and frustrating phenomenon. As a disparate, ubiquitous and overt empirical entity, it is eminently subject to scrutiny, conclusions about a range of issues may be on offer. But it can be a particularly difficult matter for enquiry. And its status as a subject of philosophical analysis has been contentious at the least.

Following Frege and Russell, the early (1921) Wittgenstein (TLP 3.323-3.325, 4.002) considered that ordinary language was not the subject matter of philosophy. 57 But, from the beginning of the 1930s it became his focus. Indeed, in The Blue and Brown Books (BB 17), he proposed that when simple forms of language are examined, the ‘mental mist’ that seems to enshroud language use disappears. Indubitably, dissipating the mental mist is no mean achievement. In orthodox Wittgensteinian (BB 27) terms, and so that confusion might be avoided, the fascination that forms of expression exert must be resisted. Clarifying talk (including talk about talk) is certainly a major Wittgensteinian (PI 133) philosophical

Indeed, as a Wittgensteinian, D Z Phillips (WR xviii-xix, 77) aspired to it in regard to religion (that is, ordinary language locutions in religious language-games). The extent of Phillips' success, in that objective, is the issue concerning 'God is love'.

Now, deferring consideration of the phenomenon of religion, the idea of language per se is both an interesting and useful place to begin the pursuit of clarity. For the later Wittgenstein (PI 241) human beings agree in their language. (Unless we agree, how can we communicate?) However, that does not mean that Wittgenstein recognised a commonality in the phenomenon to the extent that it might be designated Language [Sprachen]. In the Philosophical Investigations Wittgenstein (PI 65) made clear:

... Instead of producing something common to all that we call language, 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. And it is because of this relationship, or these relationships, that we call them all "language".

So, an important issue for analysis of the later Wittgenstein emerges here: just what is language and wherein lies its commonality?

It might be put that language is about the communication of meaning in linguistic acts. And as subsequently confirmed by the Investigations, the post-Tractatus Wittgensteinian understanding of meaning in language dissented from a thoroughgoing Augustinian model (BB 77; PI 1, 2, 3) committed to ostension. Rather, from the early post-Tractatus period Wittgenstein (BB 65) considered that words are used in language to convey meaning:

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58 Cf. Mulhall S 'Wittgenstein's Temple' (CPR 17), p.17: In Phillips' favoured terms, the possibility of discourse about discourse makes manifest the unity of discourse...

59 Cf. PI 92.
The meaning of a phrase for us is characterised by the use we make of it.

An informal commonality in language is certainly implied by that formula. The Wittgensteinian *dictum* that meaning is use was subsequently enshrined in the *Investigations* (PI 43). And, in the *Investigations*, Wittgenstein proceeded to describe language by gesture towards the practice of language-games, a concept which was introduced in chapter 1 of this thesis but is to be considered progressively and analytically from this point.

For Wittgenstein, there is no formal commonality in language. It should not be presumed, however, that there is (separately) scientific language, legal language or religious language. Even if religious locutions be considered distinct in kind from the locutions of science, that does not mean that separate languages are employed. Rather, for Wittgenstein, there are locutions of particular kinds that characterise various fields of discourse and, depending upon the context, employ similar language in their language-games. Accordingly, because its subject matter is Wittgensteinianism, this thesis will not acknowledge religious *language*, but will discuss *locutions* of religious language-games. Such locutions include praise ('blessed be God'), prayer ('our Father, ...') and theological formulations ('God is love') that might also amount to praise and prayer.

In interim summary, then, while for the later Wittgenstein there is agreement in language use, there is no Language (formal commonality) determining what is common between usages. Indeed, Phillips (*RWL* 7, 8) has indicated that, unlike the *Tractatus* where there was considered to be a common logical space, post-*Tractatus* it is the practice of language-games that is common. That is, although there are not different languages for science and religion, there are identifiable language-games for those disciplines.

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Language-games

Notably, the notion of language-game may have had its (published) Wittgensteinian origins in the Blue Book (BB 17) where it is asserted:

I shall in the future again and again draw your attention to what I shall call language games.

And, in introducing the notion of language-game, the post-Tractatus Wittgenstein even flirted with the possibility of defining language, through language-games, also early in the Blue Book (BB 17).

These are ways of using signs simpler than those in which we use the signs of our highly complicated everyday language. Language-games are the forms of language with which a child begins to make use of words. The study of language games is the study of primitive forms of language or primitive languages.

At this point it should be noted that the later Wittgenstein wished to maintain both an aversion (PI 81) to language as a calculus of strict rules, and an insistence (PI 77) that language is learned by observing language-games. Importantly, without some commonality between language-games, it is difficult to conceive of language-games being identifiable collectively so that they may be observed. By the Investigations (PI 67), then, Wittgenstein responded to a need to identify what was common between language-games while retaining his aversion not only to Language but to exact rules of language. This resulted in the identification of 'similarities' [Ahnlichkeiten] in language:

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The later Wittgenstein's aversion is considered to have been to that notion of language (having the structure of a calculus) conceived by the Vienna Circle. Cf: Hacker P M S Wittgenstein's Place in Twentieth-century Analytic Philosophy Blackwell Oxford 1996, pp.43,86.
... we can go through the many, many other groups of games in the same way; can see how similarities crop up and disappear.

And the result of this examination is: we see a complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing: sometimes overall similarities, sometimes similarities in detail. (PI 66)

For the later Wittgenstein, then, it is important to acknowledge similarity between language-games without offending his antipathy to a general system of Language. In this regard Wittgenstein (BB 17, 87, 125; PG 75; PI 65-67) spoke of 'family resemblance' [Familienahnlichkeiten]. Language-game similarities can be established through 'family resemblances', 'family resemblances' between language-games being pointed out.

So the recognition of likeness through 'family resemblance' depends upon understanding language-games. But how is that done? Significantly, RR's Preface\(^2\) (BB p.vii) to The Blue and Brown Books (written prior to the Investigations) claims that in the Brown Book Wittgenstein introduced a notion of understanding and of the relation between understanding and language:

In the Brown Book he is insisting, for example, that "understanding" is not one thing; it is as various as the language games themselves are. Which would be one reason for saying that when we do imagine different language games, we are not imagining parts or possible parts of any general system of language.\(^3\)

And in the Blue Book, Wittgenstein sometimes referred to imagining different language-games; there (BB 17), as has been noted, he approached an understanding of 'language-game':

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\(^2\) 'RR' being Rush Rhees.

\(^3\) Although Rhees gave no indication of the passages of the Brown Book that he had in mind here, pp.172-4 may be suggested as a possibility.
Language games are the forms of language with which a child begins to make use of words.

Further, in the *Brown Book* (*BB 77*) Wittgenstein emphasised that learning a language-game is prior to the process of understanding. What is needed is not explanation but training:

The child learns this language from the grown-ups by being trained in its use. I am using the word "trained" in a way strictly analogous to that in which we talk of an animal being trained to do certain things. It is done by means of example, reward, punishment and suchlike.

Perhaps in advocacy of the notion of training, this matter reached its fulfilment in the *Investigations* (*Pl 5*):

A child uses such primitive forms of language when it learns to talk. Here the teaching of language is not explanation, but training.

Indeed, the later Wittgenstein continued the idea of children learning language-games in the *Investigations* (*Pl 7*):

We can also think of the whole process of using words ... as one of those games by means of which children learn their primitive language. I will call these games "language-games" and will sometimes speak of a primitive language as a language-game.

I shall also call the whole, consisting of language and the actions into which it is woven, a "language-game".

Importantly, the apparent virtue of studying language-games as primitive language lies in aspiring to dissipate the 'mental mist' that enshrouds their ordinary use (*BB 17*). In other words, this context is one in which an approach to meaning and
understanding may be found. Indeed, Wittgenstein (BB 3) had asserted in the *Blue Book*:

It seems that there are *certain definite* mental processes bound up with the working of language, processes through which alone language can function. I mean the processes of understanding and meaning.

So, the associated concepts of language-game, meaning and understanding developed progressively through the *Blue Book* and the *Brown Book* and on to the *Investigations*. Further, in exploiting the idea of language-games in the *Investigations*, Wittgenstein there (PI 83) acknowledged the role of rules in games:

Doesn’t the analogy between language and games throw light here? ... The whole time they are playing ... and following definite rules ...

For Wittgenstein, variations in games, rules and even understanding characterised his post-*Tractatus* outlook on language-games. Importantly, what is normative as a rule of a game is certain (to employ a Wittgensteinian term): in chess, the rule ‘ bishops are diagonal movers’ must be known and accepted otherwise the game could not be played. Nevertheless, because training allows for understanding (however diversely) and misunderstanding of game rules, the rules may be disobeyed either deliberately or inadvertently both during and following training. Similarly, the rules of grammar can be disobeyed (with nonsense the result). That would be Phillips’ claim concerning the approach of the ‘friends’ to ‘God is love’. For their part, the ‘friends’ would claim that particular rules of a language-game could be considered to ‘generate forms of description’. There the origins of an instability between rules and descriptions might be identified. The Wittgensteinian distinction between rules and descriptions will be articulated below and developed further in chapter 3. But here we continue with the notion of understanding through training in language-game contexts.

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Rational Language Use

Reason

Intuitively, discourse depends upon rationality. And that conviction gives rise to the question whether a standard of rationality can be determined and articulated.

Is there, then, a gatekeeper of rational thought for the enterprise of understanding language, especially religious language? Phillips (FAF xiv) has suggested that Wittgenstein denied philosophy an arbiter role for the exercise of rationality concerning epistemic practices. Indeed, this is commonly held especially among those who advocate for the early Wittgenstein an interpretation of the *Tractatus* consistent with mysticism. Philosophy not being the arbiter of rationality here, for the post-*Tractatus* Wittgenstein, those who are trained in (the rules of) language-games (identified through ‘family resemblances’) use words (grammatically) in language to convey meaning. But in this Wittgensteinian conception of language in terms of language-games, and given that children are trained (like the training of animals) in language use, what scope is nevertheless allowed for reason in language-game training? Indeed, what, given the concerns of this thesis, may have been Wittgenstein’s commitment to reason? Answers to these questions will determine the manner in which it makes sense to describe a linguistic expression in one way advocated by the *Investigations* (PI 58) following upon the *Blue Book*

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66 Clack B R *An Introduction to Wittgenstein's Philosophy of Religion* Edinburgh University Press 1999, p.34:

The *Tractatus*, then, was the attempt to demarcate what can be said from what cannot be said, whilst (here’s the twist) contending – *contra* positivism – that the unsayable alone is important, hence consigning discursive thought and scientific language to the realm of the merely trivial.

67 *PI* 58: ‘... the proposition looks as if it were about the colour, while it is supposed to be saying something about the use of the word “red”.'
as a 'grammatical rule' (even a grammatically disclosed language-game rule) or as description. Expressed by Wittgenstein in the *Investigations* (*PI* 248; 251; 295; 664, 665), that distinction between rules and descriptions is of central interest to this thesis. And the essential point here is to establish the ways in which reason informs the use and understanding of religious locutions.

Among the sparse and difficult references made by Wittgenstein to religion, he is reported to have observed (*LC* 58) about religion and reason:

> 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.

Was Wittgenstein advocating recognition of irrationality in religious language-games? At the least, the tension in this sentiment (originally Pauline: 1 Corinthians 1.21), and difficulties relating to the concept of reason in Wittgensteinian scholarship, should be acknowledged. In that context the initial problem is that it is possible to identify both rationalist and non-rationalist interpretations of Wittgenstein’s doctrine. In fact, there may be a profound ambivalence in Wittgenstein, compounding the difficulty of analytical reflection on his position. On the matter of reason at least, the mental mist challenges.

Now, the question of Wittgenstein’s approach to reason has been identified by Hans-Johann Glock as the most important topic of current Wittgensteinian scholarship. For his part, Glock has argued for a rationalist interpretation of Wittgenstein. Glock, however, does not deny that there are irrationalist elements in Wittgenstein’s remarks, notably in the early ‘saying/showing’ distinction and in the later stress on the need for therapy and conversion. (It might be suggested that

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68 *BB* 56: ‘When something seems queer about the grammar of our words, it is because we are alternately tempted to use a word in several different ways.

following a rule blindly, as in *PI* 219, which will provoke certain difficulties discussed in the next chapter of this thesis, be added to that list.) Glock considers that these ideas can be found in both the *Tractatus* and the *Investigations* and that they do form part of Wittgenstein's methodological convictions:

In my view, however, many of these passages can be glossed in a way that brings them closer to a more rational conception of philosophy, and some of them, like *Philosophical Investigations* 128, *must* be glossed on [sic] this way.\(^70\)

And.

In so far as Wittgenstein undertakes a linguistic transformation of this critical enterprise, he is committed to the claims of reason.\(^71\)

David Stern, further, has commented:

... Wittgenstein wrote arguments and took them very seriously, but this is only a problem for an extreme irrationalist reading of Wittgenstein, one that denies that arguments have any real significance in Wittgenstein's philosophy.

... Like the rationalist, I read Wittgenstein's writing argumentatively, as giving a reasoned defence of certain philosophical positions. Like the irrationalist, I read Wittgenstein's writing as trying to show that the unreasoned, the outer limits of philosophical argument, play a much greater part in philosophy than the rationalist thinks.\(^72\)

\(^70\) Glock H-J 'Wittgenstein and Reason' op.cit., p.215.
\(^71\) Glock H-J 'Wittgenstein and Reason' op.cit., p.195.
Even the outer limits of argument, however, must be conceivable in terms of language-games; otherwise they are beyond Wittgensteinian contemplation. And while the later Wittgenstein argued (PI 43) that meaning is use, he did not allow that meaning was endowed by any use. Indeed, use does not seem to be in fact a sufficient condition for either meaning or rationality in language-games. Some uses are unclear even to the user; sometimes (PI 79) words are used whose meaning is uncertain. (Many religious locutions, like ‘God dwells in light unapproachable’ and ‘the peace of God which passes all understanding’, may be instances of familiar words used in locutions of uncertain meaning.) Nevertheless, the employment of reason (perhaps as end-justified thinking) seems basic for rational language use so as to establish order in expression. That said and acknowledged, Wittgenstein was nevertheless interested in the way philosophy took up the idea of order and disorder.

**Wittgensteinian Order**

Wittgenstein’s brilliance was acknowledged initially in the reception afforded the *Tractatus*. And it was confirmed to the extent that the *Tractatus* was overturned by Wittgenstein himself in the *Investigations*. There, in reconsideration of the view that meaningful language must be determinate (following both Frege and Russell), Wittgenstein explored the potential of the dictum ‘meaning is use’ (PI 43). One consequence of this exploration, for the later Wittgenstein (PI 79; 282), is that meaning is not fixed. But that does not mean that language-game disorder rather than order is inevitable. Indeed, the foundation of Wittgenstein’s post-*Tractatus* approach to the significance of reason may be reflected in a provocative comment made in the period prior to publication of the *Investigations*:

> ... the philosophical problem is an awareness of a disorder in our concepts and can be solved by ordering them.\(^73\)

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Conceptual order, then, is a significant Wittgensteinian condition for overcoming philosophical confusion. But, for the post-*Tractatus* Wittgenstein, is rationality a feature of conceptual orderliness? Of course, conceptual and linguistic orderliness can be sought; and orderliness is more manageable than disorder. Problematically, however, orderliness need not constitute rationality. The arrangement of furniture in a room may be tidy to the point of being ordered without qualifying as rational. Depending on the end-justification, like staging a break-in for fraudulent purposes, tidiness might even be considered irrational. Nevertheless, conceptual orderliness is required so as to make sense of the occasional rationality of physical disorder. And for language, at the stage of drafting the material subsequently published as *The Blue and Brown Books* at least, conceptual orderliness may have been Wittgenstein’s aspiration. So, conceptually ordered language is required in explication of the conditions of rational language use.

Importantly, in this context, the early Wittgenstein emphasised his warning about the manner in which language mystifies: it can contribute towards ‘philosophical bewilderment’ (*BB* 1). While not using the terms ‘reason’ or ‘rationality’, Wittgenstein (*BB* 6) stated:

... when we are worried about the nature of thinking, the puzzlement which we wrongly interpret to be one about the nature of a medium is a puzzlement caused by the mystifying use of our language.

Nevertheless, and frustratingly, adherence to supposed criteria (such as the order of consistency) can compound this difficulty (*BB* 27):

The man who is philosophically puzzled sees a law in the way a word is used, and, trying to apply this law consistently, comes up against cases where it leads to paradoxical results.

... Philosophy, as we use the word, is a fight against the fascination which forms of expression exert upon us.
And this has been expressed clearly by Stephen Mulhall concerning the Wittgensteinian project:

A Wittgensteinian is committed, not to the defence of common sense, but to the clarification of the grammar of the words in which common sense and any other intelligible utterances are given expression.\(^7^4\)

In considering the clarification of the grammar of language, then, the notion of order (whatever the adherence to the canon of consistency in applying the perceived ‘laws’ of language) characterised Wittgenstein’s early post-\textit{Tractatus} ambition for philosophy. Whatever Wittgenstein understood up to the 1930s to be the nature of conceptual order, by the drafting of the \textit{Investigations} (\textit{PI} 132) he had clearly proposed a concentration on order in knowledge of the use of language:

We want to establish an order in our knowledge of the use of language: an order with a particular end in view; one out of many possible orders; not the order.

As Mulhall has noted, this is essentially a matter of grammar.

Accordingly, for the later Wittgenstein, order in the use of language must be apprehended and expressed through the use of the instrument without which there can be no account: grammar. But for the Wittgenstein (\textit{BB} 17, 87,125; \textit{PG} 75; \textit{PI} 67) of ‘family resemblances’ in language-games, it should not be presumed that there is any necessary form of order for language-games. Indeed, because the post-\textit{Tractatus} Wittgenstein sought an order in knowledge of the use of language, would the nature of order become clearer by examination of its occasional failure, with misunderstandings or rejection of grammar resulting in disorder perhaps even

to the point of nonsense? That question might be regarded as a clarifying limit to rationality: the consideration of nonsense. We will now turn attention to that matter.

**Nonsense and Falsehood**

While the early Wittgenstein (*TLP* 3.42) considered, like Frege, that all thoughts lie in one logically interconnected space, by the 1938 *Lectures on Religious Belief* Wittgenstein was struggling with the idea of unshared logical spaces. In a well known passage from the *Lectures*, Wittgenstein (*LC 58*) pointed to an imagined conversation where someone expressed their belief in the Last Judgement and Wittgenstein’s rejoinder was to raise profound reservations; Wittgenstein observed of that linguistic act:

> It isn’t a question of my being anywhere near him, but on an entirely different plane, which you could express by saying: ‘You mean something entirely different Wittgenstein.’

Cora Diamond, taking up the issue of logical space, has commented:

> ... if someone says to me that there will be a Last Judgement, I cannot try to occupy the space, relative to that assertion, that it seems ought to be there; the appearance is misleading. The little distance between ‘p’ and ‘Well, possibly p’ isn’t there in the space in which the assertor of the Last Judgement has spoken. The attempt to occupy that location would instead put me at a vast distance from him.\(^\text{75}\)

Diamond is interested in distance within logical space. Diamond’s point is not that there is no common human understanding, including the kind of common understanding that might be considered necessary for a religious person to converse with someone who did not share faith. Rather, Diamond has argued that Wittgenstein’s rejection of the Fregean/Tractatus conception of belief does not itself force an abandonment of the notion of common understanding.\textsuperscript{76} That being the case, two implications present. First, aspiration to common intelligibility would continue. Second, the post-\textit{Tractatus} Wittgenstein sought non-Fregean grounds for such intelligibility; and the central question is whether, for Wittgenstein, his particular convictions about order and rationality may find their reconciliation in common intelligibility. So, how might Wittgensteinians address the problem of common intelligibility?

Now, it is clear that there can be a ‘vast distance’ between locutors in various circumstances even within what is here called logical space. Whatever else may be relevant, in the context of this discussion of Wittgensteinian language-games such distances could result from grammatical confusion should language-game rules be taken for descriptions. For instance, if mention of a Last Judgement is understood by its locutor to express a religious language-game rule \textit{simpliciter}, then that would place the locutor at a ‘vast distance’ from anyone comprehending the expression as a description of a future event. Indeed, in that case the distance would be so vast that the hearer’s understanding would give the appearance to the locutor of the unintelligible: sheer nonsense. Nevertheless, the recognition of nonsense between locutors may be possible on the ground of common intelligibility: the grammar of the locution can be considered by each locutor and agreement reached about it within the language-game. We can agree in the language we use (\textit{PI} 241).

So, grammatical consideration of articulate Wittgensteinian language use aspires to enable the identification of nonsense, nonsense being taken to be that which cannot be understood because, being out of the Wittgensteinian order necessary

\textsuperscript{76} Diamond C ‘Wittgenstein on Religious Belief’ op. cit., \textit{RWL} 115.
for comprehension, it makes no sense. However, the project of identifying what makes no sense within particular language-games, because what makes no sense ultimately eludes understanding, is far from straightforward. In this regard, and following Kant, Wittgenstein (CV 15) noticed the peculiarly human failing that:

In so far as people believe that they can see the 'limits of human understanding', they naturally also believe that they can see beyond these.

If it is beyond understanding, the obvious difficulty lies in attempts to identify (and say) what is nonsense. Here the Wittgensteinian origins lie with the Tractatus. In his preface Wittgenstein (TLP p.3) set out the aim of the Tractatus:

... the aim of the book is to set a limit to thought, or rather – not to thought, but to the expression of thoughts: for in order to be able to set a limit to thought, we should have to find both sides of the limit thinkable (i.e. we should have to be able to think what cannot be thought).

It will therefore only be in language that the limit can be set, and what lies on the other side of the limit will simply be nonsense.

This concentration on 'the limit' characterised Wittgenstein's early attempt to articulate one measure of sense and nonsense. And concern about identifying nonsense in the Tractatus gave rise (TLP 4.03) to the picture theory of propositions. But the picture theory was overtaken by the theory of games in the Investigations. So the identification of nonsense, post-Tractatus, would need to be achieved without the picture theory scaffolding of the deterministic (TLP 3.25, 3.251) and connective (TLP 4.03) features of propositions but within language-games themselves. In what (language-game) ways now could the identification of nonsense be achieved? Whatever the logical space occupied by Last Judgement locutions, are there circumstances where they are recognisable nonsense?

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77 Brown S C  Do Religious Claims Make Sense?  SCM Press Ltd London 1969, p.2:

... it is no more possible for us to confess ignorance of those matters which lie outside human understanding than it is for us to claim knowledge of them.
In the *Tractatus* (*TLP* 3.263, 4.024), following the *Notebooks* (*NB* 94), Wittgenstein considered that to understand a proposition meant to know what would be the case if it were true. If it could not be known what the truth would entail, on this ground nonsense would be exposed. Critically, then, truth-apt nonsense was not an option in the *Tractatus*. Take, for example, the proposition ‘God created the heavens and the Earth’. For the proposition to be understood it must be known what would be the case for it to be true; its truth conditions would not be additional to the proposition’s meaning. Significantly, the proposition is not nonsense if an adequate story can be constructed about divine creative activity; the story would picture (*TLP* 2.223) reality. This emphasised the onus for religion to produce a credible account, at least as an initial step; clarity was required about what the truth would entail. And if such an account were not forthcoming, the proposition could be considered nonsense. Deficient accounts of Creation, not presenting a view comprehensible as truth, would not be understood. Here what is not possible is the determination of either truth or falsehood about a locution that cannot be understood. So, for the *Tractatus*, nonsense that is nevertheless truth-apt was not an option.\(^{78}\)

Now, this conviction remained with Wittgenstein in the post-*Tractatus* period. Notably, however, and contrary to any rejection of the notion of false nonsense, it has been proposed by (the Wittgensteinian) Stuart Brown\(^{79}\) that the unintelligible, in principle, can be known to be false. (Importantly, here it is not the believed falsehood of the proposition that renders it ‘unintelligible’. It is not ridiculous falsehood; rather, the locution is meaningless nonsense. Otherwise Brown would be asserting incontrovertibly that what is false is false, rather than his contentious claim that what is nonsense can be false.) Of course, theism is conventionally

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\(^{78}\) Note that in 1913 (during the drafting of the *Tractatus*), Wittgenstein criticised Russell’s theory of judgement (expressed in Russell’s draft of *The Theory of Knowledge*) on the ground that ‘the proper theory of judgement [between p and not-p] must make it impossible to judge nonsense’. Cf: Monk R *Bertrand Russell The Spirit of Solitude* Jonathan Cape London 1996, p.300.

\(^{79}\) Brown S C *Do Religious Claims Make Sense?* op.cit., pp.17, 18.
construed as admission that theological locutions (about divine creativity, for example) are conceivable as truth. But, Brown has argued, in the same way in which it is possible not to understand a proposition believed to be true, it is possible not to understand a proposition believed to be false:

In distinguishing ... between a rule-governed exercise of a concept and an intelligible application of it, we allow someone both to be an atheist and deny the intelligibility of religious discourse.\(^{80}\)

That is, if it were accepted (with Brown) that what cannot be understood (in the strong sense of being unintelligible) nevertheless can be believed to be false, then (the meaning condition being accidental to the truth condition) one would be entitled to claim that religious propositions about, say, Creation are both nonsense and false. Unless this is the case, Brown avers, it would not be allowed that someone both be an atheist and able to deny the intelligibility of religious discourse. Brown appears to be pleading the cause of an ambitious (perhaps somewhat extravagant) kind of atheist. But what account of nonsense might Wittgenstein allow here? In the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein had modified his even earlier view (*NB* 111, 112) that nominated the meaning of a proposition to depend upon understanding it to be true or false. And it has been noted that by the *Tractatus* (*TLP* 4.024), although truth or falsehood did not need in fact to have been determined, understanding was dependent upon the conceiving of truth. And the proposal that the meaning of locutions should be equated with their ability to be understandable as literally true, attracts. But, can what is not understandable be false?

In this regard Phillips (*Dl* 65, 66) observed that the necessary condition for it to be said that something is not literally true (that is, literally false) is that it can be compared with circumstances where it would literally be true. And where that comparison eludes human comprehension, the denial of literal truth is itself beyond

\(^{80}\) Brown S C *Do Religious Claims Make Sense?* op.cit., p.18.
understanding. Attempts to deny literal truth where the circumstances of literal truth are inconceivable would be 'devoid of meaning' (or, nonsense). To extrapolate from Phillips, neither the locution nor its denial would be comprehensible; both the locution and its negation would be sheer nonsense. So, consider the locution 'It is literally true that God created the universe'. Would the literal truth that God created the universe be conceivable? That is a challenge for theists. Phillips (Di 66) has insisted, however, that those who wish to maintain that the proposition is not literally true must also maintain that divine creation is actually conceivable. Otherwise, their denial of the proposition (as literal truth) is 'devoid of meaning'.

Contrary, then, to the kind of view expressed by Brown in support of the ability of atheism to deny the meaningfulness of theism, Phillips has argued consistently with the Tractatus that what is meaningless is not subject to truth conditions; nonsense is neither true nor false. So, any suggestion that what has no meaning can nevertheless be false, is unacceptable. This is the case because, despite being meaningless (unintelligible), that locution's truth conditions would be known; and that could not be so without the locution being understood (intelligible). Of course, some locutions misunderstood by some certainly may be either true or false; they are just not universally understood. But the inability of some to understand is not an issue here.

Importantly, this conclusion can be compared with the later Wittgenstein in regard to locutions considered to be nonsense. In the Investigations (Pl 43), meaning depends on use. So, for any meaningful locutions where truth status applies, truth is accidental to meaning. But that does not mean that falsehood is accidental to

81 This is a point which Phillips subsequently revisited at IP 144 where he discussed locutions that do 'not mean anything'. Also see Phillips' assertion (RFF 8) that it is not possible to mean what is 'demonstrably incoherent'.

82 Mulhall S 'Wittgenstein and the Philosophy of Religion' op.cit., p.108: ... there can be no ground for assuming a priori that such an explanation cannot be forthcoming; we have to look and see how the statement functions in the relevant context before we can establish what it means.
meaningless locutions. Wittgenstein (PI 251) considered that confusion can arise when a locution is misunderstood by virtue of its 'form' \([\text{Form}]\) as (truth-apt and) empirical when it is in fact (not truth-apt but) a rule. And the grammatical misunderstanding of a rule \(\text{simpliciter}\) is the misunderstanding of a locution that itself cannot be true or false. The same point was made by Wittgenstein in regard to some locutions about colour and sound. The locution 'That's not a noise, it's a colour' \((PR 55)\) is nonsense taken as description. So is 'Noises don't have hues'. However, each of those locutions has sense taken as grammatical rule: they lay down rules about ways of talking about colour and sound.\(^{83}\) For the later Wittgenstein, then, truth-aptness is not relevant to the nonsense consequent upon taking a rule \(\text{simpliciter}\) to be a description. Rules are not truth-apt. Nor even where misunderstood as descriptions are they truth-apt. Rules \(\text{simpliciter}\) misunderstood as truth-apt description, because misunderstood, amount to nonsense.

This emphasises what may have been the most significant move by Wittgenstein beyond the doctrine of the \textit{Tractatus}. As already indicated, in the \textit{Tractatus} the picture theory of meaning embraced truth-aptness \((TLP 2.141)\); and nonsense could be recognised. However, locutions (such as value judgements) that were not truth-apt were not necessarily nonsense; rather, there some other account of (non-‘propositional’) language would be required, an account beyond articulation \((TLP 6.54)\).\(^{84}\) By contrast, the post-	extit{Tractatus} Wittgenstein discovered meaning through use in a diverse range of language-games that even included religious activity like prayer \((PI 23)\). Nevertheless, and while meaning was identifiable by language-game use, nonsense remained to be identified amongst those games. Hence the concern, expressed categorically in the \textit{Investigations} \((PI 464, 664, 665)\), to identify a particular kind of nonsense: the \([\text{Unsinn}]\) nonsense that results from the use of rules \(\text{simpliciter}\) as truth-apt descriptions in language-game contexts. If Last Judgement locutions are religious language-game rules \(\text{simpliciter}\), then it is


\(^{84}\) Kenny A (ed) \textit{The Oxford Illustrated History of Western Philosophy} Oxford University Press 1994, pp.261, 262.
nonsense to consider them descriptions. And the same goes for 'God is love'. The central question here is: is 'God is love' a rule simpliciter? Its answer is the business of grammar.

Critically, then, the point of contention between Wittgensteinian 'friends' of religion and their Wittgensteinian opponents is whether the nonsense of invalid ascription of truth-aptness can be identified by grammatical contemplation of particular locutions. In Phillips' presentation (FAF 146, 216, 218; WR 17; RRC 216; RHC 95), the challenge is to choose either description (which, believed true, might also be a rule) or rule simpliciter for characterising 'God is love'. Whatever the choice taken, however, truth-aptness is not accidental to the nonsense of rules grammatically mistaken also to be truth-apt; truth-aptness adheres only to locutions disclosed by grammar to be descriptions. And importantly, that means that, taken as description, 'God is love' would be religious nonsense.

Notably, for Phillips, if false nonsense is not an option, and theism is beyond meaning (RFF passim), atheism is not possible. For the post-Tractatus Wittgenstein, rejecting the 'logical form' [logischen Formen] which purported to picture reality (in the Tractatus), and exposing the 'form' that 'bewitched' (in the Investigations: PI 109), was critical. In that regard, Phillips was conscientiously Wittgensteinian in orientation. But Phillips' conclusion about atheism is acceptable only if, contrary to atheism, there are no locutions about God that can be recognised as truth-apt descriptions. That is, if theism is (meaningless) nonsense. Here, that remains to be considered.

In summary, following Wittgenstein (and contrary to Brown), Phillips certainly had no concept of 'false nonsense'. For both Phillips and the 'friends', taken as a rule 'God is love' cannot be true or false: rules are not truth-apt. So, for Phillips, 'God is love' can never be false. Taken by the 'friends' as description, however, it would be considered truth-apt. But, for Phillips (because it is a rule simpliciter), taken as description 'God is love' is sheer grammatical nonsense. That said, while nonsense cannot be false, it nevertheless needs to be exposed. Indeed, the later
Wittgenstein (Pl 464) expressed the ambition to teach ways of moving from 'disguised' to 'patent' nonsense, patent nonsense being exposed nonsense.

Truth and Language-games

The Description/Rule Distinction and Truth

Now, since the first chapter, the Wittgensteinian distinction between description and rule has been introduced for the centrally important purpose of this thesis: an analysis of Phillips' position concerning 'God is love'. But, because it is essential to the ambition of describing and commenting upon Phillips, that distinction now requires further explanation concerning its application in religious language-games.

Since publication of the Investigations in 1953, there have been various formulations of, and references to, what has been identified as the description/rule distinction. In the account already provided by this thesis, according to the proffered choice, a language-game rule simpliciter cannot also be considered truth-apt without amounting to nonsense. Other language-game rules might (sequentially) present (truth-apt) descriptions. And that is the central matter for adjudication about 'God is love'. It is a religious language-game rule. But is it a rule simpliciter?

One concern here is the grammar of locutions as rules. That matter will be examined much more closely from the next chapter onwards. At this point, consequent upon discussion about reason in Wittgenstein, it is convenient to contemplate religious locutions as (truth-apt) descriptions.

Religion and Truth

The scientific approach to physical reality, of course, promotes hypothesis. And many hypotheses have all the potential of the scientific crux: a test. Similarly,
some claims about religious life can be confirmed as a matter of psychological fact: faith either is congruent with the experience of comfort in distress or it is not. But it would be agreed that various scientific locutions of a purportedly descriptive kind are not testable, at least, not in this universe of experience. And many locutions about God (like many scientific statements) are not testable (LC 60).

Further, like some religious experiences, in science the vulnerability of some hypotheses to tests provides the capacity for them to be doubted, disbelieved and even falsified (depending upon the confidence that can be lodged in the validity and completeness of particular tests). But it is also possible to doubt scientific claims (including ‘string theory’) that are not testable. The possibility of doubt in regard to untestable locutions about God also is an intellectual option. While in Wittgensteinian terms (P/ 190) use remains relevant for meaning in religious locutions, without the possibility of assessments about their truth, religious locutions might lack credibility. So, in what ways might assessment of truth apply in the use of religious locutions?

Clearly, orthodox references to God as creator and redeemer would amount to locutions of the type that are not testable. At best, their verification would need to wait for an other-worldly (eschatological) dimension of experience; necessarily, falsification would not be an option (even eschatologically). That does not mean, however, that truth cannot be an issue for religion in this universe of contemplation. Truth-apt religious nonsense has been ruled out on Wittgensteinian grounds. At least to this point, however, theism not having been established in principle to be nonsense, truth-apt description has remained conceivable for religion.

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85 It might be noted that, while Karl Popper proposed a falsifiability criterion for empirical propositions, in principle he allowed the truth of unfalsifiable propositions about reality.

But now enter Phillips' particular Wittgensteinianism. Phillips provoked Anthony Flew to express incredulity at Phillips' constant suggestion that there is no room for questions about the truth of religion as opposed to questions about what is truly religious.\(^{87}\) This raises a profoundly significant question about the post-Tractatus Wittgenstein's approach to truth, and in particular whether (and if so, in what manner) truth is relevant to religion. Notably, Phillips' Wittgensteinian mentor, Rush Rhees, considered that belief in God is not like belief in an object, but is:

\[\ldots\text{more like the belief in the reality of physical objects (notice that this is the natural way of speaking here: not in 'the existence'); and it would not make sense to talk about testing that belief.}\(^{88}\)

And the position expressed by Phillips follows from scepticism over some general or universal kind of Reality. In claiming that it should not surprise to find that God's reality is a spiritual reality, for Phillips, to find God is to enter into an affective (that is, emotional) state.\(^{89}\) While Phillips considered that the affective state is entered into with 'the divine', to do so he pressed his readers to:

\[\ldots\text{pay attention to the grammar of our uses of the word 'God'.}\(^{90}\)

Indeed, having advocated the dismissal of metaphysics because it is irrelevant to religion, Phillips (\textit{RHC passim} following upon \textit{RWE}) has argued in religion for an alternative to theism's proffered choice between religious scepticism and the


\[^{90}\text{Phillips D Z 'At the Mercy of Method' op.cit., p.5.}\]
endorsement of faith: the 'hermeneutics of contemplation' is that alternative. So, locutions like 'God is love' are language-game rules for Phillips; for him (FAF 146) they cannot also be descriptions:

'God is love' is not a description of God which may be true or false, but a grammatical rule for one use, albeit a primary one, of the word 'God'.

In another clear articulation of this position, and as already noticed, Phillips (RHC 95) considered that for 'God is love':

... the predicates become grammatical predicates of a grammatical object, not descriptions of an independent existing object of which they happen to be true.

In the wake of his much earlier conviction that religious locutions are 'absolutes of faith' (RWE 144) or a 'confession of faith' (FAF 146), here for Phillips 'God is love' is 'a grammatical rule in dogmatics' (RHC 95); and the religion centred on that grammatical rule embraces the affective contemplation of that rule.

Religion and Uniqueness

The emergence of discussion that includes 'grammatical rules in dogmatics', succeeding 'absolutes of faith' and 'confessions of faith', raises the spectre that religious language-games enjoy a particular elevated status. And the same goes for reality in religious language-games. Indeed, in reference to criteria for religious belief, and in comment on an essay by Rhees concerning the reality of things, Allan Olding has considered the suggestion that in speaking of the reality of God, the believer brings into play criteria within religious practices for deciding between appearance and reality, for distinguishing the true God from the idolator's god, sacrament from superstition and so on:

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These criteria are of their own kind and are, for example, a result of how beliefs about God cohere within a tradition rather than how they knock up against the world.\(^92\)

So, belief and reality are language-game specific for both Rhees and Phillips. Undeniably, talk of criteria specific to particular realms of discourse has a superficial attraction. But the consequences of such an epistemological position are controversial. John Hick noted that the logical implications of religious statements would then not extend across the borders of their language-game, beyond religious locutions and into assertions about the universe.\(^93\) At the least, that would disappoint the ‘friends’ of religion.

The outcome of these considerations is a conundrum. There is recognisable point (in Wittgensteinian terms) in determining what characterises certain language-games and their particular approaches to truth and reality. Nevertheless, while it is desirable for language-games to share intelligibility, the risk is that common intelligibility may militate against the uniqueness of religious language-games. Phillips, it would appear, needs a resolution of this conundrum. Perhaps the way forward is to consider further what might be the outcome of characterising religious language-games as unique. Should Hick’s caution be accepted, the hazards of an unique approach to religion seem clear. If there are different intelligibilities for various language-games, if not forms of life, then it is possible that they are not similarly accessible. Common intelligibility would be at risk; and, on this showing, religious locutions (including ‘God is love’) would not be vulnerable to broad-based assessment.\(^94\) So, has Rhees, Phillips or any other Wittgensteinian a rejoinder?


\(^{94}\) Cf: Crary A ‘Wittgenstein’s philosophy in relation to political thought’ in Crary A and Read R The New Wittgenstein Routledge London 2000, p.120.
For his part, Phillips has acknowledged the charges advanced by the critics of those who understand religious language-games to be unique. At this point discussion is confined to the charge that philosophers like Phillips discuss religion as though it were unique to the point of being an esoteric game, logically cut off from other features of human life.\(^{95}\) While disowning\(^{96}\) what he understood as Wittgensteinian fideism\(^{97}\) (esoteric religious language-games), Phillips conceded that there was an issue in regard to religious belief as unique games.\(^{98}\) However, the logically prior question concerns whether Wittgenstein might be understood in terms complementary to the esoteric thesis.\(^{99}\) On the reading now to be outlined, Wittgenstein would allow that religious language-games enjoy autonomy of a kind. But, to what extent might those games be considered unique to the point of being logically distinct? Can religious language-games be conceived in that manner; or would that be too extravagant for Wittgenstein? It can be argued that there is no clear suggestion in Wittgenstein that any language-game (including religious language-games) could be unique to the point of being esoteric. Relying upon Anthony Kenny, such an argument might be proposed as follows.


\(^{99}\) ‘Esoteric’ is acknowledged as a charge laid by the supposed anti-Wittgensteinian philosophers only in Phillips’ Preface, and not in the body of the text to *Belief, Change and Forms of Life* (1986). Notably, the word ‘esoteric’ is employed by Kai Nielsen in ‘Some Meta-Theological Remarks about Reductionism’ in *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* Vol 42 No 2 June 1974, p.337 which followed Phillips’ argument about religious belief as ‘esoteric’ games in the 1970 *Ratio* article. The ‘esoteric’ status of religious language-games is considered to give rise to Wittgensteinian religious ‘fideism’.
The point of games is that they are played; humanity participates in them as community. In this regard Kenny has confirmed the connections between language, game and language-game. He has argued that, for Wittgenstein, the comparison of language with games was meant to bring out the connection between the speaking of language and non-linguistic communal activities:

Indeed the speaking of language is part of a communal activity, a way of living in society which Wittgenstein calls a 'form of life' (Pl 23). It is through sharing in the playing of language-games that language is connected with our life (PG 65).

For Wittgenstein, that there is no common element to everything identifiable as a game is one feature of games that it shares with language (there being no Language). According to Kenny, this is what makes it appropriate for 'particular mini-languages' to be called language-games. Further, as a remedy against any naive tendency to regard language-games as somewhat trivial, Kenny has confirmed that the comparison of language with a game was not meant to suggest that language was a pastime unconnected with other features of life.

The extent to which religious language-games are unique, then, would be constrained by the fact that, like any other language-game, it is necessary to learn particular rules and the ways in which they operate. On this reading, some people learn the rules of some games, others do not. For Wittgenstein games are not esoteric if by that is meant that religion would be accessible only to those initiated by some means other than communal life (cf: PCP 50). By Kenny's account, any strong reading of 'unique' would be unfaithful to Wittgenstein. Indeed, those Wittgensteinians accused of considering religion to be characterised by esoteric


games which are logically cut off from other features of human life, then, might be accused (among other things) of not being orthodox in their Wittgensteinianism. Religious language-games are certainly unique for Wittgenstein; but they are not esoteric. The question is whether this is consistent with the account that Phillips has provided.

The later Wittgenstein considered that language consisted in a family of games. Importantly, for Phillips (PCP 49):

... [Wittgenstein's] problem was not primarily that of distinguishing one language-game from another, marking it off from its neighbours, but rather with the question of the kind of unity language has.

And here Phillips has drawn attention to a tendency in the secondary literature. Phillips (PCP 49) maintained that the emphasis has been on the fact that language has many uses that cannot be shown to be related to the general form of the proposition. But, for Phillips, this misses the reason why Wittgenstein maintained that the unity of language is the unity of a family of games. As Rhees made clear, for Phillips (PCP 50):

... language makes sense only if living makes sense.

So, for Phillips (PCP 50):

Wittgenstein wanted, rightly, to give up the analogy between language and a calculus, but he saw something in the analogy originally that needs to be retained – namely, that a certain generality belongs to language. But it is not the generality of a formal system, not that of a calculus, but the generality involved in a way of living, in which what is said on one occasion has an interlocking intelligibility with what is said on other occasions. Without this, there would be nothing here that we would call language.
That said, and while language-games themselves might be identifiable by 'family resemblance', the rules apprehended might be considered particular from one game to another. That is a critical issue for the next chapter to consider. Here, however, and in regard to the charge against Wittgensteinian philosophers of religion, orthodox Wittgensteinianism might admit that it considers religion to be comprised of numerous language-games: praying, worshipping, confessing, and so on. For his part, Phillips (WR 56, 57, 61, 67) considered those religious language-games 'distinctive' rather than esoteric. And that is certainly Wittgensteinian. Indeed, and as will be discussed in the next chapter, while separate, distinctive language-games might bind together like ship's rope (BB 87; PI 65-67). The suggestion, then, is that a 'family resemblance' shared by all language-games does not prevent religious language-games being separated from other language-games; nevertheless, while distinctive, they might bind together (PI 67) in even wider 'forms of life' [Lebensform].

Wittgenstein's 'Form of Life'

Now the Tractatus, it has been noted, rested on the picture theory’s twin pillars of reference and determinism for meaning in language. The post-Tractatus Wittgenstein certainly overturned his approach to reference, but maintained a concern (of sorts) for determinacy (PI 99, 198). So, what may be determinative for the later Wittgenstein? Here the notion of 'form of life' is critical. And the Wittgenstein (PI 19) of the Investigations, language and 'form of life' are inseparable:

... to imagine a language means to imagine a form of life.

Further, one part of a 'life-form' is the speaking of language (PI 23):

102 Problematically, Wittgenstein is notorious for not giving any general account of the concept of language-game, nor a ground for individuating them. Cf: Kenny A. Wittgenstein op.cit., p.164.

103 This debate, taken up by Kai Nielsen, receives further notice in chapter 6 below in reference to 'fideism'.
... the *speaking* of language is part of an activity, or of a life-form.

And, language is used by agreement in a ‘form of life’ (*PI* 241):

... and they agree in the *language* they use. That is not agreement in opinions but in form of life.

But how should Wittgenstein be understood? Some consider that Wittgenstein may have been talking only about locutions, not the much more diverse phenomenon of language-games themselves, in ‘forms of life’.104 Alternatively, it would be arguable that religion as a ‘form of life’ embraces the full panoply of religious behaviour.105 While that remains an unresolved issue, certainly language as imagined, chosen and spoken is associated with a Wittgensteinian ‘form of life’. But is participation in a ‘form of life’ determinative for meaning? Here, perhaps, (rational) order and training may link with meaning. Indeed, for some, this conjunction of rationality and ‘form of life’ is a natural and attractive *locus* for the acknowledgement of meaning in religion. So, are religious language-games part of a Wittgensteinian ‘form of life’? More importantly, is the Wittgensteinian ‘form of life’ that embraces religious language-games comprehensive enough to countenance common intelligibility between religion and other kinds of belief? And if they are covered by a comprehensive ‘form of life’, does that mean that they all just have to be accepted (*PI* p.192)?106

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106 It is notable, and somewhat contentious, that it has been suggested that the idea that religion, or anything else on that (large) scale, was considered by Wittgenstein as a ‘form of life’ can be excluded on textual grounds. (Cf. Kerr F *Theology after Wittgenstein* Basil Blackwell Oxford 1986, p.29.) Rather, it has been put that elements of religion like worshipping, hoping and
Now, ‘forms of life’ may have the in principle virtue of supporting a common intelligibility in order to enable comprehension of meaning across language-games. And Wittgenstein advocated description of such ‘forms of life’. Indeed he proposed that describing religious locutions (within their ‘form of life’, if that is an appropriate use) cannot change them; necessarily everything remains as it is. In Phillips’ estimation (PCP 157-166), this is a critical Wittgensteinian sentiment. How should it be understood? For Wittgenstein, the business of grammar is language (PI 371, 496, 497, 664). And, in the Investigations Wittgenstein (PI 124) stated that 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.

Two further references are relevant:

We must do away with all explanation, and description alone must take its place. (PI 109)

Further,

Philosophy simply puts everything before us, and neither explains nor deduces anything. – Since everything lies open to view there is nothing to explain. (PI 126)

forgiving are in fact Wittgensteinian ‘forms of life’. (Cf: Sherry P Religion, Truth and Language-Games Macmillan London 1977, pp.22, 23.) One difficulty for that view, however, is that locutions about worship, hope and forgiveness might be taken to present grammars rather than ‘forms of life’; at least, they might be taken to be language-games revealing particular grammars. The relationship between grammar, language-games and ‘forms of life’ will be considered in chapter 3 below.
For Wittgenstein, then, philosophy is a matter of description, not explanation. And this has been interpreted strictly by many. Here, Phillips' approach is notable. Wittgenstein (Pl p.192) claimed that a 'form of life' just has to be accepted, and Phillips (WR xxi) unambiguously endorsed Wittgenstein as the exemplar of philosophical method in the consideration of religion:

He pays religion the compliment, in all the diverse examples he considers, of leaving it where it is. That should be our ideal, too, in the philosophy of religion. It is one which is extremely difficult to achieve.

What may have been true for Wittgenstein about describing the use of language, then, may soften (on Phillips' admission) into the expression of an 'ideal'. Importantly, Max Charlesworth has argued that Wittgenstein himself engaged in much more than description in the Philosophical Investigations. If he did, then Wittgenstein's aphorism (Pl 124) expresses the 'ideal' philosophical method (subsequently articulated by Phillips at RFF 12) and, to the extent that it aspires to be therapeutic, the Investigations itself may demonstrate the difficulty of adhering to the principle.

In whatever manner 'form of life' is to be construed, then, many would concur with Phillips here about the difficulty confronting the Wittgensteinian ambition. And it may be possible to accuse Phillips (if not Wittgenstein) of failure in its pursuit. That is, where second order thinking proposes generalisations of the kind that draw conclusions about 'language-games' and 'forms of life', an approach is being developed that amounts to an articulation of the phenomenon being described. And the extension if not modification of ideas may be entailed in their articulation. That is, Phillips' philosophy of religion may not have left everything as it is. But Phillips' project, to leave everything as it is, including distinctive (WR 56-60) religious language-games, is a matter for the consideration that this thesis now attempts to provide.


**Summary**

The earliest published Wittgensteinian agenda sought to establish with clarity what can and cannot be said:

... what can be said at all can be said clearly, and what we cannot talk about we must pass over in silence. (TLP 6.54)

Importantly, were religious locutions not candidates for what could be said pursuant to the *Tractatus*, religion might not be a candidate for conversation. Were that the case then, in *Tractatus* terms, religious locutions would have to be passed over in silence. That conclusion from the *Tractatus* was adopted with enthusiasm (although perhaps precipitately) by the Vienna Circle in the 1920s.

Nevertheless, and if not only Elizabeth Anscombe but also Anthony Kenny be permitted, then religion was not intended to be eliminated by the *Tractatus*. Further, David Pears would argue that the *Tractatus* recognised the significance of inexpressible religious belief (if inexpressible belief is not oxymoronic). At the least, somehow there would be an entitlement to acknowledge in silence those experiences, being religious, to which utterance could not be given. Whether or not Anscombe, Kenny and Pears (in their different ways) were idiosyncratic if not unorthodox in regard to the *Tractatus*, the *Investigations* (*Pl* 23) certainly seems to present significant grounds for the acceptance of religious language-games and their locutions within a ‘form of life’. Indeed, within a ‘form of life’, Wittgenstein (*Pl* p.192) would have required religion to be accepted as given.

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110 Kenny A (ed) *The Oxford Illustrated History of Western Philosophy* Oxford University Press 1994, p.261: ... the *Tractatus* is a work with many different facets and it was not intended to eliminate value judgements or expressions of religious belief.
Following upon the *Investigations*, the role of post-*Tractatus* Wittgensteinian philosophers of religion, then, was to acknowledge both religious locutions and the ordinary language common sense through which they were given expression. But Cora Diamond’s consideration of Last Judgement belief confirms the difficulties in acknowledging religious locutions that may lie at a ‘vast distance’ from some common sense conceptions. Seemingly, then, describing what can be said risks argument about what can be said. And, in that endeavour, the discovery of what can be said and its articulation risked some modification of discourse. As an outcome, not everything may have been left as it was.

So, among Wittgensteinians the status of religious belief has remained highly contentious, even with the benefit of the later Wittgenstein. In fact, it is the interpretation and exploitation of the later Wittgenstein that is at issue. There Phillips advocated that religious locutions are grammatically significant. But his grammatically ambitious Wittgensteinian religion (denying that ‘God’ can refer) is fervently resisted by some. One Wittgensteinian opponent of Phillips (among the ‘friends’) has recently argued for orthodox ‘religious language’ to be both language-game rules and descriptions (pursuant to *On Certainty*). In this thesis, that contemporary dispute flows from the Wittgensteinian distinction between descriptions and rules into the particular choice presented by Phillips concerning ‘God is love’. Essentially, that challenge draws together the seminal issues of meaning and description for Phillips’ Wittgensteinian philosophy of religion. We advance, then, in the next chapter to critical issues in the later Wittgenstein: grammar, games and rules. And, for reasons that are emerging, grammar assumes priority.

112 Cf: Mulhall S ‘Wittgenstein and the Philosophy of Religion’ op. cit., p.108.
114 David Stern is suggestive here: Stern D ‘Was Wittgenstein a Jew?’ op.cit., p.246.
115 Felicity McCutcheon uses the term ‘religious language’. While that term is repeated in this thesis when describing McCutcheon’s view, following Wittgenstein the thesis refers to religious locutions.
CHAPTER 3
GRAMMAR, GAMES and RULES

What belongs to grammar are all the conditions (the method)
necessary for comparing the proposition with reality.116

Wittgenstein's Post-tractatus Move

Grammar and Clarity

Discussion persists concerning the legacy of the Tractatus for the Investigations.117
For instance, Cyril Barrett118 would argue for a surviving remnant of the picture
theory. And some eminent commentary considers that, not only late but also early,
Wittgenstein had a therapeutic aim.119

Debates of that kind notwithstanding, in the context of identifying the inheritance of
the Tractatus, Wittgenstein's continuing pursuit of clarity (TLP 4.116; PI 5) should
be acknowledged. And, for the post-tractatus Wittgenstein (PI 133), clarity could
be liberated through depth grammar (PI 664), grammar understood quite early (PR
9, 51) as the complete logical analysis of a 'proposition'. Grammar being critical,
Wittgenstein (PI 497) identified the aim of grammar with that of language: grammar

116 PG 45, p.88.
117 In 1971, Hacker predicted that the controversy would rage 'for many years
to come': Hacker P M S Insight and Illusion Clarendon Press Oxford (1972)
London 1971, p.232 and Hacker P M S Wittgenstein's Place in Twentieth-
118 Barrett C Wittgenstein on Ethics and Religion Blackwell Oxford 1991,
p.124.
119 Cf: Crary A 'Introduction' in Crary A and Read R The New Wittgenstein
Routledge London 2000, pp.1-18; and Phillips D Z 'Locating Philosophy's
Cool Place' in Sanders A F (ed) D Z Phillips' Contemplative Philosophy of
Religion Ashgate UK 2007, p.54.
facilitates the objectives of language. Indeed, as Stanley Cavell has expressed it with his own inimitable clarity, grammar is what language-games are meant to reveal. The objectives of language-games then may be clear. Importantly in that regard, and as commonly understood and employed, grammar in turn discloses rules for language use (WL 3; PG 184, 185; PI 497). Perhaps, if clarity about grammar could be established by contemplation of language-games, then clarity about ‘God is love’ qua rule would ensue. Of course, this would depend upon those incidences where language-games are characterised by rule-following.

Here an elementary but nonetheless significant point should be made: it concerns the nomination of descriptions as one aspect of the description/rule distinction, and rules as the other. In Wittgenstein’s PI 251, and in strict exegetical terms, that distinction provides for the identification of a ‘proposition’ as either ‘empirical’ or ‘grammatical’. Wittgensteinians, however, allow the distinction between descriptions and language-game rules rather than strictly between ‘empirical’ and ‘grammatical’ ‘propositions’. And the difference between game rules and grammar should be quite clear. For instance, all Wittgensteinians including the ‘friends’, should understand ‘Seraphim are six-winged’ as a Hebrew religious language-game rule in the prophecy of Isaiah. Nevertheless, for Wittgensteinians there must be a grammatical disclosure that stipulates that that rule is a rule. The rules of a language-game, then, can not themselves be considered rules of grammar. They are rules of the game. The disclosure that a rule is a rule,

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120 In Hacker’s useful aphorism, to grammar belongs everything antecedent to truth: Hacker P M S Insight and Illusion op. cit., p.185.
123 Frank Ramsey was responsible for Wittgenstein’s conviction (Pl 81) that not all aspects of games are characterised by rules. On this aspect of language-games and rules see Kenny A Wittgenstein Allen Lane The Penguin Press London 1973, pp.170, 171.
however, is a grammatical matter.\textsuperscript{125} That despite the fact that it is considered by numerous philosophers that grammar resists clear exegesis from Wittgenstein.\textsuperscript{126}

Now, this is important in appreciation of Phillips’ position. That is, in the same way in which other Wittgensteinians have sublimed Wittgenstein’s \textit{IP} 251 distinction between ‘grammatical’ and ‘empirical’ propositions into the distinction between language-game rules and truth-apt descriptions, so has Phillips. Indeed, in his first presentation which brought to bear the description/rule distinction upon ‘God is love’, Phillips (\textit{FAF} 146) sublimed the grammar alternative for characterising that locution \textit{(qua rule of grammar)} into a ‘confession of faith’:

\begin{quote}
In the mouth of a believer it takes the form of a confession of faith.
\end{quote}

That such a confession of faith is a language-game rule (rather than a rule of grammar) is clear from the other characterisations that Phillips gave ‘God is love’, including (\textit{RHC} 95):

\begin{quote}
... a grammatical rule in dogmatics.
\end{quote}

For Phillips, as for all Wittgensteinians, the locution is always grammatical. But, grammatically, it is a language-game rule rather than a truth-apt description. Should anything further be required on the point, reference can be made to \textit{FAF} 216. There, in preface to his claim (\textit{FAF} 218) that ‘God is love’ is a rule for the use of ‘God’ and is not a description, Phillips reflected on the two uses of ‘This is red’:

\begin{quote}
... In the first, we are offering a description of a particular object. ... But in the second use of ‘This is red’, nothing is being described. Rather, we are being given the rule for the use of the word ‘red’.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{125} Wittgenstein considered many kinds of rules but, while comparing game rules with rules of grammar, on occasion he is thought to have wondered whether the comparison was apt. Cf: Schulte J ‘Rules and Reason’ in Preston J (ed) \textit{Wittgenstein and Reason} Blackwell Oxford 2008, p.112.

\textsuperscript{126} Some philosophers consider that a Wittgensteinian virtue. Cf: Cavell S \textit{Must We Mean What We Say?} op.cit.
Similarly (FAF 216):

... in saying 'God is love' we are being taught one of the meanings of the word 'God'.

A related point follows. And it concerns the recognition and comprehension of their grammar from the presentation of locutions. Phillips (FAF 218) certainly maintained that that is a prime objective in understanding religious locutions. That being the case, Phillips' position should include description of the ways in which grammar yields 'perspicuous representation' of 'God is love'. Because a Wittgensteinian 'friend' like Felicity McCutcheon proposes the recognition of (appropriate) religious locutions as both rules and descriptions, she is confronted by a similar requirement. Indeed, without articulation of the disclosures of grammar, discovery of the nonsense entailed by confusing a rule *simpliciter* with a description would not be possible in anyone's religion.

In summary, those challenges concerning grammar and its revelation notwithstanding, for Wittgensteinians grammar is concerned with the logic of locutions in their language-games. Of course, were grammar so, it would be crucial to articulate what was meant by grammar and to understand how it made its rule-prescribing disclosures.\(^{127}\) Because of Phillips' reliance upon it, and the attention already drawn to it, an understanding of grammar and its employment is relevant to 'God is love' which is the locution of central concern for this thesis.\(^{128}\) But there is a lack of clarity about grammar itself. While, for Wittgenstein, 'unclarity' about grammar was characteristic of metaphysical questions (BB 35), if

\(^{127}\) Indeed, without a clear concept of grammar, it may be difficult to accept a clarifying function *(Pl* 373) for grammar.

\(^{128}\) The degree of this challenge is demonstrated by the fact that, for an otherwise comprehensive treatment of Wittgenstein, in the Index there is mention of 'grammar', 'surface grammar' and 'depth grammar' on only five pages to Kenny A. Wittgenstein *op. cit.*
not confusion, Wittgenstein himself can be quite puzzling about grammar.\textsuperscript{129}

Significantly, and consequent upon his ambitions for it, Wittgenstein's approach to grammar will become critical as Phillips comes more into focus. At this stage, however, and from Wittgenstein's post-\textit{Tractatus} perspective, if grammar promised to clarify metaphysical confusion, then grammar had a profound contribution to make in understanding reality. The development of that perspective now needs to be traced.

\textit{Grammar and the World}

Russell's commitment to logical atomism was informed by the belief that logic, once cast in appropriate form, would reveal the world.\textsuperscript{130} That is, it was being argued in post-idealist British philosophy that reality (expressed by particulars and universals) conforms with logic (individual variables and propositional functions).

For his part, and following Russell, the early Wittgenstein (\textit{TLP} 3.032, 5.61, 6.12) had considered that the fundamental laws of logic are imposed on language by the structure of the world.\textsuperscript{131} On that view, logical form through language pictures reality. Although logical grammar is mentioned in the \textit{Tractatus} (\textit{TLP} 3.325), the focus of the \textit{Tractatus} (\textit{TLP} 6.13) was logical atomism and, in particular, that logic is a mirror-image of the world. Nevertheless, by the \textit{Investigations} these fundamental convictions had been cast off. One difficulty for the \textit{Tractatus} lay in


\textsuperscript{130} Russell B 'On Denoting' \textit{Mind} 14 (1905), pp.479-493.

\textsuperscript{131} Kenny A 'Mill to Wittgenstein' in Kenny A (ed) \textit{The Oxford Illustrated History of Western Philosophy} Oxford University Press 1994, p.270.
discovering what in fact was pictured about reality through the comprehension of a logic determined by the universe. That ambition, according to the post-\textit{Tractatus} revolution articulated by Wittgenstein from the (1933-34) era of the \textit{Blue Book} (BB 17), was transformed into the examination of ‘simple forms of language’. It has been suggested that Wittgenstein (\textit{PI} 108) was rotating his investigation about the fixed point of real need:

\begin{quote}
Instead of ‘referring’ to the putative metaphysical structure of the world, the axis of reference was now pointing inwards, to the autonomous rules of grammar.\textsuperscript{132}
\end{quote}

On this showing, language must be interrogated to dispel confusion if meaningful locutions, comprehended by grammar, are to be discovered among the detritus of language-games. But Wittgenstein’s post-\textit{Tractatus} innovation also acknowledged that, while locutions can be meaningful because disclosing rules of language use, the same locutions may amount to nonsense if taken as descriptions of reality. Everything would depend upon the grammar applicable. Clearly, whatever the precise nature of the legacy bequeathed through the \textit{Tractatus}, by the \textit{Investigations} disclosures of the grammar revealed by language-games were critical for the prosecution of Wittgenstein’s mature project.\textsuperscript{133}

In identifying the most significant features of his later approach, it should be emphasised that Wittgenstein was highly ambitious for his employment of the notion of grammar. The previously conceived task of philosophical analysis for the \textit{picturing} of reality by logical ‘form’ gave way to \textit{descriptions} of the ways in which words are used in language. This aspired (\textit{PI} 109) to be a remedy against the ‘bewitchment’ that might have arisen by virtue of the proposition’s ‘form’ (\textit{PI} 251). And, attention might be drawn to \textit{PI} 92 as indicating that grammar proceeds

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{132} Hacker P M S \textit{Wittgenstein’s Place in Twentieth-century Analytic Philosophy} op.cit., p.81.
\textsuperscript{133} Hacker P M S \textit{Wittgenstein’s Place in Twentieth-century Analytic Philosophy} op.cit., p.110.
\end{flushright}
beyond the 'surveyable'.\textsuperscript{134} Because grammar enables us to find our way around in the context of philosophical difficulties\textsuperscript{135} it is first important to ask in what ways a locution might be ‘surveyable’ by grammar.

The Disclosures of Grammar

Surface Grammar and Depth Grammar

At the outset, and in order to consider Wittgenstein's mature position, how might surface grammar be understood?

Commonly conceived, grammar determines correct use of language (in Wittgensteinian language-games). That is, syntax, like morphology, can be misused in various ways; so the intended expression is presented only when orthodox syntax and morphology are used correctly (that is, grammatically). From a strictly linguistic perspective, then, grammar determines by rules what is correctly expressed in particular languages (\textit{PG} 184, 185). Children may be given training in a language before formal lessons in its grammar, but that is unlikely to entail that their first lessons in language do not involve training in grammar. Otherwise even their most simple of sentences may not make sense. This is what Wittgenstein meant by surface grammar.

Importantly, in the \textit{Investigations} (\textit{PI} 99) Wittgenstein continued his interest in the conviction of the \textit{Tractatus} that sentences must have definite sense. Baker and Hacker have explained that a sentence with a sense may leave 'this or that' open, undetermined. But what it leaves open must be determined; otherwise it has no

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{134} \textit{PI} 92: 'The essence is hidden from us': this is the form our problem now assumes. Cf: Hacker P M S \textit{Wittgenstein's Place in Twentieth-century Analytic Philosophy} op.cit., p.107 and Hacker P M S \textit{Insight and Illusion} op.cit., p.179.\textsuperscript{135} Hacker P M S \textit{Wittgenstein's Place in Twentieth-century Analytic Philosophy} op.cit., p.111.}
sense at all. Indeed, it has been claimed that the idea that meaning must be determinate (by virtue of correct rules of language) remained a theme for Wittgenstein throughout the post-\textit{Tractatus} period. Nevertheless, Hacker has noted that both Quine and Wittgenstein recognised the problem of indeterminacy, Wittgenstein raising a question about an apparent indeterminacy in the applications of rules. This leads at \textit{PI} 201 to the paradox that there is no such thing as correctly or incorrectly following a rule. And Hacker has averred that this paradox must be defused on pain of the absurdity that, there being no correct or incorrect application of rules, there is no such thing as a correct, meaningful use of language.\footnote{Baker G P and Hacker P M S \textit{An Analytical Commentary on Wittgenstein’s Philosophical Investigations} Vol 1 op.cit., p.207.}

That is a matter for careful adjudication. At this stage, sense being assumed determinate, grammatical mistakes can be identified. But, following Wittgenstein, this is not the only level at which it makes sense to speak of a grammatical mistake. Attention can be drawn, not to the correct use of words in a sentence, but to the use of words at all.\footnote{Malcolm N \textit{Wittgenstein: Nothing is Hidden} Blackwell Oxford 1986; McCutcheon (64).} Although, problematically, the post-\textit{Tractatus} Wittgenstein may not have been definitive in what he meant by grammar, attention to the use of language may help to explain what Wittgenstein meant by depth grammar at \textit{PI} 664:

\begin{quote}
... one might distinguish ‘surface grammar’ from ‘depth grammar’. What immediately impresses itself upon us about the use of a word is the way it is used in the construction of the sentence ... And now compare the depth grammar, say, of the word “to mean”, with what its surface grammar would lead us to suspect.
\end{quote}

Critically, for Wittgenstein, it might be in patterns of use that grammar would be considered ‘surveyable’ (\textit{PI} 92): by grammar language-games disclose their

\footnote{Hacker P M S ‘Wittgenstein and Quine: Proximity at Great Distance’ in Arrington R and Glock H-J \textit{Wittgenstein and Quine} Routledge London 1996 (2005), p.4.}
\footnote{Cf. \textit{PCP} 48, 49.}
various patterns as rules for use. Here, however, it needs to be established what the later Wittgenstein allowed in regard to the essence of language, that which lies beyond the surface and which is available upon analysis of the ‘surveyable’. So, how might such analysis proceed?

**Grammar and Use**

Wittgenstein made four most significant references to the concept of *use* in considering grammar. At the commencement of a lecture (WL 3) in 1932 he proclaimed:

“How is the word *used*?” and “What is the grammar of the word?” I shall take as being the same question. [emphasis added]

Subsequently, in *The Blue and Brown Books* (p.23 and p.135 respectively) it is observed that:

... it was a way of examining the grammar (the *use*) of the word “to know”, to ask ourselves ... [emphasis added]

And:

It is one of our tasks here to give a picture of the grammar (the *use*) ... [emphasis added]

Further, it has already been noted that in the *Investigations* (PI 664) Wittgenstein affirmed:

In the *use* of words, one might distinguish ‘surface grammar’ from ‘depth grammar’. [emphasis added]
In each of these instances, Wittgenstein is equating grammar with use; he not only stated that meaning was use \((PI \ 43)\) but also considered that use revealed a locution’s grammar \((BB \ 23, \ 135; \ PI \ 664)\). For the later Wittgenstein, then, word use determines meaning and reveals grammar in language-games.

Now, it may be tempting to suppose that for Wittgenstein grammar may have embraced more than meaning in relevant contexts. For Wittgenstein, grammar itself is certainly neither correct nor incorrect. Forster\(^{140}\) (perhaps following Hacker\(^{141}\)) has made clear that, in being neither true nor false, grammar itself is rather antecedent to truth and falsehood. Nevertheless, what is grammatical can be either true or false or, as in many types of locution, irrelevant to truth-aptness. Seemingly, if a locution is used to disclose truth, then it must accord with the grammar that its language-game has disclosed.\(^{142}\) But by the disclosure of grammar a statement may not amount to truth or falsehood, but operate in regard to another logic, communicating about another matter, a (normative not truth-apt) language-game rule. This is the essence of the description/rule distinction already articulated consequent upon significant Wittgensteinian aphorisms such as \(PI \ 251\) and \(PI \ 295\). So, in what ways does grammar make such disclosures?

In principle it might be thought that the grammar (as use) of a locution may indicate whether the locution is a description. According to Wittgensteinian doctrine \((PI \ 373)\), grammar purports to tell what kind of ‘object’ a thing is. In indicating (if it does) that a description is at issue, then, how does grammar tell what kind of ‘object’ the thing depicted by language is? The statement ‘quarks are sub-atomic’ would be considered to have expressed orthodoxy in physics whether or not there were quarks. Understood in those terms the statement might be regarded as a rule: it expresses orthodox uses for its terms. The point of the Wittgensteinian aphorism \((PI \ 373)\), however, goes much further. The locution’s grammar aspires to


\[^{141}\] Hacker P M S \textit{Insight and Illusion} \ op.cit., p.185.

\[^{142}\] A point made clearly by Forster M N \textit{Wittgenstein on the Arbitrariness of Grammar} \ op.cit., p.10.
disclose what it means to identify quarks as sub-atomic. Wittgenstein (PG 45, p.88) suggested elsewhere that:

What belongs to grammar are all the conditions (the method) necessary for comparing the proposition with reality.

It is not established what Wittgenstein may have intended here about the conditions of comparison with reality. Nevertheless, and setting aside questions of multiple realities and quarks as objects, whether a (synthetic) locution is truth-apt will depend centrally on the use of the locution as description: whether it has sense in that use. One possibility is to consider the proposition in the following manner. Pursuant to PI 373, the grammar (use) of ‘quarks are sub-atomic’ might tell what kind of ‘object’ is presented by way of locution (qua rule and/or description). If the locution lacks sense qua description and only has sense qua rule, then it is a rule simpliciter. But where taken as a description (by those who would treat it so), it might purport to tell what kind of entity quarks are: they are existent. In the case of descriptions, the nature of reality would be told in regard to locutions about the purported existent. This raises the question of ways in which rules might be depicted by locutions, and whether reality is subject to grammatical disclosure. That will be a focus of consideration in chapter 4. Here immediate attention turns to another feature of the disclosure of grammar. It concerns a matter already raised, but about which we can say more: nonsense.

Grammar and Disguised Nonsense

In the account thus far, the grammar of locutions is revealed by their language-games. Following Cavell, grammar is what language-games are to reveal.143 And following Hacker, given its ‘unclarity’ (BB 35), grammar casts its shadow.144 Nevertheless, Wittgensteinians consider that mistakes can be made about the

143 Cavell S Must We Mean What We Say? op. cit., p.56.
144 Hacker P M S Insight and Illusion op. cit., p.179.
grammar of locutions; and it may not be obvious that a mistake has occurred. This is the case where the nonsense of misconceived grammar is ‘disguised’ (PI 464) by some locutions. Where a locution’s grammatical status is not properly apprehended, failure to understand the grammar can result in language going on holiday, so generating philosophical problems (PI 38). Because the post-Tractatus Wittgenstein wants the nonsense of philosophical problems identifiable in language-games, it is necessary to be clear about Wittgenstein’s notion of nonsense.

In the year following publication of Phillips’ The Concept of Prayer, the identification of kinds of nonsense was attempted by Philip Hallie. Hallie nominated ‘opaque nonsense’ where a sequence of sounds is not a sentence; Wittgenstein referred to that kind of nonsense [sinnlos] in PI 500, for example. Also, there are false assertions [falsch] which may be called ‘clear nonsense’. (Here it needs to be emphasised, although Hallie did not do so, that there is no Wittgensteinian suggestion of the possibility of ‘false nonsense’, a notion rejected in chapter 2 above.) ‘Clear nonsense’, then, is obvious (even ridiculous) false belief. It is ‘patent’ nonsense; it is demonstrably false. Further, Wittgenstein identified the kind of nonsense [Unsinn] referred to at TLP 4.003 (in comparison with propositions that are merely false), and which characterises the concerns of philosophy. Indeed, it might be emphasised, philosophy’s role for the later Wittgenstein (PI 464) was to reveal precisely this kind of ‘disguised’ nonsense.

Now, what seems problematic is ‘disguised’ nonsense where the grammar may be revealed by the language-game but is certainly not comprehended by the participants. And, courtesy of the Investigations, two steps are apparent in order for philosophy to identify the Unsinn nonsense that is of particular concern here. First, the description/rule distinction is available; it is a significant instrument of

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146 While relying there upon the concepts of proposition and logic, the origin of this conviction might be identified in the Tractatus (TLP 4.023).
disclosure. But second, correct identification (by grammar) must be made whether a locution is a language-game rule *simpleriter* or perhaps both a rule and a description (believed true). Pursuant to that distinction, mistaken identification of locutions would comprise *Unsinn*. The identification and avoidance of *Unsinn* nonsense, then, if it depends upon the description/rule distinction, will rely on grammar: grammar must be revealed by the language-game and the disclosures of grammar must be comprehended. While Cavell has characterised the role of grammar by suggesting that grammar is what language-games are meant to reveal, Hacker has evocatively confirmed only that grammar casts its shadow. So, consideration moves to the logic of games in order to secure revelations of grammar by language-games. In pursuit of Wittgensteinian clarity (*PI* 133) we are interested in more than shadows. The hope is that, by its disclosures, grammar may expose nonsense to the light.

**Games and Wittgenstein’s Own Unclarity**

For any locution to be grammatically surveyable (*PI* 92) and subject to grammatical analysis, that locution must be part of a language-game. Regrettably, however, and as with grammar, Wittgenstein is notoriously difficult about language-games. Indeed, Phillips has drawn attention to the fact that even Rush Rhees wrote a detailed analysis of the limitations of the Wittgensteinian analogy (*PI* 83) between

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149 Grammar can be ‘surveyed’ from language-game contexts in that both grammar and games follow rules (*PG* 133,134).

language and games. Nevertheless, at least four features of Wittgenstein's approach to games are relevant:

- an analogy applies between language and games (PG 83);
- but, there is no characteristic element common to everything called games (PG 130); the identification of games is a 'family-resemblance' matter (PG 74, 75, 118);
- like games, language-games need have no external goal; they can be autonomous activities (PG 184; Z 320); and
- the function of rules in many games has similarities with the function of rules in language (PG 63, 77).

If communal activity embraces language-games, is any communal activity possible beyond them; can community persist beyond language-games? Wittgensteinians answer that question in the negative. Indeed, what occurs beyond any language-game has been described by Hallie as 'opaque' nonsense. Despite Phillips' reservations (PCP 49), then, it may be critical to know not only what language-games are, but also where one language-game ends and another begins. The exposure of 'opaque' nonsense beyond language-games and 'disguised' nonsense within them may depend on it.

According to Kenny the most systematic treatment of language-games comes in the Brown Book in which a large number of games is described or invented. That discussion was applied to the treatment of traditional metaphysical problems about the nature of modality and time, as well as the notions of language and guidance by rules. Nevertheless it is not possible from that book to derive a principle which would enable the detection of what constitutes an illegitimate crossing between

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153 Hallie P 'Wittgenstein's Exclusion of Metaphysical Nonsense' op.cit., p.98.
154 Kenny A Wittgenstein op.cit., p.164.
155 Kenny A Wittgenstein op.cit., p.165.
games (Cf: RFM 50). As has already been noticed, Wittgenstein did not give any general account of the concept of language-games, nor a ground for individuating them. Indeed, by the *Investigations* Wittgenstein had made it very clear that there is no characteristic element common to everything called games (*PI* 130); they do not even follow rules in every circumstance (*PG* 63, 77; *PI* 108, 125, 205, 567, p.193). Critically, however, there is ‘family-resemblance’ among them (*PG* 75, 118). And the most eloquent metaphor relates to the fibres of a rope (*BB* 87; *PI* 65-67). That is, and in considering games and language-games (*BB* 81), various forms of an activity can be compared with the overlapping fibres of a ship’s rope. Importantly (*BB* 87):

... it does not get its strength from any fibre which runs through it from one end to the other, but from the fact that there is a vast number of fibres overlapping.

In the Wittgensteinian conception, games do not all compound into one ‘supergame’. A ‘family-resemblance’ may be evident between soccer and tennis; but they are separate games. Despite identifiable ‘family-resemblance’, particular games persist (*PG* p.130; *PI* 65). For example (*PI* 67):

... if someone wished to say: “There is something common to all these constructions – namely the disjunction of their common properties” – I should reply: Now you are only playing with words. One might as well say: “Something runs through the whole thread – namely the continuous overlapping of these fibres”.

Indeed, particular games have particular rules: not all rules are shared between all games. Chess does not have an ‘offside’ rule, chess and soccer having autonomous rules. And all games considered together may not amount to a

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'supergame' (to employ Winch's terminology): to extend Wittgenstein's metaphor, rope binding of games may occur only between certain related language-games within particular 'forms of life' (*PI* 23). That is, it can be argued that various language-games (including those of religion) do not contribute to one game overall, any attempt so to do, resulting in the kind of difficulty that would visit attempts to combine soccer and tennis. But this continues our significant difficulty. Many games may need to make sense autonomously. Yet games are identifiable, for Wittgenstein, through 'family resemblance', enabling them to be recognised and understood as games.

Here the question for Wittgensteinian philosophers of religion, provoked by Kenny, concerns the persisting issue of common intelligibility: whether the 'family-resemblance' shared by religious language-games also identifies other language-games such that religious language-games, while distinct, are not separated from other language-games but (to extend the metaphor) may bind like rope fibres in wider 'forms of life' (*PI* 19). Perhaps this is where Phillips' reliance on 'communal life' (*PCP* 50) finds its point. Problematically, however, and like grammar and games, 'form of life' is again not a concept believed to have been made explicit by Wittgenstein. But, if there is no 'supergame', intelligibility nevertheless must be common between language-games in a 'form of life' if more than one language-game is to be recognised or accessed.

Now, a concern for common intelligibility must have been the ground of Father O'Hara's approach to religion, an approach that drew Wittgenstein's 1938 complaint (*LC* 57-59). In a BBC radio broadcast on 16 November 1930, O'Hara associated the religious enterprise with that of science:

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... the gap between religion and science has been closed.\footnote{O'Hara C W (the Revd SJ) ‘Science and Religion – VIII’ The Listener BBC 19.11.30, p.840.}

If, as will be explained below, Father O'Hara (LC 57-59) was to be considered 'unreasonable' for not understanding the difference between science and religion, then an intelligibility must be capable of identifying the language-games of those disciplines as separate language-games. So, we proceed on the assumption that common intelligibility persists to the extent that language-games as diverse as science and religion are comprehensible as particular language-games. Nevertheless, if language-games bind together, then how is that done? And if they bind, how might they still be comprehended as distinct? Wittgensteinians, like anyone else, need to be able to say that science is science and religion is religion yet identify what, if anything, is common to understanding them.

Wittgenstein’s case against O'Hara is sparse and obscure, at least from the published notes taken by others (LC 57-59). Given the point already made in chapter 2, however, Wittgenstein’s complaint against O'Hara should not have been (and perhaps was not) that religion is an esoteric game completely unconnected with all other games. Rather, religion presents distinctive discourse quite different from that of science: O'Hara’s blunder was in failing to recognise the nature of the distinctive discourse. For Wittgenstein, religion was superstition when treated as science. Even treated as distinctive discourses, however, and whether or not they share a 'form of life' (\textsl{PI} 19, 23, 241), science and religion must enjoy a common intelligibility as language-games bound together like rope fibres. Otherwise science and religion would not be recognisable (through family resemblance) as games. Where, then, might a common intelligibility that acknowledges such distinct games (\emph{qua} games) be found?

Here, in regard to religious language-games, it is notable that (like O'Hara) the 'friends' of religion beg certain religious locutions to be compared (considered to be on a par) with empirical locutions. Nevertheless, in one way at least, religious locutions are quite unlike mundane empirical statements: even were religious
locutions to succeed in making reference to God, the referents of empirical and religious statements would be radically different in nature. In orthodox religion, God is transcendent and unspeakably holy; the created order is not. Accordingly, Wittgenstein’s insistence (PI 7) on distinctive language-games is convenient. Indeed, it will be noted in the next chapter that a doctrine that held out at least some promise for the recognition of religious language-games as distinct games is seductive even to many theistic philosophers.

At this stage a point already made might be further developed. In that there is no fibre of a rope that extends throughout the length of the rope, and if (as Wittgenstein suggested) one way that philosophical nonsense arises is by language being used in a game inappropriate to it, then, where games are identified as fibres, it is critical to locate the positions where they properly ‘overlap’ and to isolate the points of their termination. Problematically and fundamentally, the question of crossing between games raises issues concerning the nature of games. It gives rise to the problem of identifying one game from another, respecting the various canons relevant to each.162 Common intelligibility seems to involve an ‘overlap’; but game specific rules and the identification of the grammar of particular language-games would seem to require that the individual game fibres (and their ends) be identifiable. Despite an extensive list of games at PI 23, here Wittgenstein is of limited assistance. And the limitations of Wittgenstein’s account suggest profound difficulties.

Given the pivotal role of games in his attempt to achieve clarity about grammar, then, Wittgenstein’s own struggle with language-games is significant. Even if games might be identified by ‘family-resemblance’ (obscure as that may be), unless there is an identification of distinct games, how could it be shown that ‘family resemblance’ was of any utility? Problematically in this regard, and no Wittgensteinian fibre extending the length of the rope, the strength of rope binding (BB 87) amounts to a metaphor emphasising similarity or unity, not distinction; so does the ‘family resemblance’ notion. But not identifying what makes language-
games distinctive might leave them characterised only by a 'form of life' encompassing particular rules. It is necessary, then, to establish both clear identification of language-games yet common intelligibility about them. That might inform both O'Hara's aspiration and Wittgenstein's frustration over O'Hara's confusion.

Now, in casting about for grounds of common intelligibility for language-games, the place of rules in games is of interest. Attention, then, now might be drawn to the fact that games may be distinct because characterised in various ways by particular rules. The game rules might be distinct; but the phenomenon of rules is common. Therein common intelligibility may be promised across identifiably distinct language-games.

**Wittgensteinian Rules**

The Logic of Rules

Mindful, then, of the apparent need to identify a ground of intelligibility that nevertheless permits distinctive (WR 57, 61, 67) language-games (as widely divergent as those characterising science and religion) and allows for their identification, attention turns to a shared feature of language and games: rules. In Wittgensteinian doctrine, as is being considered, language and games might be considered analogous (PI 83) consequent upon the consideration of rules. Further, in any Wittgensteinianism, rules may be critical for common intelligibility because, in the context of this discussion, rules characterise both games and language. The possibility is that, while many rules themselves are distinctive, the logic of rule-following (should there be such a logic) may provide an intelligibility between language-games.
Like grammar and games, however, the notion of rule was not unproblematic for Wittgenstein. Nevertheless, one feature of the analogy between language and games was that both involved the employment of rules. If, as Wittgensteinian ‘friends’ might suggest, Wittgenstein may be read as allowing that the grammar of ‘God is love’ discloses a rule and a description, then the notion of rules is important to them. Obversely, because Phillips considers ‘God is love’ to be a rule simpliciter, the logic of rules is similarly significant for him. What, then, should be concluded about rules from that perspective?

While the notion of grammar itself remains less than perspicuous, the extent of Wittgenstein’s ambition for grammar should be becoming clear. And that is the issue being pursued concerning Phillips and the ‘friends’. At this point, and in clarification, the question arises how ‘God is love’ is distinguishable from ‘God is dead’ for Wittgensteinians. For Phillips the answer would depend upon the orthodox rules of the game: the rules are the rules. But Wittgensteinian ‘friends’ submit that appropriate locutions can be both language-game rules and truth-apt descriptions; in certain cases, Wittgensteinian religious ‘friends’ acknowledge rules also as descriptions. For the ‘friends’, not all descriptions are rules because some locutions (like ‘God is dead’) are truth-apt but false. Being false, ‘God is dead’ could not be a rule of the orthodox religious language-game; no more could ‘apples are blue’ be a rule for the greengrocery language-game. While some locutions (perhaps like those about Seraphim) may be rules simpliciter, among those that are truth-apt only those that are believed true can be orthodox language-game rules. So, and critically, when this thesis considers the case put by the ‘friends’ that appropriate religious locutions are (sequentially at least) both descriptions and rules, only those believed to be true (qua description) are countenanced as orthodox rules of religious language-games.

\footnote{Cf. Searle J ‘Wittgenstein’ in Magee B (ed) The Great Philosophers BBC Books op.cit., p.337: We have been talking as if the notion of a rule for Wittgenstein was unproblematic. But of course, it wasn’t.}
That said, on the level of surface grammar, rules of grammar would be a condition of meaning. Those rules do not stand in need of justification; they are what is done (PI 124). Here the Wittgensteinian ground of meaning and legitimacy in language use is central. And, as has already been noted, the post-Tractatus concept of use (PI 6) is founded on training:

The children are brought up to perform these actions, to use these words as they do so, and to react in this way to the words of others.

If language-games are taught by training, then the concept of grammatical rule should find its place in the training model. And if it in fact does so, that is because being trained encompasses the notion of following rules of grammar: indeed, training may facilitate obeying those rules blindly (PI 219). But rules are relevant beyond surface grammar; they also characterise depth grammar (TLP 3.325; BB 55; PG 184-187; PI 497).

In consideration of depth grammar and pursuing a philosophical agenda about religion, Phillips (CP 3) considered that conceptual accounts of the phenomenon need to be separated out. And in following a Wittgensteinian approach, the ultimate appeal (following PI 124) is to the activity itself. Concerning the religious activity of prayer, for example (CP 3):

Wittgenstein's point implies that the meaning of 'prayer' is in the activity of praying.

That is, meaningful articulate 'accounts' might be given by observing and describing the activities of religion, including prayer. On these grounds (and in contemplation of depth grammar), Phillips' Wittgensteinianism (FAF 146, 216, 218; WR 17; RRC 216; RHC 95) proposes that 'God is love' be acknowledged as a

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language-game rule simpliciter. But even here, what seemed like a recognition of religious belief could be challenged. The Wittgensteinian dictum 'meaning is use' (PI 43), far from endowing legitimacy on religious locutions by confirming their meaning in religious practice, raises questions about the kinds of use to which religious locutions are put, including as language-game rules.

Now, the language-games of religion, like any other language-games, can be entered blindly (and often are). However, and whatever the circumstances of entrance to the game, if rational continuation in the language-games of religion is to occur, it should be as a consequence of the disclosures of their grammars withstanding sustained scrutiny, not because that has been avoided. For instance, despite presenting many common grammars, the Lord’s Prayer might itself be understood as presenting rules for its distinct language-game: understood as a language-game, the Lord’s Prayer would reveal its grammar (including adoration and petition). But, in principle, like any other religious text the Lord’s Prayer risks adverse judgement on intelligibility grounds: its religious use may be incoherent and its language-game may not be worth the votive candle. Indeed, while games can be entered blindly and their rules followed blindly, Wittgenstein did not propose that the grammar that language-games reveal can be comprehended blindly. There is an intelligibility of language-games required in the comprehension of grammar; and Phillips has exploited that fact. As already noticed, he would not allow some to mean what they want to mean (RFF 13).

How, then, should grammar be understood in regard to ‘God is love’ as an articulate locution? It is clear that three kinds of rules are (in principle) identifiable. First, any articulately expressed game rule will comply with the grammatical rules of the language (say, English) in which it is expressed. Second, that rule (‘God is love’) is a language-game rule. And, third, the game rule will be disclosed by grammatical rule; that is, it will be governed by the rule of grammar determining that the locution is a game rule. ‘God is love’, then, is (first) grammatically expressed, (second) articulates a rule for the orthodox use of religious terms, and

165 Cf: FAF 146: 'In the mouth of a believer it takes the form of a confession of faith.'
(third) its grammar may disclose that the locution also is, or is not, a rule 
\textit{simpliciter}. According to Phillips (\textit{FAF} 218), its grammar (being the grammar of a 
particular religious locution) does not disclose the locution to be a description, but 
does disclose that the locution is a rule of the second variety indicated here; 
orthodoxy is expressed. Whereas, presumably, 'Bishop Rowan is progressively 
orthodox' discloses by its grammar that, although a rule, it is also a description: 
where Rowan is understood to exist, the locution is about much more than 
language-game normativity.

\textit{The Intersection of Rules and Grammar}

Because for Wittgenstein (\textit{PG} 63, 77; \textit{PI} 83) language can function in ways 
analogous to the functioning of rules in games, rule-relevant games offer models 
for language use. In Wittgensteinian terms, religious locutions, like any other, are 
used according to grammar in particular language-games that employ rules in 
varying extent. But, given that language-games can be distinct (\textit{PI} 261), what 
might grammar disclose about religious language-game rules?

By early Wittgensteinian observation, rules provide the means by which a musician 
can read a musical score (\textit{TLP} 4.0141). And it might be thought that (like music) 
meaningful language operates normatively. To one degree or another there are 
rules that govern its articulate use. The normative operation of language, then, 
might entail (rule-determined) roles for its constituent features. That will be its 
grammar. But, where language use can be shown to have been extended beyond 
intelligibility, then an important disclosure in regard to locutions of those particular 
kinds will have been achieved. It will have been demonstrated that the use of 
those rules across certain language-games has not been sustained. And this has 
been the basis for various significant essays in philosophy of religion.\footnote{One such essay, which is beyond the scope of this discussion centred on Phillips, is Kenny A \textit{The God of the Philosophers} Oxford University Press 1979. Kenny's argument (p.121) might be paraphrased: for God to be omniscient, determinism must be true, but for God to be omnipotent,}
One essay, by C B Martin, took as focus the notion that God is good and employed an understanding of intelligibility that Phillips rejected. Phillips (CP 6) noted that Martin, in his quite influential (1959) *Religious Belief*, expressed his method as follows:

I shall try to set out as clearly as possible what I believe to be some of the most important difficulties and confusions in religious forms of argument and assertion; then I shall give accounts of what such forms of argument might mean that would be safe from philosophical censure.\(^{167}\)

A non-religious account of religious rationality was being called for here; and, methodologically, following the same intelligibility canons in religious contexts as would be required in other contexts might render certain religious locutions incomprehensible. The onus then would be upon the users of religious locutions to explain why those intelligibility canons might be disregarded and only those understandings employed that are specific to distinctive religious language-games.\(^{168}\) Or in Phillips’ advocacy (*RHC* 317-326), an ‘indeterminacy’ would be required. By contrast, and if Martin’s position can be expressed in Wittgensteinian terms, the understanding would be that while the rules of games may be distinct, there must be some kind of commonality to distinctive (Phillips’ term) language-games in the interests of intelligibility from game to game. And the obvious issue is whether to maintain game rules that make sense only in a distinctive and particular language-game, or to dismiss that game as unintelligible.

So, can canons of use (grammar) be understood to render game rule intelligibility common across language-games, including the distinctive language-games of religion? Without such a grammar, projects like that conceived by Martin’s methodology would be unable to show that religious locutions in particular contexts


\(^{168}\) Martin C B *Religious Belief* op.cit., p.vi.
were problematic in ways not so for locutions of like types in other contexts. And there Phillips (CP 2) would be safe. In another context Phillips (PCP 3) pointed out that the (methodological) question consistently arises: how is the measure to be measured?\(^{165}\) Or, why ‘sublime’ one measure over another?\(^{170}\) In resisting the need for a measure of grammar across all language-games, Phillips sought to leave open the possibility of ‘conversation’ (as will be explained) between various religious language-games yet with their own sense of rules and truth. But, why resist subliming some measures, grammar in particular for Wittgensteinians, and the common intelligibility of rules (and descriptions) for everyone? Would that not facilitate ‘conversation’?

Here it is important to draw attention to a recent (2000) publication by Phillips about Peter Winch’s work. Winch’s first book, *The Idea of a Social Science* (1958, reprinted 1990), took as a major focus the role of philosophy in giving an account of the intelligibility of things.\(^{171}\) Phillips observed (BR 19) that the early Winch (1958) argued that philosophy gives a general account of reality, and it does so by discussing the general conditions for the possibility of distinguishing between sense and nonsense, intelligibility and unintelligibility:

This general account of these conditions, in terms of rule-following, Winch argued, will apply to all practices without involving one in the claim ‘that the results of all these ... activities should all add up to one grand theory of reality’ ...  

From the perspective of the idea here being considered about the place of rules in common intelligibility, it is important that Phillips (BR 18) noted that Winch had

\(^{165}\) Notably, and a matter to which further reference will be made, if the rules of grammar are the measure of all things (Baker G P and Hacker P M S *Wittgenstein Rules, Grammar and Necessity* Vol 2 of an Analytical Commentary op.cit., p.181), then Phillips ‘sublimed’ grammar itself as the measure of all things. Indeed, Phillips (FAF xvi) should have asked about the measure of grammar, that is, how grammar is to be measured.

\(^{170}\) RHC 89, 90; BR 18. ‘Sublime’ [Sublimes] is a Wittgensteinian (PI 89) term.

made the concept of following a rule central. In Winch’s original conception, and having a central function in human activity by way of demonstrating intelligibility and unintelligibility, rules nevertheless allow for variety in their own content and role (BR 19, 20). Drawing on Wittgenstein’s analogy (PI 83) between language and games, Phillips (BR 21) related how Winch considered that, despite being characterised by rules, there was nothing that all games have in common:

Rules can be found in them, but these vary. Similarly, all language-games do not have something in common, although they are rule-governed.

Varying rules, then, permit game-specific normativity; at least Winch thought so in 1958.\textsuperscript{172}

Of course, on Wittgenstein’s own dicta, all language-games do have something in common: they are all games (PI 71) identifiable through ‘family resemblance’ (PI 67). Nevertheless, not all aspects of all games are subject to rules (PI 81, 82).\textsuperscript{173}

Accordingly, beyond ‘family resemblance’ at least, Wittgenstein (PI 130) did not consider that there was one thing that was all-pervasive for games; not even rules (BR 21) endowed that kind of commonality. The point is that language-games not only do not employ a common Language, but they observe varying rules and in certain circumstances even some characteristically rule-governed language-games may not observe rules rigorously or pervasively. Indeed, in some respects games may not observe rules at all. (For example, there is no rule governing the height to which a ball may be thrown while serving in the game of tennis.)

Notably for Phillips, at the time (1965) that he published The Concept of Prayer, Winch’s (1958) view might have been an attractive account of the significance of rules with respect to (the grammar of) religious language-games and their

\textsuperscript{172} Winch P \textit{The Idea of a Social Science} (1958) op.cit., p.101.

\textsuperscript{173} Kenny A \textit{Wittgenstein} op.cit., p.170.
intelligibility.\textsuperscript{174} While (in 1965) he did not commit in that regard, Phillips (CP 13) was concerned to identify the distinctive grammar of religion. It is important, then, to nominate the ways in which Phillips understood and reacted to Winch’s revision of his earlier position given that Winch’s subsequent self-correction might have denied Phillips an important option (to the approach of philosophers like Martin). The essence of that option is, by virtue of rules, the recognition (CP 24) of religious language-games that might be distinctive to the point of autonomy. Even more to the point, if for Phillips (FAF 146, 216, 218; WR 17; RRC 216; RHC 95) ‘God is love’ is a language-game rule \textit{simpliciter} in distinctive language-games, then such an account of those games and their rules should be forthcoming. So Winch’s later (1990) correction of his earlier (1958) position on rules warranted comment from Phillips’ perspective. To what, then, did Winch’s self-correction amount?

In the Preface to the (1990) second edition of \textit{The Idea of a Social Science} Winch outlined some of those matters that, with the benefit of more than thirty years of hindsight, he would have expressed differently were the book to be rewritten. Fundamentally, Winch confessed to a ‘parallel distortion’ in his employment of rules in the account he gave of human behaviour. He came to the view that he had been insufficiently careful in expressing the relevance of the notion of a rule in language, in particular where he had claimed that:

\begin{quote}
... all behaviour which is meaningful ... is \textit{ipso facto} rule-governed.\textsuperscript{175}
\end{quote}

Winch’s self-criticism subsequent to his 1958 view centred on \textit{Pl} 81, 82. As opposed to a confidence in consistent rule-following, Winch came to a view about the ‘fragility’ of the ethico-cultural conditions which allow exchanges of ideas.\textsuperscript{176} So, what was Winch’s progression and Phillips’ response? By 1990 Winch considered that Wittgenstein’s acceptance of Frank Ramsey’s caution about the

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{175} Winch P \textit{The Idea of a Social Science} (2\textsuperscript{nd} ed) op.cit., pp.xii-xiv, 52.
\bibitem{176} Winch P \textit{The Idea of a Social Science} (2\textsuperscript{nd} ed) op.cit., p.xvii.
\end{thebibliography}
tendency to think that someone who is using language must be playing a game characterised by fixed rules, should have enabled him (Winch) to avoid any suggestion that social practices are more or less self-contained, each proceeding in its own rule-governed autonomous way. (Perhaps there was something stronger to ‘family resemblance’ and ‘rope binding’ than he had earlier recognised.) But originally he had gone on to argue that science and religion each has ‘criteria of intelligibility peculiar to itself: religious language-games would not only be distinctive (with their own rules) but enjoy particular intelligibilities (for those rules).\textsuperscript{177}

As has been noted, games must be alike in some ‘family resemblance’ manner (otherwise they could not be grouped under the category of games). But, there might be considerable variety among the language-games of science, art and religion. And Phillips (\textit{BR} 21) stated that Winch originally wanted to show that this variety is persuasive against the temptation to postulate a general account of reality, or a ‘supergame’. One consequence would be that scope appears for avoiding the conclusions of projects such as that prosecuted by Martin provided that it is considered, for Martin to prevail, a universal (rule-centred) intelligibility for language-games must persist.

The early Winch, then, considered that criteria of logic arise out of, and are only intelligible in the context of, modes of life. While he continued to endorse that view, the later Winch concluded that he had developed an associated but erroneous view: that criteria of logic cannot be applied across modes of social life as such. He had earlier concluded, for instance, that science (enjoying peculiar intelligibilities) is one mode and religion is another.\textsuperscript{178} (And O’Hara’s chastisement would continue.) Following Rhees\textsuperscript{179} however, by 1990 Winch later determined that different aspects of social life do not merely ‘overlap’: they are frequently internally related in such a way that one cannot even be intelligibly conceived as

\textsuperscript{177} Winch P \textit{The Idea of a Social Science} (2\textsuperscript{nd} ed) op.cit., pp.xiv, xv, 100; and \textit{BR} 24.

\textsuperscript{178} Winch P \textit{The Idea of a Social Science} (2\textsuperscript{nd} ed) op cit., p.xv.

existing in isolation from others.\textsuperscript{180} (And while O'Hara's particular view might remain beyond redemption, if religion is intelligible the language of religion enjoys a common intelligibility with the language of science, there being no Language.) Even Winch, by 1972, resisted an intelligibility that was context dependent or 'indeterminate' (\textit{RHC} 319) from game to game, permitting religion to appeal to its own \textit{rationale}. And Winch's recognition of common intelligibility related to the ability to see sense in life.\textsuperscript{181} That is, for the later Winch ways of speaking were not insulated from each other in exclusive systems of rules and intelligibility; what can be said in one context by the use of a certain expression depends for its sense on the uses of that expression in other contexts.\textsuperscript{182} So, the idea that religion might enjoy a game-relative intelligibility was undermined. And the later Winch significantly disturbed the kind of understanding of context dependent intelligibility on which Phillips relied for \textit{The Concept of Prayer}.

Importantly, were Winch's original view to be sustained, somehow allowing various language-games to permit game-relative intelligibilities in particular modes of discourse, then Martin (whose book, published in 1959, was completed in the year following that in which Winch first published \textit{The Idea of a Social Science}) would have needed to revisit his argument (\textit{CP} 6, 11). Phillips' 1965 avoidance of Martin's methodological threat then would be supported. But by 1990 Winch had withdrawn that support. So, Phillips made a rejoinder to Winch's 1990 self-criticism which would have discounted Phillips' dissent from projects of the kind pursued by Martin. In 2000 Phillips (\textit{BR} 24ff) commented that Winch recognised that issues about how aspects of life have sense only if related to other aspects of life, are \textit{logico-conceptual} issues. But, Phillips (\textit{BR} 24) argued that if relations between different aspects of discourse and ways of living do raise logico-conceptual issues, they cannot be expressed as Winch (1990) ultimately did:

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
    \item \textsuperscript{180} Winch P. \textit{The Idea of a Social Science} (2\textsuperscript{nd} ed) op.cit., pp.xv,xvi.
    \item \textsuperscript{181} Winch P. 'Moral Integrity' in \textit{Ethics and Action} Routledge & Kegan Paul London 1972, p.47.
    \item \textsuperscript{182} Winch P. 'Moral Integrity' in \textit{Ethics and Action} op.cit., pp.40-41; BR 33.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
It cannot be a case of these aspects of discourse being brought together, or of their being frequently internally related. That way of talking makes the matter look contingent, as though some aspects of discourse could be themselves without being so related.

Critically, for Phillips:

... To engage with this thesis is to engage with possible confusions about language.

To comprehend Phillips' case here, it is useful to note that in 2001 Phillips (RHC 304-317) published a further description and criticism of Winch's 1990 position on the internal relation of overlapping aspects of social life (a position disallowing a game-relative intelligibility for religion). Ultimately Phillips (RHC 319, 320) considered that he supported an opinion expressed by Winch in 1997 recognising the philosophical objective to be reconciliation of the 'indeterminacy' in understanding each other with the task of doing justice to different points of view. So, what did Phillips propose?

For Phillips, consistently with the early Winch, any attempt inappropriately to bring together different discourses is to hazard confusion. Even more to the point, Rhees had observed that in getting rid of the analogy between language and a calculus, and in resorting to rules in language-games, Wittgenstein had jettisoned interlocking intelligibility between language-games (BR 26). Phillips observed that Rhees adamantly advocated that language has sense if living has sense (BR 26; PCP 50); but if language were a family of self-contained games, nothing would be said because that is too 'external' an account of language. According to Rhees (BR 27; PCP 65, 87), the unity of a language is like the unity of a 'conversation' (the term exploited by Phillips) and unlike a series of games. Notably, for Rhees, the Wittgensteinian analogy between games and language is flawed. For instance, and unlike a game, when an interesting 'conversation' is concluded there is no
incentive to repeat it. Similarly, for Rhees (RHC 310), we do not speak of knowing our way around a 'conversation', or of mastering it (as is done with games). Nevertheless, common intelligibility may be locatable in the dynamic practice of 'conversation' rather than reliant upon the logic of rule-following. To repeat, for Rhees, language has sense if living has sense. Effectively, Rhees had raised the focus of common intelligibility from games and rules to Wittgensteinian 'forms of life'. If so, then 'forms of life', although vague in Wittgenstein, would be required to bear the considerable weight of common intelligibility across distinctive language-games and game rules.

Now, it should be emphasised that, on Phillips' invitation dating from 1965, Martin is the ghostly guest at this banquet. Critically, in Martin's interests but from a Wittgensteinian perspective, while there is no 'supergame' can rule-based intelligibility be permitted across language-games? At the least, while recognising the range of language-games with their diverse roles, can a case be made out for overlapping fibres (even 'conversational' fibres) of language-game rope? Perhaps, to express the point another way, is 'rope binding' (allowing for distinct fibres) internally dynamic in the 'overlapping' of fibres? If it is, then the intelligibility between certain language-games (the games being disclosed by their distinct grammars) might be secured by their rule-oriented 'overlap'. That is, there could be no game enjoying 'criteria of intelligibility peculiar to itself' for its distinctive game rules. This would mean the rejection of Winch's early thesis with the consequence that, once this was shown, Phillips would lack Winch's (1958) support for *The Concept of Prayer*. And Martin would be free to practise his methodology.

So the point on which Phillips sought to leave this discussion is important. And Phillips chose to assent (RHC 317) to one consideration of this matter given by

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183 Phillips D Z 'Editor's introduction' in Rhees R *Wittgenstein and the Possibility of Discourse* op.cit., p.7.
184 Rhees R *Wittgenstein and the Possibility of Discourse* op.cit., p.13.
185 Rhees R *Wittgenstein and the Possibility of Discourse* op.cit., pp.71,143.
Winch in 1997. That is, Phillips (BR 32, 33) understood that Winch (in his 1972 Ethics and Action), having relied on the notion of 'sense in life', moved in Rhee's direction. But while considering that making sense depends upon language uses in various contexts, by making games central Winch sought to remain orthodox in his Wittgensteinianism. Phillips then had several options. Phillips could have adopted Rhee's position that Winch, as a conscientious Wittgensteinian, had not accepted in its entirety. That position (BR 32) centred on 'conversation'. But, through the allowance of ('conversation' based) common intelligibility, that could endow legitimacy upon the Martin project and others of like kind; 'conversation' may be a somewhat dynamic activity and the distinctiveness of various language-games might be put at risk, including those of religion. In the alternative Phillips could have accepted Winch's 1990 revision that allowed for the centrality of language-games (and the role of rules in them) in the context of common intelligibility. That would have been to accept commonality in aspects of discourse rather than the essential distinctiveness of (at least some) language-games. So Phillips (BR 32, 33) rejected the 1990 Winch. Phillips continued to the end with a treatment of distinctive language-games that supported his (1965) book The Concept of Prayer. Despite his subsequent bow in Rhee's direction, Phillips' position (following the 1958 Winch) defended distinctive language-games and the particular intelligibilities that characterise them. Phillips (BR 29) argued, with some deference to Rhee, that rule-based activity is possible when 'conversation' can occur. And distinctive language-games give rise to normative prescription. In that regard, within its language-games 'God is love' is considered normative by Phillips (FAF 146, 216, 218; WR 17; RRC 216; RHC 95).

Notwithstanding that language-games are distinctive for Phillips, it does remain to say how 'God is love' should be understood as normative, a rule of its distinctive language-games. We know that, as a generalisation, Phillips (RWE 144) considered such religious beliefs to be 'dogmas' or 'absolutes of faith'. More particularly, as has been noted, Phillips characterised 'God is love' as a 'confession of faith' (FAF 146) and as a 'grammatical rule in dogmatics' (RHC 95). The point is

186 Winch P 'Can We Understand Ourselves?' Philosophical Investigations Vol 2 No 3 July 1997.
that those characterisations are characterisations of language-game rules. And, Rheesian Wittgensteinians might insist that, by virtue of ‘conversation’, common intelligibility is inherent in religious grammar, games and rules. That could be considered to ride upon the back of the view already noticed from Mulhall: that Wittgensteinians (of any sort) are committed to the clarification of the grammar of the words in which common sense is given expression.\(^{187}\) So, while distinctive language-games may adhere to particular grammars and rules, it is intelligible to consider whether a locution is a rule or description. Indeed, in modest exploitation of the Rheesian (rather than Wittgensteinian) rubric concerning ‘conversation’ and common intelligibility, that is precisely what Phillips aspired to do. Problematically, however, even Rheesian ‘conversation’ will need to identify some common ground for the identification of distinctive language-games in religion. If by virtue of ‘conversation’ we cannot identify where distinctive religious language-games have their commencement and termination, then their distinctiveness is compromised. In that event Martin may be justified in applying his particular analytic scrutiny across the language-games of religion.\(^{188}\) Nevertheless, faithful to the Wittgensteinian agenda, contemplation of the particular religious locution ‘God is love’, and Phillips’ characterisation of it, will continue doggedly grammatical here. It will test whether religious language-games are distinctive under the (common intelligibility) rubric of Rheesian ‘conversation’.

Consolidation: Grammar, Games, Rules and the Description/Rule Distinction

Participating in that Rheesian ‘conversation’, and for the purposes of this thesis, it remains to consolidate this consideration of Wittgensteinian approaches to

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Somewhat in Martin’s interests, that particular ‘conversation’ did not reach resolution by Wittgenstein in the range of *trophs* that he presented in *Lectures and Conversations* ... : the Last Judgement (LC 53-59); the German aeroplane (LC 53); the Resurrection (LC 56); Napoleon (LC 57); and Father O’Hara (LC 57-59). And the extent to which contemporary philosophy of religion has attempted to remedy that is beyond our scope.
grammar, games and rules while allowing the description/rule distinction to be centrally significant.

For more than four decades, at least ever since the year of Phillips’ first publication, the distinction between descriptions and rules has been considered of Wittgensteinian significance. In 1963, when Phillips' first journal article appeared and a decade following the publication of the *Investigations*, Hallie described the distinction as 'very important'.¹⁸⁹ That view has persisted: the centrality of the description/rule distinction for the later Wittgenstein was promoted without reservation by Ray Monk in his biography. In reference to grammatical and 'material' propositions, Monk has claimed (not without hyperbole) that:

> The distinction between the two types of proposition lies at the heart of Wittgenstein's entire philosophy.¹⁹⁰

Both Stephen Mulhall and Walford Gealy might tend to support a more moderate assertion taken in support of a 'divergence' between empirical and religious locutions.¹⁹¹ And Michael Forster has characterised it as Wittgenstein's basic two-component model of 'true-false games':

> ... one component consisting of empirical or factual claims which are true or false, the other of the grammatical rules which regulate them, constitute their concepts, and set a standard for adjudicating their truth or falsehood ...

Critically, and by way of reminder here, without mentioning the description/rule distinction as such, Wittgenstein (LC 57) emphasised that professional religious thinkers can make (grammatical) ‘blunders’ that might be considered identifiable by it:

Father O'Hara is one of those people who make it [religious belief] a question of science.

Indeed, the whole of Wittgenstein's point in the Lectures and Conversations, in particular the first lecture on religious belief, has been agreed (between Gealy and Mulhall) to be a demonstration of the differences between empirical and religious statements. Nevertheless, given that we have no criterion for religious locutions, how is that difference in fact established from instance to instance? For Wittgenstein here (the late 1930s), in considering applications of the description/rule distinction, religious locutions are epistemically distinct from those that are hypothetico-deductive. So, if the position of the Wittgensteinian 'friends' in philosophy of religion is to survive against Phillips and his sympathisers, it would be necessary to show that there was a development in Wittgenstein, over time, in favour of their understanding. Notably, Wittgenstein's published opinion continued to develop until the end of his life; and it is apparent that its development gives rise to disputation in contemporary philosophy of religion.

That remains the ultimate matter for consideration. Importantly, a case can be established that the description/rule distinction originated early in Wittgenstein. Although he discussed grammar in The Blue and Brown Books (BB 1, 19, 23, 26, 27, 35, 49, 55, 65, 135), Wittgenstein did not define grammar beyond giving 'the use' as a synonym. However, in 1933, Wittgenstein (BB 55) wrote:

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193 Gealy W 'Wittgenstein and the Philosophy of Religion: a Reply to Stephen Mulhall' op.cit., p.125; see also Phillips at p.144.
We show that this proposition hides a grammatical rule. That is to say, we destroy the outward similarity between a metaphysical proposition and an experiential one.

'Outward' appearance is important. In that regard, by the *Investigations* the game of chess had been carefully considered. And, of course, it is characterised by rules such as 'bishops are diagonal movers'. In that form, clearly, the locution presents nouns, a verb, articles and an adjective. So, rules of the game of chess are expressed by virtue of rules of English grammar. Two dimensions of rules, then, have been identified: rules themselves and the (surface) grammar by which they are expressed. But a third dimension of the locution is suggested by the later Wittgenstein (*PL* 248, 251, 295, 373). It is by (depth) grammar that the locution expressing a rule of a game (consistently with the rules of grammar) discloses its status as an expression of a rule; by grammar the locution indicates that it is a rule of a game rather than any other kind of locution. It is not, for instance, a conventional description of reality: chess may never have been played. But if in particular contexts a rule can be also (sequentially) a description, that will also be disclosed by the grammar of the locution in its language-game.

Further, it should be noted that the description/rule distinction is now well acknowledged for religious language-game contexts.\(^{194}\) That is, Wittgensteinian philosophers of religion, both followers of Phillips and their opponents (the 'friends'), have been complicit in the importation of the distinction into an understanding of religious language-games. In that one element of the distinction concerns language-game rules (grammatically disclosed), grammar, games and rules attract attention. At this point, however, an essential question hovers over responses to the description/rule distinction: that question concerns the stability of

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The position of regarding theology as grammar argues that Wittgenstein wished neither to side with the believer or the atheist but rather wished to clarify that religious language was making grammatical or conceptual claims rather than factual ones.
the distinction. Here, and as will be further explained in chapter 4, it is useful to observe that Phillips made the distinction explicit when he stated (FAF 218) that:

... doctrinal statements ... give us rules for the use of the word 'God' and that the claim 'God is love' may mislead us into thinking that it is a descriptive statement rather than a rule for the use of the word 'God'.

As has been emphasised, the substance of this quotation is repeated by Phillips in five other significant instances: FAF 146, 216; WR 17; RRC 216; RRC 95. This would present what has been considered by McCutcheon (RWLLA 106) a stable approach to the distinction. It offers a choice between rule and description in characterising 'God is love'. Stability in the distinction is exploited once one element (description) is ruled out as Phillips does in regard to 'God is love'. But, and as has been noted since chapter 1, the Wittgensteinian 'friends' of religion need to argue against stability in the distinction if they are to maintain that religious locutions can be (sequentially) both language-game rules and rule-following descriptions.

The argument that Phillips is mistaken depended for McCutcheon (RWLLA 106) upon establishing 'fluidity' in the description/rule distinction. Notably, and as has already been made clear, it is Wittgensteinian (OC 96) to consider locutions ('propositions') 'fluid', not the description/rule distinction. Accordingly, consideration will be given to the conditions under which that distinction is stable. That will be a critical matter for adjudication. Further, rules simpliciter need to be discriminated if the point of the description/rule distinction is to be maintained: to mistake a rule simpliciter for a truth-apt description can be to misunderstand the language-game itself. So, although that distinction purports to discriminate rules and descriptions, there remains a question concerning its operation. How should

Notably, McCutcheon has been criticised for not demonstrating from Wittgenstein that the distinction permits the 'instability' that she asserts. (Cf: Scott M Religion Within the Limits of Language Alone: Wittgenstein on Philosophy and Religion arsdisputandi.org, p.2.) One concern of this thesis is to remedy that deficiency.
that distinction be worked? What shadow\textsuperscript{196} of grammar has been cast for the disclosure of rules \textit{simpliciter}? How does grammar discriminate rules \textit{simpliciter} from rules that might also be (sequentially) descriptions?

Here the position of the 'friends' suggests that the distinction itself cannot bear the load put on it by Wittgensteinians like Phillips. McCutcheon, one 'friend', has denied legitimacy in the manner that the description/rule distinction was employed by Phillips. McCutcheon contends that some religious locutions function \textit{both} assertorically \textit{and} as rules of language. And she complains (\textit{RWLLA} 110) that philosophers like Phillips frequently deny that a statement can be treated as a description just because it is a rule. As will be considered in the next chapter, her position appears to rely centrally on two arguments. First, that the distinction between language-game rules and truth-apt description cannot be allowed to disqualify certain religious locutions as truth-apt. Second, she also considers that Phillips' position rests on a mistaken interpretation of Wittgenstein, and that his claims about the meaning of ordinary religious beliefs are themselves illegitimate.\textsuperscript{197} At issue is Wittgenstein's position and the ways in which it may be exploited. Two matters, then, continue in focus: the Wittgensteinian description/rule distinction and Wittgensteinian warrant for the drawing of that distinction in religious language-games.

\textbf{Summary}

Grammar, games and rules have now been considered from a consolidated Wittgensteinian perspective. These notions were presented in \textit{The Blue and Brown Books}, and were further exploited in the \textit{Investigations}. Crucially, religion is characterised through contemplation of the grammar of its own language-games.

\textsuperscript{196} Hacker P M S \textit{Insight and Illusion} op.cit., p.179.

\textsuperscript{197} Note that Richard Swinburne (whom McCutcheon does not mention) considers Phillips' understanding of the conventional meaning of religious locutions to be 'false'. Cf: Swinburne R \textit{The Coherence of Theism} Clarendon Oxford 1977, pp.95, 96.
Following Wittgenstein, clarification of the nature of religious language-games by virtue of grammar, games and rules has been central to the project prosecuted by Phillips from the 1960s. For him (FAF 146, 216, 218; WR 17; RRC 216; RHC 95), and perhaps pursuant to PI 373, the term 'God' (being a language-game 'object' subject to grammar) in 'God is love' is a component of a rule and not a component of a description. According to Phillips, while 'God is love' can mistakenly be thought to be description, its grammatical status is that of rule simpliciter. In Phillips' submission, the particular religious language-game reveals its grammar: the religious significance of that locution qua rule.

So Phillips exploited the Wittgensteinian distinction between descriptions and rules. In fact his religion depends on it. And Phillips considered (on Wittgensteinian grounds) that religious language-games are distinctive. That is one way in which he exploited 'God is love' as rule simpliciter. On those grounds, Phillips would have expected to be immune from the methodological agenda of numerous analytical philosophers, among whom was C B Martin. Resisting any acknowledgement of an epistemological 'supergame', Phillips sought to avoid the kind of challenge to religion mounted by Martin. Phillips regarded language-games as distinctive (rather than esoteric) within a 'form of life'. But, given the difficulties pointed out by Rhees, and exploited by the later Winch, Phillips also needed an adequate account of common intelligibility between distinctive language-games. While their grammars could be diverse among particular language-games, Phillips contemplated how religious locutions were to be understood by virtue of the 'conversation' that bestowed their intelligibility. He (1976) characterised them as 'dogmas' or 'absolutes of faith' (RWE 144).

That said, in the interests of a more comprehensive treatment this thesis will further interrogate Phillips' position. Conveniently for that task, Phillips was adamant over a period of up to twenty years (from at least 1988 until his death in 2006) about his characterisation of 'God is love' as a rule simpliciter. Given that that is the way in which Phillips insisted that the locution be understood, it is by the grammar of Wittgensteinian language-game rule that 'God is love' will be considered for its distinctive language-games. And, as the grammar of that locution is contemplated,
the common sense by which it gives expression will be respected. That contemplation will be attempted in the context of the overall objective: to describe and adjudicate the dispute surrounding the description/rule distinction in Wittgensteinian philosophy of religion. This will be done in recognition that the holding up of a mirror to Phillips cannot but reflect (however inadequately) the strength of his contribution in resisting the ‘friends’ of religion. Further, in that at least, this thesis does aspire (with a *modicum* of modesty) to the Wittgensteinian (CV 18) heights:

I ought to be no more than a mirror, in which my reader can see his own thinking with all its deformities so that, helped in this way, he can put it right.

Finally, then, and notwithstanding inherent difficulties and unclarity concerning Wittgensteinian conceptions of grammar, games and rules, this chapter completes the articulation of a Wittgensteinian template against which Phillips’ philosophy of religion is being assessed. With the benefit of this template we progress more fully to a consideration of Wittgensteinian philosophy of religion.

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198 Mulhall S ‘Wittgenstein and the Philosophy of Religion’ op.cit., p.108.
 CHAPTER 4
WITTGENSTEINIAN PHILOSOPHY and RELIGION

Theology as grammar. 199

An articulation of the development of certain Wittgensteinian doctrines now has been completed for the continuing purpose of describing and commenting upon the characterisation of ‘God is love’ given by D Z Phillips; and, in this account, grammar has been central. While varying references have been made to it, the point has now arrived at which attention should turn even more fully to religion, especially its Wittgensteinian interpretations. Attention to Phillips’ own Wittgensteinian religion will develop more comprehensively in chapter 5.

Wittgenstein’s Religious Significance

Wittgenstein is well known to have reflected on religion. However, he made relatively little direct mention of religion in the extensive corpus of his now published work. Stephen Mulhall200 has observed that few references were in fact recorded by Wittgenstein and none were originally intended for publication. More specifically, beyond a number of obscure remarks published in Culture and Value (1977) Wittgenstein made little mention of God. Nevertheless, the Wittgensteinian aspiration of clarifying talk is shared by theism; in its case, talk about God.201 That is, orthodox systematic religious locutions attempt to recount what may have been said coherently thus far and to make an articulate contribution to that. But,

199  P/ 373.
201 Barth K Church Dogmatics Clark Edinburgh 1936-75, 1.1 p.11/10.
because significant religious locutions are extant, they are vulnerable to philosophical scrutiny. In fact, the orthodox religious enterprise has been profoundly troubled by philosophy, the focus here being the Western analytic tradition (in which Wittgenstein is placed).

By courtesy of Hobbes, Locke, Berkeley, Hume, Bentham and Mill, from the mid-seventeenth century varieties of empiricism characterised British philosophy. While Locke and Berkeley conscientiously provided accommodations for religion, Hume was hardly so benign. And, following the hiatus represented by British (Neo-Hegelian) idealism, Russell and Moore carried an empiricism into the twentieth century that provided continuing embarrassment for religion. As their student, and at least initially, Wittgenstein was to even further compound the troubles that philosophy presented for academic religion in the English-speaking world and beyond. Although exploiting a subsequently discredited doctrine, logical positivism had mounted a substantial challenge to certain metaphysical beliefs from the 1920s; it appeared to have rendered religious locutions meaningless. Precipitately, if not erroneously, logical positivism’s Vienna Circle enlisted Wittgenstein’s (1921) *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* to its cause. Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus* provided a rigorous manifesto that was taken in support of the logical positivist view that synthetic statements, if unverifiable, were meaningless. Religion was dismissed out of hand.

Within thirty years of the *Tractatus*, however, theistic philosophers thought they had reason to consider that, in Wittgenstein, one of the purportedly seminal

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203 Neither Anscombe nor Kenny nor Pears should consider advocates of logical positivism to be justified in any invocation of the *Tractatus* in rejection of religion. Cf: Anscombe G E M *An Introduction to Wittgenstein’s Tractatus* op.cit, p.150; Kenny A *The Oxford Illustrated History of Western Philosophy* op.cit., pp.261,262; and Pears D *Wittgenstein* op.cit., p.57:

> By refusing to locate the truths of religion and morality within factual discourse, he was not rejecting them, but trying to preserve them. They are non-sense because they lack factual sense. But to make this point about them is not to condemn them as unintelligible. It is to take the first step towards understanding them.
sources of their recent difficulties may have emerged as a saviour.

Wittgenstein’s intriguing personal religious disposition may be the subject of conjecture and dispute. But, for philosophy at least, that issue is much less significant than the substance of his ideas bearing on religious belief that have been debated by philosophers of religion. In what, then, lies the importance of the later Wittgenstein to philosophy of religion? In answer to that question, the focus shifts from the *Tractatus* to the *Investigations* and beyond. It has been observed that some philosophers, like Elizabeth Anscombe and David Pears, considered religious belief to have been allowable by the *Tractatus*, if only in mystic silence. Nevertheless, as theists, even they, while not as troubled by the *Tractatus*, should have found increased room for manoeuvre offered not only by Wittgenstein’s posthumous *Investigations* but also the subsequent publications.

Importantly, any contemporary consideration of Wittgenstein and religion must fully encompass his post-*Tractatus* opinions in the material that both preceded and extended beyond the *Investigations*. Put briefly, the later Wittgenstein proved seductive for many philosophers of religion. By default if not intention, the post-*Tractatus* Wittgenstein allowed clear (or, perhaps, much clearer) scope for religion. That is, religious locutions (rather than mystical experiences) might be able to

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Positivism holds – and this is its essence – that what we can speak about is all that matters in life. Whereas Wittgenstein passionately believes that all that really matters in human life is precisely what, in his view, we must be silent about. And Searle J ‘Wittgenstein’ in Magee B (ed) *The Great Philosophers* BBC Books 1987, p.325:

... in the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein thought ... that the really important things in life were unsayable, were unstatable. He thought that ethics, religion and aesthetics, for example, were all in the realm of the unsayable.
claim acceptance of some sort if they could be shown to be encompassed by the rubric of 'language-games' within a 'form of life'. To many, including Phillips, the *Investigations* seemed to provide that forms of utterance have their own appropriate place: religious locutions could be understood, by Phillips (*WR* 56, 57, 61), as persisting within distinctive language-games. At the least, religious discourse no longer lacked the status it had been denied at positivism's *apogee*. The post-*Tractatus* Wittgensteinian agenda became as much evident in philosophy of religion as in any other field. Indeed, it has been suggested that:

... it may ... be the case that one reason for the prominence gained by Wittgensteinian writers in the field of the philosophy of religion is that the implications of the Wittgensteinian critique of epistemological systems may be seen to be more effective in this realm than in any other branch of philosophy.

Even if that is too emphatic, many of those who (unlike Anscombe and Pears) may have regarded the *Tractatus* as an assault on religious belief, could have found relief not only in the (1953) publication of the *Philosophical Investigations* but in the ultimate appearance of other work including *The Blue and Brown Books* (1958) and *On Certainty* (1969). Consequent upon them, it was thought, articulate religious belief could seek grounds for recognition, if not credibility. The later Wittgenstein, then, was (and is still) celebrated by many philosophers for having provided for an accommodation of religious discourse by Western analytic philosophy.

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206 Even Karl Barth, perhaps the most significant of 20th century systematic theologians, has been given this reading. Cf: Hordern W *Speaking of God: the Nature and Purpose of Theological Language* Macmillan New York 1964, pp.83ff.


That said, given Phillips' Wittgensteinianism, here it is relevant to ask whether Wittgenstein was an atheist. As was established in chapter 2 above, to assert atheism should be to comprehend the status of appropriate religious locutions as truth-apt, but to consider them false. Indeed, Brian Clack has referred to Wittgenstein as follows:

"... far from Wittgenstein being the fideistic friend of religion hoped for by apologists ... , the consequence of his later thought on religion is an unavoidable acceptance of atheism."\(^{209}\)

And, for John Searle:

"... I think most people who knew him would say that he was an atheist."\(^{210}\)

By stark contrast, Phillips (WR 12) did not even concede that the question of divine reality arose for Wittgenstein. And for Phillips, while the sense of atheism might be appreciated (RHC 5, 6), it is not an option because it requires a 'distortion' of the true nature of religion. That is, it is not feasible to mean what is meant by theism (RFF 6, 8): in particular, for Phillips (FAF 146, 216, 218; WR 17; RRC 216; RHC 95), grammatically considered 'God is love' is not a truth-apt description but a religious language-game rule.

Accordingly, questions about any Wittgensteinian allowance of a descriptive function for religious locutions, and the ways in which that might be determined, are contentious in contemporary philosophy of religion and are the most significant concerns of this thesis. Here, for the purpose of following Phillips in regard to 'God is love', those questions distil into the choice offered by the distinction between descriptions and rules. That is, given that it is important for meaning, surface grammar (Pl 664) is interesting in its own right. But depth grammar is particularly


\(^{210}\) Searle J 'Wittgenstein' op.cit., p.344.
revealing; it concerns the nature of language use. And in the origins of depth grammar at *BB* 49, 55 (despite not employing that terminology), the post-*Tractatus* Wittgenstein claimed that the metaphysician’s hazard was the confusion of rules of language use with truths about reality. According to the later Wittgenstein (*PI* 251; 295, 665), sometimes locutions will only function as rules of grammar. Critically, a ‘friend’ of religion like McCutcheon (*RWLLA* 111, 112) submits that, for Wittgenstein and against Phillips, religious locutions often function as both rules and descriptions. Where truth-apt description of God is accepted, atheism is possible. Unless that is so, strictly speaking it could not be said with Clack and Searle that Wittgenstein was an atheist.

The prevailing point, then, is that the purpose and effect of the recognition of religious locutions consequent upon Wittgensteinian analysis continues contentious. In this regard, and as already noted in chapter 2, it is routinely considered that one of Wittgenstein’s more important objectives (*PI* 124) in the scrutiny of locutions of various types was to ‘leave everything as it is’. The Wittgensteinian conception of philosophy (*PI* 126), then, is clarification rather than explanation, or indeed justification. And that persists as a most welcome project for some philosophers of religion, notably Phillips (*PCP* 166); in fact, that is their professed *modus operandi*. So how should perspicuous representation (*PI* 122; *FAF* xiv; *WR* xviii; 200; *BR* 25) of religious locutions proceed within the Wittgensteinian inheritance? And what might be its dividend?

**Wittgensteinian Grammar and Religious Language-games**

In addressing the dispute that continues between Phillips and the ‘friends’ of religion, and despite Wittgenstein’s scant references to religion and God, detailed notice now might be taken of the features of Wittgensteinianism that attract the philosopher of religion. As has been observed, the most noteworthy feature concerns the acceptance of religious locutions. In that regard, and as has been foreshadowed, Wittgenstein’s enduring attraction for some philosophers of religion emanates from the idea of language-games. Language-games, perhaps related to
their particular 'forms of life', enjoy a status conferred by the elementary fact that they are performed (PI 654). To be a religious believer is to participate in language-games of a particular kind (like praying). And as the grammar of religion is revealed by its language-games, so the grammar of religious locutions is disclosed by religious practice. This was a theory that promised to be employable so as to accept religious locutions \textit{qua} significant, meaningful locutions. And, critically, everything depended upon their grammar.

In pursuit of the ideal of leaving everything as it is, however, somewhat inconveniently the philosopher of religion confronts an embarrassment of (often dubious) riches in religious locutions, at least some of which should be considered problematic because, despite their use, they do not make sense. Locutions employing terms like 'omnipotent' and 'omniscient' have been considered problematic in this regard. More particularly from the perspective of the later Wittgenstein, articulate expressions can be formulated that employ the proper noun 'God'. But even if a proper noun can be adequately articulated, for Wittgensteinians the comprehension of elementary religious expressions like 'God is love' depends upon the disclosure of their grammar. By analogy, consider the locution 'the Great Pumpkin is coming'. The return of the Great Pumpkin may be an orthodox rule for both defining and following the Halloween language-game. According to the game, the Great Pumpkin comes each October. That is the rule. And it is Wittgensteinian to consider Great Pumpkin locutions as \textit{Unsinn} nonsense if taken also as truth-apt description. If such nonsense were so to arise, then, a failure in comprehending the disclosure of grammar would have occurred. At least, so it might be understood from Wittgenstein (\textit{BB} 7, 16, 17; \textit{PI} 90, 464).

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{As already noted, a point made eloquently in Kenny A \textit{The God of the Philosophers} Clarendon Press Oxford 1979.}
\footnote{Quine, of course, would protest that Great Pumpkin locutions are false; but Carnap would have agreed with Wittgenstein against Quine. Cf. Hacker P M S \textit{Wittgenstein's Place in Twentieth-century Analytic Philosophy} op.cit., p.200. The matter is beyond adjudication within the scope of this thesis.}
\footnote{Pitcher G 'Wittgenstein, Nonsense and Lewis Carroll' \textit{The Massachusetts Review} 1965 Vol 6, passim.}
\end{footnotes}
Wittgenstein did indicate that grammar discloses rules *qua* rules of language-games (*PI* 497). So grammar must also purport to disclose, pursuant to the description/rule distinction (*PI* 58; 251; 295; 664, 665), when a rule is mistaken also to be a description, resulting in 'bewitchment' (*PI* 109). In that the discovery of a language-game's disclosure of grammar is not assured, however, determining the nature of such failure and the circumstances of its incidence amounts to a significant challenge. Rules of language-games, *qua* rules, are to be identified grammatically. Consequent upon surface grammar confusion, however, that would not be a straightforward matter. But its intended significance is clear. Because grammar purports to disclose the use of language by way of rules and/or descriptions (*PI* 251; 295; 665), confusion within language-games (*PI* 109) can be revealed. With respect to religion, if Wittgensteinian language-games endow status upon their religious locutions, language-game grammar discloses what is expressed: for language-game locutions, grammar (*PI* 373) tells what kind of 'object' a thing is. Or, as Hacker would have it, the idea is that the essence of anything is given by rules of grammar which determine the application of an expression.²¹⁴

The exposure of *Unsinn* nonsense, then, depends upon the disclosures of grammar. Nevertheless, whatever may be the remedy against mistaking the grammar of locutions, nonsense in religion (as a grammatical confusion) must not be identified with theological error (a rule mistake). An analogy with, say, physics may assist. It is possible to make mistakes about physical reality without also mistaking the status of physical reality. It is possible both to be in error about the theory applicable and to miscalculate the speed of a bus without misunderstanding the ontology of buses.

So, what discloses religious heresy? In religious language-games, given that the nature of the locutions is comprehended, how are theological errors to be spotted? Or, is there no such thing as heresy in these circumstances because all language-games are allowable? That, surely, would be universally unacceptable to any who

play articulate games, including the language-games of religion. This includes theistic believers who would consider, say, pantheism unacceptable to orthodoxy. Chess players would find any suggestion about alternative chess rules similarly unacceptable on the same grounds. There is only one orthodox game of chess. The game has established rules. Any move inconsistent with those rules is disallowed. Like chess, religious believers might argue, religion should be allowed its orthodoxy. Wittgensteinians need to leave everything as it is (PI 124) and recognise that orthodox games are played (PI 654). The identification of religious mistakes, then, can depend (at least in part) upon the recognition of orthodox language-games.

But, even where orthodox games are identified, what is to determine whether the language-games themselves are acceptable? Just because there is an orthodox game does not mean that it should be played. Indeed, with respect to religion, many choose not to participate in any of its language-games. But for those who do, it is important to confirm that a particular religious language-game is being played. The importance lies in the fact that mistaking one language-game for another leads to nonsense because the grammatical rules may be confused. So may be the game rules.

It is necessary, then, to establish adequate methods both to discriminate between language-games of religion (some of which are heretical) and to identify mistakes within particular (orthodox) religious language-games. Rules (orthodox or otherwise) can be taken erroneously also to be description; obversely a description can be taken erroneously only to be a rule of the language-game. And any rule or description can be misunderstood despite being understood correctly to be a rule or description. (In which case, the equivalent of incorrect identification of buses, and their speed, may result.) In essence, then, mistakes within language-games are errors of comprehension of locutions and their Wittgensteinian grammar. But it is yet to be clearly established whether grammar has a role in identifying particular language-games within what Wittgenstein (PI 19) called ‘forms of life’; in distinguishing, say, contrition from penance among the many strands that bind into religious rope.
Now, it is clear that grammar does not determine the orthodoxy or otherwise of particular locutions understood as rules for particular language-games. Even if the status of rules (qua rules) might be disclosed grammatically, as already noticed the orthodoxy of particular rules in language-game contexts may be determined only by correct identification of the language-games themselves. Like any other language-game, such as chess and sub-atomic physics, orthodox religion disallows moves that might be complicit with the distinctive rules of unorthodox language-games (like pantheism). The point is, religious language-games and the grammars of their locutions require separate explication by way of concept and function. Grammar will indicate that a rule is disclosed. But the language-game determines whether the rule is orthodox for that game.

Orthodox rules enable invalid moves to be exposed. And recognition of orthodox rules is dependent upon the identification of particular games. Problematically, however, and in reflection on the identification of alternative games, if religious language-games are identifiable, that might not be achieved by the fact simply that they are played (PI 654). Frustratingly, Wittgenstein (PI 496) certainly made no promises there. Despite some concern about the problem (such as LC 57-59), Wittgenstein did not identify how religious language-games are systematically to be distinguished from the secular; nor even how religious language-games are to be distinguished from each other within a religious ‘form of life’ (were there such a thing).

These remain severe difficulties for those who have espoused a Wittgensteinian philosophy of religion: religious language-games remain to be identified. It is understandable, then, that this might challenge Phillips' Wittgensteinian project. Critically, clarification continues to be required both in regard to the grammar of religious locutions and the identification of language-games in which such locutions are used. Here it is appropriate to turn to the obvious: locutions about God.
Religion and God

Religious Discourse

Wittgensteinians consider that, whenever a believer expresses an articulate locution that includes the term 'God', the language-game reveals its grammar (PI 92). Consequent upon that exposure, questions arise about the nature of such discourse: whether it has a particular sense.

Such questions amount to a significant challenge for Wittgensteinian 'friends' of religion. For them, certain religious discourse aspires to an ideal. Not only should it be rational in adhering to the canons of articulation and argument. But, where applicable, it can be considered descriptive. Indeed, for theistic 'friends' of religion verbal exercises in spirituality may be allowable as human activity, but locutions about God cannot successfully claim legitimacy without meeting these particular requirements. Nevertheless, and consistently with a concern for grammar, as a Wittgensteinian Phillips (WR 1) would assert that the concept of God, and the use of locutions presenting the term 'God', raise a question about the appropriate accounts that may be given:

What kind of philosophical and theological account does the concept of divine reality call for?

It may not be possible to compose a more challenging question in religion. For those of a Wittgensteinian disposition, grammar, games and rules must be employed if it is to be answered.

\[215\] It is well evidenced that the conservative theological agenda continues undiminished both for theologians and philosophers. Cf: Davis S, Kendall D and O'Collins G. The Resurrection: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Resurrection of Jesus. Oxford University Press 1997.
As already observed, there are few overt references to religion in the *Investigations*. Nevertheless, one that does appear is significant here in addressing Phillips’ question (at *WR* 1): it might even be submitted that, in response to Phillips, Wittgenstein’s convictions may conveniently be considered through the aphorism expressed at *PI* 373:

Grammar tells what kind of object anything is. (Theology as grammar.)

With the provocation of that aphorism, then, what might be said about the grammar of religious locutions? For Wittgensteinians, the answer to that question must allow that grammar is critical in disclosing within language-games what kind of ‘object’ anything mentioned is. And, in turn, this may offer the potential for understanding the distinction between descriptions and rules. So, in Wittgensteinian response to Phillips’ question (*WR* 1) concerning philosophy and theology, the account of divine reality that is able to be given will depend upon the disclosures of grammar. But, how does grammar characterise the locutions of religious language-games? Attention now might be paid to the case advocated by Wittgensteinian ‘friends’ for the recognition of religious locutions as descriptions within religious language-games.

The continuing question is whether the ‘friends’ position is credible: that certain religious locutions might operate like empirical statements, at least to the extent of being descriptions. For his part, Wittgenstein (*PI* 251) must be understood to mean that particular locutions are not descriptive; they must only be normative rules of locution use. Other locutions about either ostensive reality (the world of buses) or non-ostensive reality (the world of ultimate particles) must disclose their particular status. At least, and whether or not Wittgenstein would have agreed to the application, this is the seminal point exploited by Phillips (*FAF* 146, 216, 218; *WR* 17; *RRC* 216; *RHC* 95) about ‘God is love’. And, in Wittgensteinian doctrine (*PI* 373), grammar tells [sagt] what kind of ‘object’ [Gegenstand] a(ny) thing is.
In turn, despite the difficulties associated with questions about grammar, because of the interests of the 'friends', attention centres on whether grammatical disclosure of description is possible in religion. In principle, there are numerous paths that may be trod. While the most apparent concerns the nature of description, the notion of reality unavoidably rears its head. In this regard, at the genesis of his career, and while Wittgenstein’s name did not appear in Phillips' first significant publication, Phillips (WR 2) suggested that:

To say that x is a fact is to say something about the grammar of x ...

To the extent that this is consistent with PL 373, it might be thought that both Wittgenstein and Phillips seemingly display an isomorphic treatment of facts and language. That impression might be an inheritance, perhaps, of the Tractatus (TLP 4.4, 4.461). By the Investigations, of course, Wittgenstein had ceased to hold to the earlier (Russellian) view that meaningful sentences were necessarily propositional and truth-functional and that names have meaning only by having reference. While allowing language to be meaningful by virtue of use (PI 43), the later Wittgenstein no longer required names (like ‘God’) to designate. Everything would depend on the grammar applicable. How, then, is the notion from the Investigations that grammar tells the nature of 'objects' to be understood? And in what ways did Phillips exploit that notion? Clearly, the question of the scope for understanding the notable PL 373 in Wittgensteinianism should now be considered. Here two contrasts are convenient: (the actions of) showing/telling and (the artefacts of) objects/locutions.

Significantly, Wittgenstein’s showing/telling distinction originated early. In his 1919 correspondence with Russell, Wittgenstein recorded:

\[\text{For Phillips (PCP 1-11), multiple realities seem on offer, disclosed by grammar.}\]
... the main point is the theory of what can be expressed by propositions ... and what can not be expressed by propositions, but only shown; which I believe is the cardinal problem of philosophy.\textsuperscript{217}

And this distinction was made infamous by the *Tractatus* (TLP 6.522, 6.53, 6.54) where what metaphysics strove to say is ineffably shown by the well-formed proposition.\textsuperscript{218} Indeed, and while in the early 1930s he abandoned\textsuperscript{219} the *Tractatus* doctrine of what cannot be said but only shown, a form of contrast between showing and telling continued to be both difficult and important for the post-*Tractatus* Wittgenstein (PI 31):

When one *shews* [sic] someone the king in chess and says: "This is the king", this does not *tell* him the use of the piece. [emphasis added]

This is a fascinating presentation of showing/telling as a distinction. By the *Investigations*, physical objects could not tell their use even by being shown and named. The chess piece might be the subject of ostensive attention; but naming and even showing does not tell the use. That being the case, a physical object's use may not be disclosed simply by the object itself. A more articulate combination of locution and action (in a language-game context such as *PI* 2) may be required in the interests of understanding. And, in this regard, it is notable that (in the tradition of Descartes, Leibniz and Locke) clocks receive Wittgensteinian attention. Indeed, Rhees\textsuperscript{220} reported an incident in a (1936) lecture where Wittgenstein reflected somewhat strangely on the kind of bewilderment that clocks can present:


\textsuperscript{218}Hacker P M S *Wittgenstein's Place in Twentieth-century Analytic Philosophy* op.cit., p.36.

\textsuperscript{219}Hacker P M S *Wittgenstein's Place in Twentieth-century Analytic Philosophy* op.cit., p.62.

... If in some situation it strikes you as a bewildering instrument, and you can then bring yourself round to saying that of course it is not bewildering – then this is the way to solve a philosophical problem.

The clock becomes a bewildering instrument here because he says about it ‘it measures a fragment of infinity, measuring something which does not exist perhaps’. What makes the clock bewildering is that he introduces a sort of entity which he then can’t see, and it seems like a ghost.

But how might this Wittgensteinian reflection be understood?

Of course, we tell the time from clocks. Clocks ‘say’ the time.\(^{221}\) Consequently, from clocks it is possible to ‘tell’ the time.\(^{222}\) Nevertheless, as a Wittgensteinian exercise, it might be asked how clocks and locutions about time ‘bewitch’ in regard to clockwork objects and time. That is, just like merely showing (and naming) the king chess piece (\(P/31\)), simply showing a clock does not tell its use. But does the grammar of locutions about time and clocks ‘tell’ (about concepts like time and physical objects like clocks) in a manner in which clocks themselves cannot ‘tell’ about both time and clocks? Importantly, and, in order to avoid ‘bewitchment’ (\(P/109\)) can the grammar of locutions be employed to show what clocks and time are in their language-game?

In saying or showing\(^{223}\) the time, clocks do several things. To the initiated, they show the reading at any particular moment of a calculus expressing a convention. Importantly, however, they show features of the convention but not its rationale. And they do not show what kind of thing time is; just as a pressure gauge does not show what kind of thing pressure is, or a fuel gauge show what fuel is. Further, clocks and gauges do not depict other objects as a painting, plan or photograph might. (This despite the fact that, when their use is understood, gauges can

\(^{221}\) In the English tradition, ‘What does your watch say?’ is the equivalent of ‘What time do you have?’ for Americans.

\(^{222}\) \(P/266, 363, 607\). Cf: McCutcheon (63).

\(^{223}\) Wittgenstein mentioned clocks both ‘showing’ (\(PG\ 84\)) and ‘telling’ (\(P/363\)) the time.
certainly depict something about other objects: for instance, *how much* fuel is in the tank.) Similarly, clocks do not depict another object. More importantly, in Wittgensteinian terms, clocks do not show what another thing is in the way grammar purports to tell (or disclose) what kind of ‘object’ a thing is.

Nevertheless, if Wittgenstein’s assertion can be maintained, compared at least to some artefacts like clocks, grammar (as use) aspires to be comprehensively articulate. But grammar has its own shortcomings. Wittgenstein (*BB* p.26) admitted, at least when the grammar of ‘measurement’ is considered, that the grammar of ‘time’ can puzzle. So, in comparison with clocks themselves, and given its own puzzling limitations, how would grammar disclose the nature of locutions about time or any other concept or thing? Indeed, consider the (common, meaningful and regularly true) locution: ‘The clock says four o’clock’. This sentence may be expressed with accuracy upon the reading of a clock: from the clock it is possible to tell that time. But what can one tell from the grammar of this locution within that language-game? In Wittgenstein’s terms, what is the ‘thing’ that the grammar has to ‘tell’? Pursuant to *PI* 373, what could the grammar of the locution disclose?

These questions raise consideration of the use of the term ‘object’. For the *Tractatus* (*TLP* 2.021), objects make up the substance of the world. That is, the word ‘object’ was devised as the technical term for the ultimate constituents of existence, ‘objects’ containing the possibility of all states of affairs (*TLP* 2.014). And if for the early Wittgenstein ‘objects’ were simples that could not be further analysed, ‘names’ designated but did not describe:

The terms ‘objects’ and ‘names’ denoted the elements which comprise reality and a proposition, respectively.

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That said about the *Tractatus*, the issue here concerns what the post-*Tractatus* Wittgenstein meant by ‘object’.

By the *Investigations*, there are no simple ‘objects’ as there are in the *Tractatus* (TLP 2.02). For instance, in the *Investigations*, Wittgenstein refers to a face and a drawing of that face as ‘objects’ of sight (*PI* p.165). Teasingly, however, in another post-*Tractatus* use of ‘object’ (*PI* p.175) it is asserted that:

... we regard the photograph, the picture on our wall, as the object itself (the man, landscape, and so on) depicted there.

In that event, and in their activity of depicting, do photographs or drawings tell what kind of object is depicted? Indeed, following *PI* 373 and if it made sense (which, as is here to be considered, it may not) to talk of the grammar of physical objects, would the grammar (as use) of photographs tell what kind of object a photograph is? If we regard photographs as the object depicted, as the *Investigations* appears to do, then (presumably subject to certain conditions) the photograph shows the object photographed. But can it show or tell what kind of object is depicted? For instance, what would a photograph of a photograph tell about the object (that is, the first photograph) depicted? Presumably, a photograph of a photograph is used only as a photograph. So, and problematically, photographs are not absolute truth-tellers; photographs show an image without showing whether that image was live, contrived or a photograph. That is, photographs depict physical objects without necessarily showing what kind of object is depicted. Otherwise a photograph of a photograph would clearly be so.

Further, in that a clock shows the time according to a conventional calculus without showing what time is, clocks (*qua* objects) are quite unlike the Wittgensteinian grammar of *PI* 373. In contrast with clocks, however, are there language-game

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226 By the *Investigations* Wittgenstein used two words translated ‘object’ in English: in addition to *Gegenstand* Wittgenstein employed *Objekt*. The *Investigations* Index reference to *Gegenstand* lists *PI* 476, 518 and pp.154, 160, 165, 173, 175, 180-1 but it should also list p.168; and, contrary to the Index, there is no reference at p.181. There is no reference to *Objekt* in the Index; but *Objekt* appears at pp.180, 181.
locutions that (unlike clocks) disclose grammars that do tell what kind of 'object' is depicted? Is there a disclosure by the grammar of locutions, and is that the import of *PI* 373 for religion? Or, contrary to Wittgenstein's assertion, are religious language-games limited to representation of locutions merely like a photograph at best, depicting a religious locution without showing what kind of 'object' is depicted?

An allegory may assist in sorting locutions *qua* the 'objects' of *PI* 373. Consider the possibility that, at some point in the far distant future, an archaeologist from another galaxy some light years distant, on a field trip to planet Earth, discovers an analogue clock: the first such artefact of its kind to be discovered. At first, it is considered to be a teaching aid to show the number system once in use, its pointers designed with an ostensive purpose to move sequentially over a period. But that theory is eventually rejected. Why would anyone place the numbers in a circle for that purpose? And why move the pointer, rather than the numbers? One researcher considered the possibility that this was an elementary timepiece. That view, however, did not attract wide support: the artefact was just too crude. With the benefit of mature reflection, it came to be considered that the clock was in fact nothing more than an interesting primitive work of art: merely an aesthetic object.

At the same archaeological site, a novel by Ian Fleming is found. All other evidence about Fleming and his work (including the movies) had not yet been discovered. In reading Fleming's story, James Bond is presumed to be an historical figure. This is based on the apparent supporting empirical evidence from the site of the former city of Berlin. The foundations of the Berlin Wall have been unearthed: there is good reason to believe that the Cold War did in fact take place. The most significant remaining question is whether collaborative evidence can be established to verify that (the supposedly real) James Bond actually lived the life as detailed by (the purported historian) Ian Fleming. Both the analogue clock and the Fleming book are existents. The clock can be understood as a pedagogical aid, or aesthetic artefact, if that is judged to have been its intended use. And the novel can be read as an historical record if that is considered to have been its intended use. But, as both Wittgenstein (*PI* 31) and archaeology understand, merely
showing an existent does not tell its use; and both judgements about the uses of these existents are false.

Now, it has been noted\^\^\textsuperscript{227} that Wittgenstein did mention the grammar of states, processes or abilities, colour and sensation; in regard to primary colours, \textit{PG} 29 would be an example. Nevertheless, Wittgenstein spoke centrally of grammar in regard to language; in regard to colours, he spoke (\textit{PG} 134; pp.185-187) of the grammar of colour \textit{words}. But in the case of the Fleming novel, and because the intended use was misunderstood, the grammar of its sentences failed to be comprehended in so far as it mentioned characters and places. Consequently the kind of (literary or fictional) characters mentioned was misunderstood; the grammar of the locutions was not told. Indeed, the grammar of Fleming’s work has not been understood as disclosing fictional literature. Unless its use is adequately apprehended, the grammar of the novel is incorrectly comprehended for telling what it might be meant to depict, what kind of ‘object’ it depicts \textit{qua} locution.

So, if there is any sense in such a Wittgensteinian conception, how can the grammar of language-games facilitate understanding of novels and clocks? If the nature of the ‘object’ is to be disclosed, it will be necessary to rely upon knowledge of the language-game. Language-games for clocks concern the calculus for time, but not the nature of time itself. The language-game of photographs includes that of pictorial representation of (other) objects but not the nature of representation. And the seminal language-game for the novel is that of fictional story: it is knowledge of the relevant language-game that is critical for understanding the nature of what is depicted by particular language-game locutions. For the exploitation of fiction, the novel is dependent upon the reader’s familiarity with the language-game of fiction. And the language-game may indicate its own limitations. It may reveal that it is concerned with fictional literature, as opposed to historical accounts: comprehension of the use of the artefact is critical. As Wittgenstein (\textit{PI} 664) believed, use is necessarily characteristic of grammar.

\textsuperscript{227} Hacker P M S \textit{Insight and Illusion} op cit., p.181.
In summary, in the *Investigations* (PI 363) ostensive objects like clocks do not tell what kind of thing time is; and *absent the articulate context of the relevant language-game* of chess (PI 31), bishops and pawns do not tell what kind of thing chess is. So, on their own clocks do not show what use they have; just as bishops do not show what kind of use they have. That is, because grammar (like meaning) is determined by use, objects alone do not tell their rules of grammar. How, then, is it that grammar could be conceived to tell what kind of ‘object’ a locution presents? Grammar (exploited according to Wittgenstein’s dominant intention) may tell about ‘objects’ only by virtue of language-game familiarity with the use of locutions. The Wittgensteinian promise is that, in comparison with photographs which (although depicting objects) do not tell what kind of object they depict, within language-games (such as that involving a photograph or novel) the grammar (as use) tells what kind of ‘object’ or locution is mentioned (to employ a use/mention distinction\(^{228}\)). Importantly, without knowledge of the language-game practice in question, the grammar of an ‘object’ or locution will not be disclosed. As a consequence, even the kind of locution shown by novels will not be revealed. The point being made here would seem to support that recently put by Moyal-Sharrock. Her most useful explanation is that the ‘object’ being pointed to is instrumental in language. So:

> ... having an attitude towards some *objects* is sometimes equivalent to having an attitude towards a grammatical rule ... In the same way that being a sentence does not prevent a string of words from also being an act (a *speech-act*), being an object does not prevent something from being a means of representation or part of the expression of a rule. ... the same object can be either an object of description or a *means* of description – though not *simultaneously*.\(^{229}\)

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For Wittgenstein, on this account the grammar revealed by language-games is powerfully articulate in showing (or disclosing); and mere existents are not articulate in this way at all. On this reading existents do not disclose any grammars although, within language-games, grammars do disclose the nature of the 'objects' of locutions. And to what does this amount? Are language-games inherently so much more revealing (language-games disclosing their grammars) than any observation of existents? And does that work to the advantage of reasoning about the kind of reality that is not subject to ostensive identification? That is, even were God an ostensive object, as a mere being God would not disclose what kind of existent God is. Identification of the kind of existent God is would depend on the language-games in which locutions about God were considered relevant. At the least, the kind of object that God is cannot be shown; but in Wittgensteinian terms, God can be the subject of grammatical telling by religious locutions in their language-games. And the fact that the grammar of God can be told exposes religion to Phillips' scalpel. So, what did Phillips say?

The Divine Existent

As a Wittgensteinian, Phillips relied on language-games and grammar in his characterisation of religious locutions. And it has been argued above that, if familiarity with the language-game is adequate, then the relevant grammar of a locution might disclose its 'objects'. Grammar 'casts its shadow' (to borrow Hacker's metaphor). So, how did Phillips construe religious locutions in this regard?

Notably, in 1976 Phillips (RWE 150) identified any reference to God as an object as 'reductionism':

If we mean by reductionism an attempt to reduce the significance of religious belief to something other than it is, then reductionism consists in

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230 Hacker P M S Insight and Illusion op.cit., p.179.
the attempt, however sophisticated, to say that religious pictures must refer to some object; that they must describe matters of fact. That is the real reductionism which distorts the character of religious belief.

In the 1980s this was confirmed by Phillips (FAF 317) in response to J L Mackie and T A Roberts:

Two of my critics ... recognise that, on the one hand, I deny that 'God' refers to an object, and that, on the other hand, I deny that 'God' is a metaphorical use of language.

This will be an important matter for consideration in chapter 5. Here it might be observed that, of course, it is not unusual for certain theologians to deny that God is an existent among existents. And, for 'God is love' Phillips (RHC 95) characterised the proper noun 'God' as a 'grammatical object':

The illuminating grammatical alternative is to see 'God is love' as a grammatical rule in dogmatics: it gives one use for the word 'God'. ... Seen in this way, the predicates become grammatical predicates of a grammatical object, not descriptions of an independent existing object of which they happen to be true.

For Phillips, if 'God is love' cannot be regarded as disclosing that God is an existent, then the term employed is itself the 'object' shown. That is, for Wittgensteinians, within the language-game the term is shown to be a 'grammatical object' as disclosed by the locution's grammar. More expansively, and terms like 'God' being used meaningfully in religious language-games, these words are 'objects' whose kind is illumined (to employ Phillips' term) by grammar to be 'grammatical objects'. By virtue of their grammar, within their language-games

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231 Phillips relied on Ludwig Feuerbach for an argument that God cannot be a thing. In this thesis, criticism of Feuerbach will be important for denying Phillips that argument against treating God as an existent.
religious locutions do tell what kind of 'object' is mentioned. On these grounds, then, *Pl 373* should have been critically important for Phillips. He certainly appears to have relied on it in his important early formula (WR 2) already quoted:

To say that x is a fact is to say something about the grammar of x ...

Because God is not an existent, the term 'God' is not a metaphor that might be cashed in such terms. ‘God’ is a ‘grammatical object’, and therein lay the religion in ‘God is love’ for Phillips. That is, for Phillips religion resided in the use of ‘grammatical objects’ in ‘distinctive’ religious language-games. Critically, however, as has been noted, while for Phillips religion lay in the religious use of ‘grammatical objects’, that does not mean that Phillips ever clearly articulated what religion itself is. Rather, he (FAF xvii) confirmed:

Religion is a ragged phenomenon.

*Meaning and Reality*

While Phillips' struggle with religion will receive more considered attention in the next chapter, here it is immediately important to acknowledge a significant although controversial reading of the later Wittgenstein on meaning.

If grammar tells (within language-game contexts) what kind of ‘object’ a thing is, but existents cannot do so, then the meaning of language may not be dependent upon reality. Michael Dummett is regarded as the most extreme advocate of this view: he considers that assertoric sentences (making affirmations) are neither true nor false. Even commentators like Hacker cannot help but see the denial of ontological grounds for language being replaced by the alternative theory that

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232 It might be suggested that this position was developed through essays like that presented in Phillips D Z *From Fantasy to Faith* SCM Press London (1991) 2006.

reality is somehow grounded in language. Notably, in consideration of Wittgenstein, Hacker comes close to the Dummett view in his (already mentioned) point in exegesis of the *Investigations*:

... the apparent ‘structure of reality’ is merely the shadow cast by grammar.\(^{234}\)

Phillips, from this perspective, was profoundly Wittgensteinian. Indeed, in his unremitting dependence upon grammar, Phillips shared what might be considered Wittgensteinian ground in finding his religion in religious locutions, however they might be identified (*RHC 98*):

... philosophy cannot answer the question, ‘Does God exist?’ with either an affirmative or negative reply. From whose mouth does the question come and how is it answered? Praising, thanking, confessing, asking and adoring before God may have meant little to a man. But, then, it means everything to him. He says that God has become a reality in his life. Has this come about by his discovering an object? Hardly. What has happened is that he has found God *in* a praise, a thanksgiving, a confessing and an asking which were not his beforehand.

For Phillips, then, by virtue of religious locutions such as those used for praising and confessing, ‘grammatical objects’ present religion for contemplation. This is consistent with the Wittgensteinian conviction that, to extrapolate from Searle, there could not be religious thinking or religious experience apart from the use of linguistic expressions.\(^{235}\)

At this stage, then, the focus turns to critiques of Phillips' Wittgensteinian position. And the ‘friends’ of religion have attempted a contribution towards that assessment. Searle is important in this context because he would deny Phillips’

\(^{234}\) Hacker P M S *Insight and Illusion* op.cit., p.179.  
\(^{235}\) Searle J ‘Wittgenstein’ op.cit., p.334.
Wittgensteinianism its own territory. And McCutcheon is significant, by contrast, in presenting a Wittgensteinian case against what she has called ‘Neo-Wittgensteinians’ among whom she numbers Phillips.236 We turn first to Searle.

Two Critiques of Phillips’ Wittgensteinianism

Searle’s anti-Wittgenstein Argument

Pressing the notion that characterising ‘God is love’ must centre on the ‘grammatical objects’ of the locution, Phillips (RHC 95) was fascinated by the phenomenon of religion. Indeed Phillips considered himself an advocate for religion among philosophers. In 1988 (WR 235) he described himself as ‘a Christian who gives himself to disinterested inquiry’. Nevertheless, for many including John Searle, the kind of support offered for religion by Phillips is highly suspect; and Searle based his dispute with Phillips upon a rejection of Wittgenstein. Searle has nominated two of a series of ‘massive mistakes’ in Wittgenstein. One of those mistakes, centrally relevant here, will now be explained.237 It is of profound significance for the Wittgensteinian description/rule distinction. And, the identification of any ‘massive mistake’ in Wittgenstein would be relevant for commenting on Phillips.

As has been indicated already, whether or not it has received careful exegesis from Wittgenstein by philosophers, the description/rule distinction has been taken as the ground of important Wittgensteinian approaches to religion. And Searle’s criticism of Wittgensteinian positions (like that adopted by Phillips) centres on the later Wittgenstein’s avoidance of the idea that ‘representation’ (of states of affairs)


237 Another ‘massive mistake’, not relevant here, is Wittgenstein’s failure to see the importance of the brain for understanding mental phenomena: Searle J ‘Wittgenstein’ op.cit., p.344.
is somehow the essence of language in favour of the view that language should be thought of as consisting of different signalling tools. In his 1987 BBC exchange \textsuperscript{238} with Bryan Magee, part of Searle's most significant philosophical observation was that:

\begin{quote}
... if you look closer ... you discover that representation lies at the heart of nearly every single language game. ... Now once you see that propositional contents run through just about every language game then you can also see that representing lies at the heart of language. Representation is of the essence of language.\textsuperscript{239}
\end{quote}

Searle is prominent among philosophers approaching language from the speech-act tradition of J L Austin. Searle has attempted a general theoretical account of the functioning of various modes of 'representation' in different sorts of speech acts. And this has informed his understanding of the phenomenon of religious discourse. While agreeing with Wittgenstein that it is necessary to consider the role that religious discourse plays, he has considered that it is not possible to reach such an understanding without seeing that religious discourse refers beyond itself:

\begin{quote}
... when ordinary people pray it is because they think there is a God up there listening.
\end{quote}

Indeed as Searle explained:

\begin{quote}
... The reason people play the language game of religion is because they think there is something outside the language game that gives it a point.
\end{quote}

So, and in conclusion:

\textsuperscript{238} Searle J 'Wittgenstein' op.cit., pp.322-347.  
\textsuperscript{239} Searle J 'Wittgenstein' op.cit., p.343.
You have to be a very *recherché* sort of religious intellectual to keep praying if you don’t think there is any real God outside the language who is listening to your prayers.²⁴⁰

Now, prayer usually signals religious activity. And conventionally (for philosophy at least) religious activity raises the question of God’s ontological status. For theists, Searle would seem to have a sound point about representation. If Searle is correct, prayer (often being petitionary amongst verbal religious activity) requires belief in the existence of the object of religion, God, in order to be sane. Seemingly, without belief in God, the language-game of prayer is not ‘reasonable’ to employ Wittgensteinian terminology (*LC 58*). In that regard Searle’s criticism might be welcomed by orthodox Judaeo-Christian religion. And, ironically, it might be considered a telling point (consistent with *PI 124*) by Wittgensteinian ‘friends’ of religion. That is, and evidence McCutcheon (*RWLLA 107*) the Wittgensteinian ‘friends’ would not concede that Wittgenstein ruled out a representational function for religious locutions.

For Wittgensteinian religious ‘friends’, certain language-games involve the use of religious locutions with propositional content that comprise descriptions. And, Searle has made out his case requiring the point of the language-game of religion to lie in something outside religious language-games by using praying as the religious activity under consideration. But Searle’s observations are provocative from a religious perspective. If, as Searle claims, prayer requires something outside its language-game in order to have a (rational) point, then prayer is a particular kind of language-game. Importantly, however, it might be observed that numerous types of language-game mentioned by Wittgenstein (*PI 23*), ‘play-acting’ for example, do not appear to need an external ‘something’ in order to acquire a point.²⁴¹ That, at least, seems to be orthodox Wittgensteinianism. Indeed, the locutions of some religious language-games might be ‘representational’ but the

²⁴¹ Wittgenstein (*NB 72-75*) had earlier observed: ‘Prayer is thought about the meaning of life’. 
state of affairs being represented would be strictly imaginary. While Searle does not seem to allow for even the religious point of prayer unless God were an existent, numerous practitioners, such as those adhering to Buddhism, likely would reject that claim as a brute matter of fact. From Phillips’ perspective, Buddhists would be entitled to a Wittgensteinian account of their particular practice. And, with respect to ‘representationalism’, it is certainly not clear that Buddhist prayer precludes the entertainment of imaginary states of affairs. Neither would Phillips’ concept of prayer, nor that of those in the Judaeo-Christian tradition who nevertheless emulate Buddhist practice.

These remarks parallel Phillips’ concern (WR 23) about Searle’s objection to Wittgenstein. Other observations might be made relying on the game of chess, because chess is one of Wittgenstein’s paradigm examples (PI 197, 205, 337) of a game. Critically, games have rules and also a point (PI 564). (And Searle would be consistent with Wittgenstein in searching for the point to a game.) So, in considering the point of rules in the game of chess, purpose is significant (PI 567). Nevertheless, and by consensus, whatever may be the interest of individual participants the point of chess (like the point of Patience) is the game itself. Indeed, the significance of particular rules for Wittgenstein is demonstrated (in Kenny’s account) by contemplating the game of chess:

> The game is not about the wooden pieces, and yet the pieces stand for nothing; the significance of each piece is given by the rules for its movement.\(^{242}\)

In Wittgensteinian terms (PI 563), then, the meaning of a chess piece is its role in the game. So, Searle is deliberately at odds with Wittgenstein in raising the prospect that the point of a religious language-game needs to be external to the game. And Searle must be asked why some particular language-games of religion (such as some aspects of prayer) are not like games such as chess.

Wittgensteinian philosophers of religion need an argument about that, one way or the other. Philosophers like Searle, who maintain that belief in God qua existent is required as the point of religious language-games, need to argue that religious language-games certainly are not like chess. Indeed, Phillips (WR 23) challenged Searle on this issue. Although Phillips (WR 25) accepted Searle’s exegesis of Wittgenstein on language-games, he concluded that:

Searle cannot maintain his exposition of Wittgenstein and say in criticism: ‘The reason people play the language-game of religion is because they think there is something outside the language-game that gives it a point’.

In this response to Searle, Phillips successfully identified a dissonance between acknowledging Wittgenstein’s position on language-games and requiring all religious language-games to have a point beyond the game.

Significantly, an additional comment in Phillips’ favour can be offered. That is, whether recherché or not, it is a fascinating question whether Phillips’ approach to prayer presents a challenge to theistic understanding of Judaeo-Christianity. Consider the undeniable fact that prayer is not answered (positively) in a significant proportion of instances. Practical experience confirms that whatever else prayer may be, it is not a mechanism for manipulating God and the universe. In cases where prayer does not meet with a positive response, wherein lies the point of the prayer; what is the religious point? In Searle’s ‘representational’ approach, the answer would have to be along the lines that God just listened. But, even in orthodox religion, God does not always listen.244 How recherché does a


244 Cf: Psalm 5.2: ‘Listen to the sound of my cry, my King and my God, for to you I pray’; and Isaiah 1.15: ‘... even though you make many prayers, I will not listen ... ’.
contemplative petitioners have to be to keep praying in that event? In what Phillips likely would have claimed to be Wittgensteinian terms, the language-game has been played in those contexts, and the point of the game was the game itself. Prayer was offered; and religious locutions qua rules were used. In those circumstances at least, that is the essential point of prayer: the point of prayer is praying.

Accordingly, a Wittgensteinian approach (as articulated by Phillips) for characterising the practice of prayer may be useful at times, even for those believing in God as existent. Understood in those (chess-playing) terms, prayer (as a language-game) may even enjoy status as a 'reasonable' (LC 58) activity. Indeed, why is it necessary, as Searle insists, for all religious locutions to have a point beyond the language-game itself? That is not at all clear through the 'mental mist'. After all, and as has been suggested, the state of affairs 'represented' might be imaginary. There, as Cyril Barrett\(^5\) has assured, PI 520 echoes TLP 2.1-3.01, especially TLP 2.151-2.171:

> Even if a proposition is conceived as a picture of a possible state of affairs and is said to shew [sic] the possibility of the state of affairs, still the most that the proposition can do is what a painting or relief or film does ...

Argument aside that might concern the extent to which Wittgenstein continued the picture theory into the Investigations, in contexts where representation might be considered applicable for the exercise of the imagination, it is not clear that representationalism of any sort is inconsistent with Wittgensteinian language-games to the extent suggested by Searle.\(^6\) And representation may not be limited to pictures of moves within language-games for games like chess. Wittgensteinian 'friends' of religion may argue that the same might apply to some

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\(^6\) Cf: Barrett C Wittgenstein on Ethics and Religious Belief op.cit., pp.124, 125.
religious language-games, or some aspects of them. They would certainly argue the case in regard to 'God is love'.

In summary, Searle's rejection of Wittgenstein is based on the claim, somewhat problematically, of representation operating pervasively even in religious language-games like prayer. Phillips (WR 25) did not consider that Searle achieved that, given the Wittgensteinian argument about games (perhaps like chess) that have no point beyond the game itself. To extrapolate, games like chess demonstrate that it is misconceived to propose that all language-games must be representational in the manner suggested by Searle. Some language-games, like language-games of fictional literature, provide only for rules simpliciter. The same may apply to aspects of prayer.

In Phillips' favour, and at this stage of the discussion (in regard to some aspects of some religious language-game practices like prayer), support has been discovered for a Wittgensteinian approach that would not require appeal to God qua existent in order to permit the rational pursuit of some religious language-games, or some moves within them. Phillips' position (WR 29) might be expressed as follows. The point of prayer, indeed, is prayer. And on those grounds, Patience and chess are reasonable language-games only if aspects of prayer are also. Indeed, the fact that most people who pray may say that they believe in God qua existent is not a consideration against the Wittgensteinian understanding of particular religious behaviour as aspects of language-games characterised by locutions disclosed by grammar as rules simpliciter.

Clearly, then, in the religious language-game of prayer, Phillips' approach to religious locutions as rules simpliciter withstands Searle's uncompromising attack. And some approach other than that put by Searle is required if Phillips' particular Wittgensteinianism is to be resisted. The approach will need to disclose more finesse from a Wittgensteinian perspective. It will need to allow that particular rules

247 Similar in sentiment to 'It isn't the fish you catch, but rather the fishing you do that matters'.

might also (sequentially) be descriptions, while other rules might be rules *simpliciter*.

**McCutcheon's 'Friendly' Wittgensteinianism**

As has been observed, Felicity McCutcheon makes such an offering from within Wittgensteinianism. (Notably, and in her rejection of Phillips, McCutcheon made no reference to Searle.\(^{248}\)) McCutcheon has argued that the description/rule distinction (properly understood from Wittgenstein) can be employed in the manner that the ‘friends’ of religion do. Of course, if the ‘friends’ can seek to exploit it, so can Phillips. For him, the distinction can be exploited by characterising ‘God is love’ as a rule *simpliciter*. But in McCutcheon’s estimation, for Wittgenstein the distinction does not require the resolution that ‘Neo-Wittgensteinians’ (like Phillips) posit. In short, McCutcheon has promoted the description/rule distinction but argued that Wittgensteinians like Phillips mistake Wittgenstein over it. So, while reference to McCutcheon has already been made, a more concentrated consideration of her position as a Wittgensteinian ‘friend’ in dispute with Wittgensteinians like Phillips is now appropriate. Discussion of her argument might be enlightening of both Phillips and the ‘friends’ of religion in the Wittgensteinian tradition.

Before proceeding with that discussion, an important observation should be made. It concerns interpretation of Wittgenstein by the ‘friends’ of religion. While McCutcheon considers that (appropriate) religious locutions may be both rules and descriptions, it should be acknowledged that Wittgenstein cannot be understood to have readily conceded that view. Indeed, along with Wittgensteinians like Phillips, religious ‘friends’ should recognise Wittgenstein’s documented decade-long dismay (until 1938 at least) over Father O’Hara’s 1930 ‘blunder’ where O’Hara equated the

epistemological status of science with that of religion. That is, from the
{\textit{Tractatus}} period until at least the late 1930s Wittgenstein considered that religious
belief was profoundly different from belief of an historical or scientific kind. Further,
for the Wittgenstein of the {\textit{Lectures}} (LC 57-59), religious belief was not a matter of
being 'reasonable'. Critically, in Wittgenstein's estimation (LC 57), religious belief
uniquely requires grounds beyond even historical 'indubitability':

\begin{quote}
It has been said that Christianity rests on an historical basis.

It has been said a thousand times by intelligent people that
indubitability is not enough in this case. Even if there is as much evidence
as for Napoleon. Because the indubitability wouldn't be enough to make me
change my whole life.

\ldots

Here we have a belief in historic facts different from a belief in
ordinary historic facts. Even, they are not treated as historical, empirical,
propositions.
\end{quote}

Taking account of the chronology involved, then, if (as some of the Wittgensteinian
'friends' might hope) Wittgenstein was eventually to allow some religious locutions
to be empirical propositions (\textit{qua} descriptions), that would be a development well
beyond the period of the \textit{Blue Book} (1933-34) and the \textit{Brown Book} (1934-35)
where his ideas of grammar and its functions emerged. Given the criticism of
O'Hara recorded in Wittgenstein's 1938 lectures on religion, any recognition of
description in religion (should it ever have occurred) would have come quite late for
Wittgenstein. An argument that Wittgenstein would (rather than should) have
allowed religious locutions as description, then, needs to admit that fact from the

\cite{O'Hara}

\cite{O'Hara} O'Hara C W SJ '{\textit{Science and Religion-VIII}}' \textit{The Listener} 19.11.30. Cf:
p.841: 'Christianity ... holds that its truths are reached by the very same
intelligence that is operative in science and with the same certainty. These
truths are that God exists, ... ' The BBC had broadcast that talk on
16.11.30; as already noted, Wittgenstein's 1938 rejection was recorded at
LC 57-9.
Wittgensteinian corpus. So, given that caution, how should McCutcheon’s ‘friendly’ interpretation of Wittgenstein be understood?

Perhaps indicating her acknowledgement that philosophers like Phillips aspire to be Wittgensteinian, McCutcheon (RWLLA 60) considers that, in regard to the way in which philosophy of religion is traditionally done, the ‘Neo-Wittgensteinian’ critique ‘mirrors’ Wittgenstein’s:

... they desire to show that anyone who construes a rule of language as a statement about the world is guilty of a metaphysical confusion. Traditionally, philosophers of religion (and philosophically influenced theologians) have been guilty of such confusions, claims Phillips. They have treated rules as truths and this is the kind of bad philosophy that Wittgenstein came to put a stop to.

The ‘Neo-Wittgensteinian’ complaint (against the ‘friends’ of religion) identified by McCutcheon (RWLLA 60) is that philosophers are inclined to construe ‘religious language’ as truth-apt (or descriptive) because they treat it on the model of language concerning empirical objects. Indeed, it has been noted, that was Father O’Hara’s ‘blunder’ (apprehended by Wittgenstein in 1938). To avoid that blunder, religious locutions should be distinguished from empirical science, science labouring on epistemic foundations different from religion. McCutcheon (RWLLA 60) observes that, for the ‘Neo-Wittgensteinians’, to treat it otherwise:

... is to misunderstand its grammar and this effects an imposition of an alien criterion of meaningfulness and justification; one to which religious language cannot conform and which makes it look epistemically inferior to the language of science.

So the 'Neo-Wittgensteinian' remedy is that we need only perceive the use to which religious locutions are put and the meaning that the language has will become apparent.

By contrast, and in criticism of the 'Neo-Wittgensteinians', as a 'friend' of religion McCutcheon (RWLLA 107) provocatively considered that:

... the important difference between the positivists and Wittgenstein on the nature of grammar was that Wittgenstein had no difficulty in accepting that the same proposition can function as an assertoric statement and as a rule of meaning and this was because he didn't define grammatical as those propositions whose meaning could be given independent of all experience.

This particular claim is problematic, however, by way of appealing negatively to Wittgenstein's approach to grammar. It is often hazardous to rely upon impressions of what a philosopher has not done, in particular over concepts that have been left unclear. But it is important to the extent that it attempts to set up the option for McCutcheon's argument that certain locutions can be both rules and descriptions. Some locutions are not dependent upon empirical experience for their meaning: for example, 'bishops are diagonal movers'. But philosophers have quoted examples of rules (beyond religious language-games) that may be argued to be dependent (at least in part) upon empirical experience for their meaning; they include 'Only one person can feel one's pain' (Hallie251) and 'Every rod has a length' (Aidun252). Importantly, in relying on Aidun's contribution, McCutcheon (RWLLA 106) has emphasised the 'fluid' nature of the distinction between rules and empirical propositions. Her argument is that Wittgenstein ultimately allowed for just that 'fluidity'.253

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253 It has already been noted that this thesis considers 'instability' in the description/rule distinction; Wittgenstein (OC 96) nominated propositions as 'fluid'.
The obvious difficulty for McCutcheon, at this point, is that locutions concerning God are not dependent upon empirical experience for their meaning; for Wittgensteinians, at least, they are dependent for meaning upon their use in non-ostensive contexts, in religious language-games. McCutcheon has argued for an instability in the distinction on the basis of Wittgenstein's definition of meaning and her assertion of its occasional dependence upon experience. Nevertheless, it is one thing to place reliance on a component of experience in Wittgenstein's comprehension of meaning; it is another to argue for an instability in the distinction where the distinction is brought to bear upon locutions that can have no relation to experience. Given that, first, God *qua* existent is not an ostensive entity and, second, the observable evidence of God's worldly intervention is ambiguous at best, even for theists 'God is love' would depend for meaning upon considerations beyond the experiential. With respect to locutions like 'God is love' within religious language-games, then, if there is an instability in the description/rule distinction it must be an instability that is relevant to descriptions of the non-ostensive. And the requirement is to establish that 'God is love' is more than a language-game rule. Certainly, that is the challenge from Phillips.

In taking up that challenge, McCutcheon is a critic of those like Phillips whom she has identified (*RWLLA* 59) as 'Neo-Wittgensteinian'. The use of that term is quite undesirable because it presumes orthodoxy for the Wittgensteinian 'friends'. Of course, disputation over Wittgensteinian orthodoxy has been a continuing issue for this thesis. Nevertheless, and against Phillips, a summary of McCutcheon as a Wittgensteinian 'friend' of religion might now be put. McCutcheon's characterisation of 'Neo-Wittgensteinianism' presents two uncompromising central propositions held by Wittgensteinians like Phillips:

- 'religious language' is used to express religious attitudes; and
- 'religious language' is not descriptive, but gives rules of grammar for religious concepts.
For McCutcheon, this entails a third proposition adhered to by 'Neo-Wittgensteinians':

- Claims that 'religious language' is descriptive are attempts to get to a reality outside language in the same way that a metaphysical philosopher attempts to get outside reality.

However, and in criticism of Phillips, for McCutcheon:

- the 'Neo-Wittgensteinian' position rests upon a mistaken interpretation of Wittgenstein;
- so, the description/rule distinction cannot be used to do the work asked of it by 'Neo-Wittgensteinians'; and
- the claims made by 'Neo-Wittgensteinians' about the meaning of religious belief are illegitimate.

So, based on an argument about Wittgensteinian orthodoxy, McCutcheon (RWLLA 59-61) can be read as proposing that:

- it should not be denied that Wittgenstein makes the distinction between language-game rules and descriptions;
- but, because it is not drawn immutably by Wittgenstein, that distinction allows locutions (such as, it might be suggested, 'God is love') to function both as rules and descriptions;
- and the distinction can be 'thrown away' once its lessons have been learned.

The description/rule distinction, then, has been imported conscientiously into religious language-game contexts. As advocates of their different Wittgensteinian causes, both Phillips (FAF 146, 216, 218; WR 17; RRC 216; RHC 95) and McCutcheon (RWLLA 59ff) make common cause in that development. Here, and
unlike Searle because relying upon a purportedly Wittgensteinian argument, McCutcheon nevertheless presents the same conclusion: that, effectively, Phillips is in error in denying that there can be descriptions in religious language-games. While Searle has in effect dismissed the Wittgensteinian approach *tout court*, McCutcheon's central claim (*RWLLA* ix, x) is that Wittgenstein's own philosophical method, when applied to religious belief and language, will not license the conclusions drawn from the description/rule distinction by Wittgensteinian philosophers of religion like Phillips. The suggestion is that the distinction, properly understood from Wittgenstein, cannot bear the load put on it by philosophers like Phillips. That is, McCutcheon contends that certain 'religious language' functions both assertorically *and* as rules of language. She complains (*RWLLA* 110) that the 'Neo-Wittgensteinians':

> ... frequently deny that a statement can be treated as a description just because it is a rule.

That is, McCutcheon effectively accuses 'Neo-Wittgensteinians' of question-begging against the Wittgensteinian 'friends' of religion. As noticed above in chapter 3, McCutcheon's position (*RWLLA* 61) appears to rely centrally on two arguments:

I will argue that the Neo-Wittgensteinian position rests on a mistaken interpretation of Wittgenstein's philosophy and that the claims they make about the meaning of ordinary religious beliefs are themselves illegitimate.

Now, this particular description of her aspiration is less than clear. But her treatment of her project can be traced as the text proceeds. First, in her text, she argues (*RWLLA* 106) that, in principle, the distinction need not be 'hard and fast'. Second, she argues (*RWLLA* 114ff) that certain religious locutions are 'basic' in a manner that in fact defies separation as rules or descriptions under the distinction. Concerning the first argument, she considers (*RWLLA* ix, x, 61) that the 'Neo-Wittgensteinian' position rests on a mistaken interpretation of Wittgenstein; she has
argued that the distinction between rules of meaning and truths about reality should not be maintained in the case of ‘religious language’ and that the claims made by Wittgensteinians like Phillips about the meaning of ordinary religious beliefs are themselves illegitimate. In regard to the second argument, ‘religious language’ enjoys ‘basicality’ not requiring justification. ‘Basicality’, as will be considered, is introduced by McCutcheon (RWLLA 114) in regard to ‘propositions’ foundational (not requiring evidence) within the noetic structure:

On the foundationalist view of rationality, propositions are of two sorts. There are those which stand in need of evidence and those which provide the required evidence. Those that don’t stand in need of evidence are said to be foundational or basic ….

Being critical to that second argument, basicality will receive attention in due course. But the immediate focus centres on McCutcheon’s interpretation of Wittgenstein’s description/rule distinction.

Now, although he may have allowed quite early for the significance of religion beyond language (perhaps in mystic silence), Wittgenstein progressed to a model of language, embracing religious locutions (PI 23), that was centred on the notion of games. Importantly, Phillips and McCutcheon would be on common Wittgensteinian ground to that point. But McCutcheon pleads for (particular) religious locutions as both rules and descriptions. In the spirit of Searle, but not in his anti-Wittgenstein footprints, McCutcheon (RWLLA 60, 61) understands philosophy of religion to be ‘traditionally’ done by employing locutions to make statements about ‘the world’, that is, ‘reality’. She would assert such a grammar. But Phillips is a Wittgensteinian committed to showing that ‘friends’ of religion (such as McCutcheon) have misunderstood the grammar of ‘religious language’ in regard to ‘God is love’: they misunderstand religious reality. So, there is a profound Wittgensteinian grammatical dispute.

How, then, has grammar been understood by McCutcheon? McCutcheon (RWLLA 107) has interpreted Wittgenstein on grammar as follows:
... for Wittgenstein, the criterion for whether or not a proposition belongs to grammar is whether it makes sense to question it when one is playing (or learning to play) the game in which it belongs as a rule. And the criterion for whether it makes sense to question it is also given by context, not content.

So McCutcheon purports to know quite clearly what Wittgenstein meant by the notion of grammar. Of course, neither logical truths nor game rules are questionable. And it is Wittgensteinian, in McCutcheon’s favour, that all principles of formal logic and pure mathematics belong to grammar (RFM III 26). But what does it mean for other locutions to belong to grammar? Grammar embraces rule locutions beyond logic and mathematics.

Importantly, it has been noted already that Wittgenstein argued only vaguely for the operation of grammar, somewhat understandably resulting in Hacker’s metaphor about the ‘shadow’ cast by grammar. It certainly casts a shadow, but without clarity in Wittgenstein it is difficult for Wittgensteinians to establish precisely how grammar is to be understood across language-games. That will be argued in chapter 6 below in regard to proposals put by Pitcher, Hallie, Hacker and McCutcheon. To the point here, it is difficult to accept that the grammar of religious locutions operates in the manner McCutcheon has suggested. How is it established whether or not it makes sense to question a locution taken as a rule of grammar (RWLLA 109)? It certainly does not make sense to question the analytic truths of logic and mathematics. But even as a language-game rule, the grammar of ‘God is love’ is not beyond question: many grammatical locutions do not amount to unquestionable certainties. Consider rules of grammar. Such a rule of grammar might be: “‘God is love’ is a language-game rule simpliciter”; or “‘God is love’ is a language-game description’. Because neither rule of grammar is beyond question in religious language-game contexts, giving rise to the dispute between Phillips and

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255 Kenny A Wittgenstein op.cit., p.10; Hacker P M S Insight and Illusion op.cit., p.179.
the 'friends' of religion, McCutcheon's criterion of grammar would require the disqualification of both locutions as rules of grammar. That is clearly unacceptable (as will be further considered in chapter 6).

Further, and in support of her approach, McCutcheon certainly questions 'Neo-Wittgensteinian' conclusions about grammar. She has attacked that reading of the grammar of religion which makes two assumptions: first, that 'religious language' is used primarily to express religious attitudes and feelings; and, second, that 'religious language' is not descriptive but provides rules for the use of religious concepts. McCutcheon (RWLLA 21) has noted that the Wittgensteinian emphasis on the limits of language is appealed to by certain philosophers of religion (Phillips being significant among them) in order to rule out the possibility of language about God being referential. But McCutcheon (RWLLA 15) identifies the later Wittgenstein as having established that, while philosophy is still concerned with the limit of language and the world, the demonstration of that limit became more difficult because there are many different systems of application, each with its own limits:

This difficulty is further increased by the recognition that meaning is not precise or exact and so a transition from meaningfulness to meaninglessness at the limit of any application will not be sharp or sudden. This makes the limit more difficult to establish.

McCutcheon, then, appears to have attempted an exploitation of the Wittgensteinian move from clear limits of language as a picture of the world (in the Tractatus) to the recognition that the limit is difficult to identify (in the Investigations). And from there, employing her own definitive criterion of grammar, she has sought grammatical flexibility to manoeuvre against her Wittgensteinian opponents. Critically, and although being criticised²⁵⁶ for not providing detailed argument, she has promoted what is termed here an instability in Wittgenstein's

²⁵⁶ Scott M Religion Within The Limits of Language Alone: Wittgenstein on Philosophy and Religion www.arsdisputandi.org
description/rule distinction in order to allow religious locutions to be both language-
game rules and descriptions of reality. For McCutcheon (RWLLA 106):

... the distinction between rule and empirical proposition is fluid enough in actual practice to eradicate a hard and fast distinction ...

In essence, McCutcheon promotes ‘fluidity’ in the description/rule distinction in order to allow a rule locution to be also a description. McCutcheon would advocate that "God is love" is both a language-game rule and truth-apt description’ is a rule of grammar. So McCutcheon’s essential question for Phillips (and similar Wittgensteinians) at this point is whether and to what extent they may have mistaken Wittgenstein over grammar. Her argument that they are mistaken depends, as already noted, upon their particular maintenance of the distinction between language-game rules and truths about the world.

It was noted in chapter 2 that McCutcheon has pointed out (RWLLA 59), citing FAF 218, that:

D Z Phillips makes the distinction explicit when he tells us, for example, that "doctrinal statements ... give us rules for the use of the word ‘God’ and that the claim ‘God is love’ may mislead us into thinking that it is a descriptive statement rather than a rule for the use of the word ‘God’ ".

What, then, might be said of the locution ‘God is love’? Here, provided that religion is characterised by recognised language-games, the locution certainly may be understood grammatically as a rule for the use of what Phillips (RHC 95) calls its ‘grammatical objects’. That is, the sentence is not only coherent in English, it lays down a religious language-game rule; from an orthodox perspective, in this case it certainly does. But this locution is also conventionally understood by theism to be truth-apt as a description of God.

The essential difference, then, between Phillips and ‘friends’ like McCutcheon over ‘God is love’ concerns Phillips’ ‘grammatical objects’: and that may be reduced to
the question whether particular ‘grammatical objects’ can be understood to refer. The question is whether locutions containing ‘God’ (like ‘God is love’) could disclose by grammar (indicate by rule) that they are both truth-apt and rule-specifying in principle, or only rule-specifying for the language-game. Allowing that the distinction as employed by Phillips is Wittgensteinian, that still leaves the question whether Wittgenstein might ultimately have allowed both elements of the distinction to apply in regard to many religious statements. Again, these are questions critical to the argument of chapter 6 below. They are significant because they provoke a discussion of the ways in which Wittgenstein has been understood, and remains contentious, in philosophy of religion.

So, McCutcheon (RWLLA 59, 60, 109, 110) is deeply at odds here with Phillips within Wittgensteinianism. Her thesis amounts to the claim that, while Wittgenstein provided the description/rule distinction, it should not always be drawn immutably as an either/or choice (which gives grounds for a rejection of Phillips). So, while (i) both are Wittgensteinian in orientation, (ii) each in diversely particular ways may be considered disposed towards religion, and (iii) they concur in the significance of the description/rule distinction, Phillips and McCutcheon would not agree about its legitimate exploitation. Phillips cannot accept that ‘God is love’ is a description; for him it is a ‘confession of faith’ (FAF 146) or a ‘grammatical rule in dogmatics’ (RHC 95). And McCutcheon must believe that ‘God’ is a referential term permitting description when used in appropriate locutions.

Critically, however, for her book McCutcheon was unable to comment upon Phillips’ final treatment of Feuerbach given that both McCutcheon’s book and Phillips’ argument (RHC 87ff) were published in the same year (2001). So the situation remains that, whatever instability is identified in the description/rule distinction, if Phillips can summon an argument against taking various religious locutions as descriptions then (where appropriate) the only alternative is to consider them rules simpliciter. McCutcheon (RWLLA 104-107) sought scope to embrace locutions like ‘God is love’ as both description and rule. Were Phillips

257 Phillips (FAF 218); and McCutcheon (59, 109).
right about Feuerbach's argument (yet to be assessed) concerning the inability of such a religious locution to be a description, however, then McCutcheon is not entitled to 'God is love' as a description. Pursuant to the description/rule distinction, rule *simpliciter* would be the only remaining alternative. And it would hardly amount to question-begging to choose it. Crucially, McCutcheon's appeal to basicality to identify certain religious locutions as descriptions only continues viable provided that Feuerbach's argument dismissing divine reality can be resisted. (In chapter 6 this thesis takes issue with Feuerbach.)

With the benefit of that summary of McCutcheon, and to complete this particular account of Wittgensteinian philosophy of religion as it bears on 'God is love', we may now turn to her argument in support of the position promoted by Wittgensteinian 'friends': that relying on 'basicity' for comprehending 'God is love' as description. Analysis of Phillips (and coincidental criticism of 'friends' like McCutcheon) then may be developed in the remainder of the thesis. Critically, however, McCutcheon cannot be conceded her view of the basicality of locutions like 'God is love' (*qua* description) unless Phillips' case (ultimately relying on Feuerbach) against 'God' as a descriptive term can be dismissed. That is, and to foreshadow chapter 7 below, showing the possibility of description is not enough if, in the case of locutions about God, 'God' cannot refer.

In this regard some, including McCutcheon (RWLLA 113-114, 117, 119-120), have exploited what they regard as Wittgensteinian foundationalism. Now, according to Phillips (FAF xvi), one form of theological foundationalism is presented by 'cognitivist' theories of religious belief:

> Such theories see theologies as descriptions of a divine object to which they refer. Competing theologies are competing descriptions, on this view.

Foundationalism is a theory of epistemic justification. It maintains that knowledge of reality can be justified by resting upon a foundation of indubitable belief. For example, and understandably, beliefs about sense experience have been considered 'basic' in the foundational structure. And in McCutcheon's conception...
(RWLLA 124), religious locutions similarly enjoy a 'basicality' not requiring justification. (Alternatively, the 'basicality' itself provides the justification.) In essence, McCutcheon considered that it was desirable to establish an epistemology in which the same locution can be normative (qua rule) yet be truth-apt (qua description). She searched for it in 'basicality'.

This reliance upon 'basicality' requires explanation. And as already noted, McCutcheon (RWLLA 140) has promoted an isomorphism: the view that talk about words and talk about objects (provided that there are such objects) can 'come to the same thing' (utilising a phrase that had been employed by Debra Aidun\(^\text{258}\)). McCutcheon's argument depends in part upon the following claim (RWLLA 110, 111): while 'religious language' cannot be explained or justified by 'appealing' to a divine being (because of our entrapment within language), this does not mean that such language cannot refer to a divine being. McCutcheon's position (RWLLA 111) is:

I may accept that the meaning of religious language cannot be explained or justified by appealing to a divine being which the language purports to be about because I am trapped within the meaning through which I think this divine being's purported existence. ... to think I am doing anything more than this is to be deceived by the imagination. This does not mean, however, that my language can't refer to a divine being.

McCutcheon (RWLLA 15) would claim to have established that Wittgenstein allows for different limits of application of language. So, the objective here seems to be to discover the ways in which 'religious language' might be 'basic' in its particular application. McCutcheon's proposal is that it is 'basic' as both rule and description. Notably, however, there is a problematic ambiguity immediately apparent here in McCutcheon. McCutcheon's ambiguity concerns the question whether, even where 'basic', a locution may be both rule and description simultaneously. To

\(^{258}\) Aidun D 'Wittgenstein on Grammatical Propositions' op.cit., p.144.
repeat, McCutcheon's (purportedly Wittgensteinian) position claims that there is nothing intrinsic to 'basic' propositions that denies them truth-aptness. But where normative in grammar, they cannot be spoken of as either true or false. This despite the fact that, from a description perspective, the possibility of their being either true or false is real.

What, then, does the Wittgensteinian corpus allow? Consistently with the 1938 Wittgenstein (LC 57) it might be noted, McCutcheon considers (RWLLA 123) that theists are entitled to certainty about religious locutions even although, and perhaps inconsistently with the same 1938 Wittgenstein (LC 57), religious locutions are truth-apt (and may be false). According to McCutcheon (RWLLA 124), Wittgenstein should be understood to advocate (as does Phillips) that, in religion, 'basic' propositions cannot be wrong as rules in a language-game; but Wittgenstein also should be taken to advocate against Phillips that 'basic' propositions can be true or false as statements about the world. (These Wittgensteinian prescriptions emphasise the need for an appropriate locution to be taken sequentially as rule and description.) Nevertheless, for McCutcheon (RWLLA 122, 123, 140) Wittgenstein conceded a 'gap' in 'religious language' between meaning and reality which the 'Neo-Wittgensteinians' do not allow; they 'conflate' reality and meaning, to reality's cost. McCutcheon (RWLLA 61) suggests that the distinction promoted by Wittgenstein between language-game rules and truths about the world is like his 'Tractarian propositions' which can be discarded (TLP 6.54) once the lessons have been learned. Contrary to kicking the ladder away once its work has been completed, McCutcheon (RWLLA 140) has suggested that 'Neo-Wittgensteinians' 'conflate the gap' allowed by the distinction in reducing 'religious language' to rules rather than descriptions.

Now, McCutcheon's notion of 'the gap' being conflated by 'Neo-Wittgensteinians' is quite misleading about the position taken by Phillips among her Wittgensteinian opponents. In comparison with McCutcheon's approach, a much clearer articulation of Phillips' religion would be that, in regard to 'God is love', he chose the rule alternative and, by relying on Feuerbach (as will be discussed), rejected the description alternative arising from that distinction. Further, it might be
suggested that it is contrary to the position of Wittgensteinian 'friends' for the 'gap' not to be 'conflated' in some language-game circumstances. For locutions such as 'God is love', Wittgensteinians like Phillips choose the second (rule *simpliciter*) alternative; they could not do that without a 'gap' between descriptions and rules. The question, then, concerns the identity of those who have 'conflated the gap' as McCutcheon puts it; her finger pointing may not be justified. Notably, McCutcheon (*RWLLA* 126, 134) has argued that there is no metaphysical substance in the distinction between rules of grammar and statements about reality. Wittgensteinian 'friends' of religion insist (in rejection of Phillips) upon 'God is love' as description as well as rule. If 'conflating' is understood as promoting a both/and posture, it is in the interests of the 'friends' to be capable of 'conflating the gap'. By contrast, and without a 'gap', there would be no sense in which Phillips could be understood to advocate choice of rule *simpliciter* to characterise 'God is love'. So, and the 'gap' being articulate for Wittgensteinian exploitation, Phillips has certainly not 'conflated' it; McCutcheon (relying on Aidun) has.

Indeed, the distinction's 'gap' would be necessary if particular locutions (like 'God is love'), counting as rules of the language-game, are also locutions amounting to truths about reality. Without that 'gap', where could the 'friends' be mistaken about reality? Problematically, 'God is love' may be unassailable in orthodox religion; but it might also be considered false in the wake of tsunamis (requiring in that case the denial of rule status to that unqualified locution). Explanation is required of the way in which 'basicity' might be of assistance. And McCutcheon's imprecision in regard to (simultaneous or sequential) choice between descriptions and rules must be clarified. Here, McCutcheon (*RWLLA* 123) has ventured that:

> The possibility of being mistaken does not apply to 'basic' propositions while they perform their role as 'basic' propositions. *As rules, they are the criterion for what counts as right and wrong in the game.* [emphasis added]

And, she has affirmed that:
... there is nothing intrinsic to basic propositions that denies them truth-
aptness. As grammar we cannot speak of them being either true and [sic] false. But from a non-grammatical perspective, the possibility of them being false is a real one. [emphasis added]

Without having committed herself to the point, McCutcheon needs those different perspectives to be taken sequentially. And we again resort to Wittgenstein. Seemingly, for him, if rules and empirical descriptions could 'come to the same', they do not do so simultaneously. Rather, and ultimately for Wittgenstein (OC 98):

Yet this is right: the same proposition may get treated at one time as something to test by experience, at another as a rule of testing.

In that case, for any game rule to be a candidate for description, the description/rule distinction continues relevant. Witness, locutions characterising the science of sub-atomic physics (which may not be unproblematic qua descriptions). In various contexts, the rules of the particle physics game are quite clear although the status of some locutions as descriptions is anything but perspicuous. There, the purpose of the distinction in the cause of identifying Wittgensteinian Unsinn nonsense continues. And the same should be the case for Wittgensteinians in religion. For Phillips, the distinction remains stable where 'God is love' is identified as a rule and not also a description. By contrast, as a 'friend' of religion, McCutcheon (RWLLA 61) considers herself free to kick away the distinction ladder once it has done its work on a locution. But the distinction continues to be required if rules and descriptions can 'come to the same' sequentially in a locution like 'God is love'. The description/rule distinction should remain clear in that circumstance in that the locution would require continuing characterisation both as rule and truth-apt description. In principle, that characterisation would not be possible in the absence of the distinction, or if it were stable to the point that sequential choice was not available. Accordingly, no Wittgensteinian 'friend' of religion should countenance its being kicked away. The 'friends' need it as much as does Phillips.
Simultaneous recognition of a locution as rule and description, then, should be rejected by Wittgensteinian ‘friends’. And the dispute between Wittgensteinians over rules and descriptions in regard to ‘God is love’ is whether it can be (sequentially) rule and description. There a locution can only be considered both a rule and a description where the description is believed true. False descriptions cannot be rules. But where rules may be descriptions, for McCutcheon the matter of ‘basicality’ continues. That is, for McCutcheon, on the ground of ‘basicality’ certain locutions may be considered true descriptions (and hence be rules). Here, and in regard to religious locutions, Alvin Plantinga’s position has been notable. Indeed, from the prism of Wittgensteinian philosophy of religion, two perspectives on ‘basicality’ are important for McCutcheon (RWLLA 113, 114, 124): the Wittgensteinian Phillips (whom she rejects) and the non-Wittgensteinian Plantinga (upon whom she relies in part).\footnote{259} Plantinga is a non-Wittgensteinian ‘friend’ of religion. In an early thesis\footnote{260} he maintained that belief in other minds and belief in God are epistemically the same: if one is rational, so is the other. Further, he believes that certain religious locutions are truth-apt descriptions; so he allows that they may be false. And, he does not embrace the Calvinistic Reformed orthodoxy that it is only by the grace of God that anyone can live in a believing condition.\footnote{261} In that regard, and to facilitate theistic belief, he\footnote{262} has employed contemporary modal logic and metaphysics to formulate an ontological argument for the existence of God.\footnote{263}

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textbf{260} Plantinga A \textit{God and Other Minds} 1967.
  \item \textbf{261} de Boer J ‘Reformed epistemology: three replies’ \textit{The Reformed Journal} Vol 32 April 1982, p.25.
  \item \textbf{262} Plantinga A \textit{The Nature of Necessity} 1974.
  \item \textbf{263} Honderich T (ed) \textit{The Oxford Companion to Philosophy} Oxford University Press 1995, p.683.
\end{itemize}
If Plantinga is taken as example, the Reformed tradition can be difficult to characterise. But it seems clear that it may embrace the idea that religious belief is part of ‘basic’ belief: it does not require justification but can comprise the ground of justification for other beliefs. In that version, theistic belief is ‘basic’ to the ‘noetic’ (intellectual) structure, the lack of a ‘basicity’ criterion entailing that belief in God cannot be ruled out. And Plantinga has been an advocate of that view. Nevertheless, Plantinga believes that we can only trust that our beliefs are ‘basic’: while ‘basic’ beliefs are certain, there is uncertainty about what is ‘basic’. Perhaps, what cannot be ruled out cannot be ruled in with any better confidence.

Upon that point a critical element of McCutcheon’s argument swings; her position (RWLLA 117, 124) is as follows. Proposing against Plantinga that it is not possible to mistake what is properly ‘basic’, McCutcheon’s interest is to find (beyond locutions being both rules and descriptions courtesy of ‘fluidity’ in the description/rule distinction) that such religious locutions, presumably when true (she allows truth-aptness in ‘basicity’), are ‘basic’ in the noetic structure. For McCutcheon, if ‘basic’, particular religious locutions (like ‘God is love’) that enjoy certainty qua rules might also be true qua descriptions.

Now, for McCutcheon, unless it is held that locutions can be known to be true descriptions, those language-game locutions could not be ‘basic’. In order to preserve their status as ‘basic’, then, how can it be known that a locution taken as a description (in particular a description of God) is true? There seems a significant point here on which McCutcheon is vulnerable. McCutcheon (RWLLA 117) observes that for Phillips, ‘basicity’ entails that it is not possible to mistake what is truly ‘basic’. For Phillips, in religious language-games, locutions as rules fall into that category because without the rules there would simply be no game. But for McCutcheon following Plantinga, what is ‘basic’ is true where she would admit descriptions to that category. It is one thing to maintain that certain beliefs are ‘basic’ beliefs; in this context, for McCutcheon rules would be certain qua rules and

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265 Although she does not say so, here McCutcheon could refer to FAF 36.
descriptions truth-apt because true. But it is entirely another to know that they are ‘basic’. And unless it can be known that beliefs are ‘basic’, it seems reasonable to propose that ‘basicality’ loses its significance. There McCutcheon’s response might claim with Phillips that the status of ‘basicality’ cannot be bestowed in error; certainty prevails about that status. Phillips is secure here by way of recognising religious locutions, *qua* rules, as ‘basic’. But, to repeat, how can it be known with certainty (as McCutcheon’s idea of ‘basicality’ requires) not only that a game rule is a rule but that a description is true? Indeed, how could this be known *in religion*? It is little wonder that suggestions have emerged from within the Reformed tradition that classic foundationalism and the ‘basicality’ of religious locutions in a foundational *schema* should be rejected.\(^{266}\)

Here Plantinga is not exposed as McCutcheon is. It might be observed that there is a difficulty in claims of ‘basicality’ if (as McCutcheon maintains) the opinion that a belief (including description) is ‘basic’ cannot be in error. She must claim to know what is true. By contrast, for Plantinga, ‘basicality’ claims are not merely competing with contradictory claims made by others, they are as tentative as other similarly truth-apt beliefs. Significantly, Phillips does not suffer this exposure because he does not regard religious locutions as true *qua* description. He only claims to know that a locution is a rule of a language-game. McCutcheon among Wittgensteinian ‘friends’, by contrast, has a much more ambitious case to argue if she is to rely on ‘basicality’. For McCutcheon among the ‘friends’, descriptions of God are not only ‘basic’. In order to be taken as rules, they are true (*qua* description) and known to be so.

**Summary**

Wittgenstein’s profound influence on philosophy of religion has been discussed here in anticipation of criticism of Phillips’ position. And Wittgensteinianism has been exposed to argument that would aspire to discredit it *tout court*. In that

regard, however, Searle has not succeeded against Phillips by rejecting Phillips' Wittgensteinianism concerning the language-game of prayer. Against Searle it has been shown from a Wittgensteinian perspective that the significant religious language-game of prayer may not have to be 'representational' in order to be rational. Searle's identification of that 'massive' mistake in Wittgenstein being unconvincing in one religious language-game at least, the dispute continues (within Wittgensteinianism) between Phillips on the one hand and 'friends' of religion like McCutcheon on the other. Further, Wittgensteinians, including Phillips and McCutcheon, must maintain the description/rule distinction. Without that distinction the characterisation of 'God is love' as a language-game rule simpliciter is not available to Phillips. And the 'friends' of religion, like McCutcheon, could not treat that locution as both a rule and a description (believed true). Critically, without that distinction Unsinn nonsense in religion cannot be discerned by anyone.

Nevertheless, the centre of Phillips’ complaint against the ‘friends’ is that, not understanding religion, they do not appreciate what it means to talk of God. For Phillips:

If we think of the differences between what ‘finding out’ would involve ... and what is meant by ‘finding God’, there may be some point in saying that finding God is not a matter of ‘finding out’ at all; it cannot be the subject of any quasi-empirical enquiry. Finding God is a spiritual matter.

That is, and in regard to ‘God is love’, whatever else might be involved in this ‘spiritual matter’, finding God can include contemplation of a religious language-game rule. And Phillips has been able to exploit the description/rule distinction through his advocacy (RRC 3) that ‘God’ does not refer. So Phillips (RHC 95) maintained that ‘God is love’ presents ‘God’ as a ‘grammatical object’; pursuant to the description/rule distinction, the locution is a ‘grammatical rule in dogmatics’.

If Phillips is to be resisted here, it will be necessary to undermine his characterisation of ‘God is love’ as rule simpliciter. And two requirements emerge. First, and as is attempted at chapter 7, to demonstrate the in principle point that
there are circumstances where the description/rule distinction is unstable and various locutions may be characterised (sequentially) as both description and rule. And second, by refuting (again, in chapter 7) the ground on which Phillips relies to disqualify 'God is love' as a description of God. The first option was attempted by McCutcheon relying upon an argument to the conclusion that rules and descriptions can 'come to the same'. Shadowing McCutcheon, although having rejected her approach to 'basic' beliefs, it will be considered whether orthodox Wittgensteinianism should accept that rules and descriptions may 'come to the same' (sequentially). In regard to the second option, unless an argument like Feuerbach's can succeed, then Wittgensteinians might claim with McCutcheon that certain religious locutions are not disqualified as (sequentially) language-game rule and description of God pursuant to the description/rule distinction (understood as unstable).

In the interests of Wittgensteinian conversation, then, we continue with that distinction and the choice that arises from it for 'God is love'. But if Wittgenstein identified the distinction, to what purpose did he put it? McCutcheon (RWLLA 61) considers that Wittgenstein employed the distinction to undermine the legitimacy of transcendent metaphysics. If he did so, would Wittgenstein have allowed the use to which 'friends' of religion like McCutcheon have put it in endowing description status to 'God is love'? Does the distinction facilitate the recognition of that locution as truth-apt description? Or, in characterising it as rule simpliciter, is Phillips both a better Wittgensteinian than a 'friend' like McCutcheon, and more sound in his approach to metaphysics? Indeed, is Phillips justified in the attempt to relegate 'God is love' to a religious language-game similar to chess where, as Wittgenstein (P 562, 563) has assured, while the game has a point the pieces actually stand for nothing? Considering these matters as they relate to Wittgensteinian religion, and in detailed characterisation of Phillips' position, we progress to chapter 5.
CHAPTER 5
PHILLIPS and RELIGION

Introduction

As already noticed, D Z Phillips (WR x) early promoted the notion that to speak of divine reality was to talk of a kind of reality; and he subsequently argued that no single account of reality can be given. This raises the question whether, for Phillips, the kind of reality represented by talk of God can ever be the subject of description. Crucially for the concerns of this thesis, Phillips (FAF 146, 216, 218; WR 17; RRC 216; RHC 95) considered that ‘God is love’ is not a description. Phillips (FAF xvi) contrasted his position with (and rejected) theistic religious belief, the belief of the ‘friends’ of religion.

Now, while considerable reference has already been made to it, an account of Phillips’ particular religious philosophy has yet to be completed for this thesis. It was necessary first to concentrate on the major concepts that form the Wittgensteinian description/rule distinction, which is the foundation upon which Phillips’ characterisation of ‘God is love’ has rested. But the stage has now been reached at which the sophistication of Phillips’ own views can be more thoroughly addressed. That is the agenda of this chapter, and it is pursued initially by considering Phillips’ criticism of a particular theory of religion: that presented by

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267 PI 124.
Cambridge philosopher R B Braithwaite (1900-90). It is here submitted that Phillips’ philosophy of religion can be described, if not most readily explained, by comparing it with that offered by Braithwaite. Indeed, Phillips himself did just that.

Having better understood Phillips’ position by comparison with that offered by Braithwaite, this chapter then proceeds to consider the specific issue of the idea of God for Phillips. Of course, the consideration of all these matters continues with the benefit of Wittgenstein’s description/rule distinction.

Braithwaite’s Religious Belief

Locutions other than description are an acknowledged and agreed part of the linguistic and literary landscape. And in religion there is significant contention about the status of many locutions, including faith stories.

For A J Ayer the ground of this contention was clear. Notably, in *Language, Truth and Logic* (1936), and granted a positivist approach to truth, Ayer argued:

... we offer the theist the same comfort as we gave to the moralist. His assertions cannot possibly be valid, but they cannot be invalid either. As he says nothing at all about the world, he cannot justly be accused of saying

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270 R B Braithwaite, Fellow of Kings (1924-90) and Knightbridge Professor of Moral Philosophy in the University of Cambridge (1953-67), is reported to have come to Christian faith as an adult. His conversion was a matter of notoriety as was his baptism at King’s College Chapel where ‘practically everybody who was anybody in Cambridge was there, except Wittgenstein’: Mehta V *The New Theologian* Penguin Middlesex 1965, p.80. Possible disinterest aside, there is an explanation for Wittgenstein’s purported absence. Braithwaite was baptised on 29 May 1948, which followed Wittgenstein’s resignation of his Chair in late 1947. Thereafter, Wittgenstein’s health began to deteriorate, his travels to Ireland and America notwithstanding. Notably, Wittgenstein is considered to have completed the *Investigations* in Dublin in 1948: Kenny A *Wittgenstein* Allen Lane The Penguin Press 1973, p.12; and he may have been in Ireland at the time when Braithwaite was baptised. (I am indebted to the Dean of Kings for advice on aspects of this matter: email 20 September 2006.)
anything false, or anything for which he has insufficient grounds. It is only when the theist claims that in asserting the existence of a transcendental god he is expressing a genuine proposition that we are entitled to disagree with him.²⁷¹

For his part, continuing in the tradition of British empiricism, but distinctively as a religious believer, Braithwaite pursued a similar conviction. In the mid-1950s, Braithwaite made an important and controversial contribution to the debate. And in that it received sustained notice (1965 through 1988) by Phillips, Braithwaite's approach remains of significance in the context of describing Phillips' position. Indeed, in its more contemporary characterisation (by J L Mackie and T A Roberts), Braithwaite's essential argument remained a subject of consideration by Phillips (RHC 64) as late as 2001.

A committed empiricist in philosophy of science, Braithwaite²⁷² adopted a strongly Humean approach to laws of nature: that laws of nature present an account of mere repetition of events. And, Phillips (RWE 22; RHC 55) has noted, the fundamental claim of Hume's Dialogues (with which Braithwaite would concur) is that it is not possible to infer anything about God from the observed world. Although having his differences with Hume, Phillips also subscribed to that conclusion. But what did Braithwaite argue that was of such continuing interest to Phillips?

In his provocative 1955 lecture An Empiricist's View of the Nature of Religious Belief, Braithwaite expressed a theory of religious (statements of) belief consequent upon scientific empiricism.²⁷³ In that lecture, Braithwaite considered whether religious statements fall into three possible classes recognised by

empiricism: empirical statements that are known by direct observation, scientific hypotheses refutable by experience, or statements that are logically necessary. Religious locutions not presenting observable properties of God, nor being refutable, are not verifiable/falsifiable by standard methods. Nor are they meaningful in terms of expressions of logical necessity. For Braithwaite in the 1950s, then, religious locutions did not present propositions understood as ‘empirical’.  

Further, Braithwaite observed that religious statements are similar to moral statements because neither is verifiable. But both religious and moral statements certainly have a use. This left Braithwaite with the particular quandary:

The kernel for an empiricist of the problem of the nature of religious belief is to explain, in empirical terms, how a religious statement is used by a man who asserts it in order to express his religious conviction.

Responding to his own formulated difficulty, and exploiting the observed similarity between religious and moral assertions, Braithwaite proposed their ‘assimilation’. Having noted that both religious and moral statements are unverifiable, Braithwaite proposed that religious assertions are actually used as moral assertions. Like Hume, Braithwaite asserted that God is not known; so in this characterisation of his proposal, religious statements are used significantly as moral assertion by believers. Nevertheless, their use is exposed to empirical inquiry. In clear contrast with Wittgenstein (for example, at Pi 109, 251, 340, 464), that a statement is used in a particular way was always a straightforward empirical matter for Braithwaite’s ordinary language approach.

275 Braithwaite R B op.cit., p.77.
276 Braithwaite R B op.cit., pp.77-78.
277 Braithwaite R B op.cit., pp.80, 82.
278 Braithwaite R B op.cit., p.78. Cf: RWE 141.
279 Braithwaite R B op.cit., p.77.
So, Braithwaite proposed that religious assertions are not verifiable/falsifiable; indeed, they are conative (provocative of action) rather than strictly emotive.\textsuperscript{280} Further, religious assertions are known to be 'empirical' by virtue of their (moral suasion) use although those who use such 'empirical' assertions (perhaps including the Creation and Last Judgement stories) need not believe that the stories themselves do (or will) correspond with empirical fact. Indeed, for Braithwaite religious stories are properly understood as 'assimilated' with assertions of moral intention; and (while not necessarily being emotive) religious assertions cause moral intention in believers.

Braithwaite's philosophy of religion, then, was robust. But, what account might be given of him as ethical theorist? Braithwaite proposed the 'assimilation' of religious and moral assertions; and if religious assertions are not truth-apt, then neither are the 'assimilated' ethical assertions. If, by some contortion 'assimilated' assertions could withstand that identification, that would require an eccentric meaning for 'assimilation' which conventionally has 'absorption', 'incorporation' and 'integration' as synonyms. So, consequent upon his particular ('assimilation') position, Braithwaite's position in ethics mirrored (by 'assimilation') that for religion.

**Phillips' Interest in Braithwaite**

That said, Phillips' interest in Braithwaite invites explanation. What was the precise point of that interest? Further, what provoked Phillips' notice of an empiricist who 'assimilated' religious locutions with moral assertions? And what sustained Phillips' extended criticism of the argument, in two forms, over more than thirty-five (1965-2001) years? In that they centre on Phillips' position, responses to these questions require a more complete description of Braithwaite's argument for the 'assimilation' of religious and moral assertions.

\textsuperscript{280} Braithwaite R B op.cit., p.78.
Braithwaite tarred both religious and moral assertions with the same brush in noting that they were both 'unverifiable' (embracing both verification and falsification) by standard methods. And Braithwaite (referencing *PI* 340, 353, 559, 560) acknowledged that his first move drew upon Wittgenstein. Further, resonating with *PI* 43, although not referencing so, Braithwaite emphasised (through repetition):

> The meaning of any statement, then, will be taken as being given by the way it is used.

Braithwaite's argument was that religious assertions are used as moral assertions. Note that Braithwaite's 'assimilation' is much more like identification of religious with moral assertions rather than comparison of likeness. The consequence is, beyond the separation of empirical from non-empirical statements, not to reveal similarities between kinds of locutions, but to identify religious assertions with moral assertions:

> ... it is the intention to behave which constitutes what is known as religious conviction.

On what point, then, did Phillips first react to Braithwaite? Phillips' initial (1965) reference to Braithwaite was provoked in the context of a consideration (*CP* 68) of the phenomenon of confession. There Phillips was concerned to retain an account from religion of the distinction between (divine) grace and (human) moral endeavour. And, critically, it depended upon Phillips' particular support for Wittgenstein's advocacy (*PI* 124) of leaving everything as it is. In *The Concept of Prayer* Phillips (*CP* 1) explained Wittgenstein in these terms:

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281 Braithwaite R B *op.cit.*, p.77.
282 Braithwaite R B *op.cit.*, p.77. Cf: Braithwaite R B *op.cit.*, p.89 and *PI* 43: '... the meaning of a word is its use in the language.'
283 Braithwaite R B *op.cit.*, p.78.
284 Braithwaite R B *op.cit.*, p.80.
He is not advocating a gallup poll on people's views about religion. What he is saying is that if the philosopher wants to give an account of religion, he must pay attention to what religious believers do and say.

That requires clarification. Indeed, it is symptomatic of the methodological difficulties accompanying ordinary language philosophy because, although based on religious believers' claims, it is philosophical accounts of religion that should be at issue, not religious believers' accounts. Otherwise, what most religious believers have to say would need to be respected in philosophy. Accordingly, and if it is the presentation of a philosophical account (of religious claims) that is at issue, which philosophical account of religion should be accepted? That can only be resolved upon rigorous examination of particular accounts. And Braithwaite gave one. Nevertheless, in Phillips' estimation, Braithwaite failed to leave everything as it is in religion. Grace and moral endeavour are indissolubly distinct for religion in Phillips' estimation (CP 68); grace relates to God and moral endeavour relates to humanity:

If any sense is to be made of the grace of God, one must take account of the fact that the believer contemplates something other than himself.

For the early Phillips, any reductionism that does not maintain that fact offends the Wittgensteinian (P 124) dictum. While Phillips (RWE 140-142) later and somewhat curiously considered Braithwaite an 'unconscious' reductionist, Braithwaite's treatment of religious locutions smacks of deliberate reductionism.

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285 Cf: WR 7,8.
286 This raises the significant and intriguing problem of the relationships between religion, theology, philosophical theology and philosophy. It would be a diversion to consider the matter at this point. But notice might be taken of reflection upon it by Ninian Smart, particularly in The Phenomenon of Religion Macmillan London 1973.
287 From a broader perspective, but with reference to Braithwaite, Phillips also complained that when religious pictures 'decline', there is often no substitute for them. And the role of such pictures is trivialised when they are considered to be mere stories which serve as psychological aids. Cf: DI 77.
288 It is relevant to note an argument to the conclusion that reductionism per se need not be a sin. Cf: Nielsen K 'Some Meta-Theological Remarks About
Indeed, Phillips appears to have been provoked initially by Braithwaite's offence. Importantly, two dilemmas ultimately found their source in what Phillips (as a Wittgensteinian) considered Braithwaite's reductionism. So, what are those dilemmas and how did they emerge?

The Braithwaite and Mackie Dilemmas

The Wittgensteinian choice of critical interest to this thesis has already been introduced: 'God is love' discloses by grammar that it is either description (which, believed true, may also be a rule) or language-game rule simpliciter. Phillips, of course, while arguing for the unacceptable nature of 'God is love' as description advocated that locution to be understood as language-game rule simpliciter. The 'friends' of religion would claim that the locution embraces both description and rule. That said, in comparing his position in philosophy of religion to that adopted by Braithwaite, Phillips considered a much wider spectrum than that offered by 'God is love'. He took notice of two dilemmas articulated by Braithwaite and J L Mackie. They are purported dilemmas for Phillips because they propose exclusive and undesirable choices, or alternatives, for him. Braithwaite's dilemma, grounded in the 'assimilation' of religious with moral belief, is:

Religious beliefs are either empirical propositions or aids to moral endeavour.

And Mackie's dilemma is:

Religious locutions are either factual or metaphorical expressions.

Now, Mackie's dilemma derives from Braithwaite. And both dilemmas are relevant here because of the attention that Phillips paid to them. Accordingly, the ways in

which they arose for Phillips as a Wittgensteinian now should be described, as well as the ways in which he addressed them. Reaction to them by Phillips' opponents should also be discussed. The suggestion is that, by analysing Phillips' responses to these dilemmas, his own religion is better identified and described. We turn first to the ways in which the dilemmas became of significant interest to Phillips.

Notably, a decade following *The Concept of Prayer* (1965), Phillips provided a more extensive rejection of Braithwaite based upon additional analytic considerations. Nevertheless, Phillips continued with his theme that philosophical accounts of religion were reductionist where they leave out what cannot be left out. In his 1976 publication *Religion Without Explanation* Phillips (RWE 140) identified Braithwaite's 'unconscious reductionism' as (unintentionally) reducing religion to something which lacked some of the fundamental characteristics of religious belief. By this stage, Phillips (RWE 142) had developed more formally his characterisation of Braithwaite's position and the point of his more mature objection to Braithwaite:

> If we take the religious belief in a last judgement as our example, Braithwaite thinks that it must either be construed as an empirical proposition ... or the story of a last judgement must be seen as a psychological aid to moral endeavour.

For Phillips (RWE 142), then, here a choice was offered by Braithwaite between 'exclusive alternatives'. Indeed, a dilemma was clearly presented by Phillips' formulation, even if Phillips did not then employ the term 'dilemma': against Phillips' profound conviction about religion, Braithwaite proposed that religious beliefs are either empirical propositions or aids to moral endeavour. In avoiding the horns of Braithwaite's proffered dilemma, Phillips argued that an option (to the dilemma's horns) presented itself for consideration in any philosophically acceptable account of religious statements. Such an option does not treat the Last Judgement as a future event to which appropriate religious statements actually make reference (RWE 142,145). Indeed, Phillips had concluded (RWE 148) about the error of those he subsequently called the 'friends' of religion that:
... a notion of reference is being imported into the beliefs which is quite alien to them.

By the same token, Phillips' option did not rest upon nor understand Last Judgement assertions as a moral 'vision' (*RWE* 143). Here Phillips (*RWE* 145) introduced and relied upon the facility of Wittgensteinian grammar in an attempt to confirm his case: Braithwaite's approach tended to propose the 'assimilation' of religious statements with moral assertions through grammatical similarity (*BB* 23; *PI* 496) despite, it must be suggested, surface grammar dissimilarity.

In Wittgensteinian terms, then, Braithwaite had argued that the grammar of certain religious locutions could be assimilated with that of the grammar of ethical locutions. But for the 1976 Phillips (*RWE* 144, 164), religious beliefs being neither 'empirical' nor moral assertions are, rather, 'dogmas' or 'absolutes of faith'.

That, for Phillips, was the option that enabled avoidance of the horns of Braithwaite's dilemma. Clearly, one major issue to be addressed and resolved concerns ways of making sense of religious beliefs as 'dogmas' or 'absolutes of faith'; and that will be addressed later in this chapter. To this point, however, language-game rules identifiable as 'dogmas' or 'absolutes of faith' appeared to be Phillips' bedrock.

Late in the following decade, in his (1988) *Faith After Foundationalism*, Phillips (*FAF* 319, 320) returned to his dispute with Braithwaite in the context of a response to the challenge to choose one horn or the other of the (perhaps more sophisticated) dilemma, characterised here as Mackie's dilemma, and derived from Braithwaite: that religious locutions are either factual or metaphorical expressions. This dilemma had arisen because Mackie and Roberts recognised that Phillips

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289 Cf: Wittgenstein (*LC* 57).
290 The notion of unquestionable 'bedrock' is employed by Phillips (*RWE* 161,163; *FAF* 55); it is Wittgensteinian (*PI* 217; *OC* 498).
denied both that 'God' refers to an object and that 'God' could present a metaphor. In support of Mackie\textsuperscript{291} Roberts had argued:

If a philosopher (for example, Braithwaite) says that religious assertions are not literally true and that their function is to express a moral conviction ... Phillips says 'he has reduced religion to something which lacks some of the fundamental characteristics of religious beliefs'. ... The dilemma Phillips tries to avoid is this: Either religious assertions are factually true or they are not; if they are not factually true, then they are not true except in some metaphorical sense.\textsuperscript{292}

Mackie and Roberts, then, identified a Braithwaitean dilemma that challenged Phillips (\textit{FAF} 317, 319) and his reliance upon grammar.\textsuperscript{293} Further, in this case Phillips (\textit{FAF} 319) certainly acknowledged that he had been presented with a dilemma. In response, Phillips accepted much more clearly than in \textit{The Concept of Prayer} that religious locutions are not factual (in the sense employed by Roberts). But that does not mean that religious locutions must be metaphorical. Indeed, Phillips (\textit{FAF} 319) considered that the Mackie and Roberts dilemmas were addressed in his response to Braithwaite. Clearly, Phillips understood the metaphor horn of the Mackie and Roberts dilemmas to be moral in kind. And Phillips argued (\textit{FAF} 319), also purportedly from the grammar of religious belief (\textit{FAF} 304, 305), that Braithwaite had not taken the language of religion seriously enough in devising his dilemma's second horn:

In saying that religious stories give psychological aid to moral endeavour, Braithwaite characterises the relation between moral endeavour and the religious stories as an external one. As far as his analysis is concerned, the same psychological help could be given to the same moral endeavour by a different story.

\textsuperscript{291} Mackie J L \textit{The Miracle of Theism} Oxford University Press 1982, p.225.  
\textsuperscript{292} Roberts T A 'Crefydd a Rheswm' in \textit{Y Traethodydd} April 1984, p.77.  
\textsuperscript{293} Cf: Mackie J L \textit{The Miracle of Theism} op.cit., p.225.
Clearly, the difficulty to which Phillips is pointing concerns the nature of religion. If the same ethical outcome could have been achieved by a non-religious moral tale, then the nature of religion remained to be disclosed. So, is there no possibility of reconciliation between Braithwaite and Phillips, enabling resolution of the Mackie and Roberts dilemmas?

Importantly, despite his allusions and particular references to Wittgenstein in the lecture/article under consideration, and unlike Phillips, Braithwaite was not (overtly at least) a Wittgensteinian. But, from the perspective being taken in this thesis, Braithwaite might be considered to have employed his own distinction, (something like the distinction between descriptions and language-game rules) in formulating a strong empiricist view of reality, on the one hand, and an interpretation of religious locutions as moral intentions on the other. (That is, Braithwaite's 'assimilation' of religious and ethical assertions parallels Phillips' 'assimilation' of 'God is love' with language-game rules.)

Braithwaite might be read in Wittgensteinian terms, then, only should he allow moral intentions expressed as religious locutions to be language-game rules in similar manner to that in which Phillips (CP 13) argued for locutions concerning God to be understood in terms of rules disclosed by grammar. Were this the case, the possibility might emerge that (a suitably understood) Braithwaite and Phillips be reconciled through recognition of the disclosures of grammar. The rules disclosed might be the particular kind of rules that characterise religious (rather than strictly ethical) language-games. For his part Phillips claimed that religious locutions are 'true' as rules of religious language-games and for Braithwaite religious locutions are actually ethical assertions (perhaps as rules for a religio-ethical game). The difficulty here is that, not being Wittgensteinian, Braithwaite claimed that expressions of moral intention are 'empirical' (rather than grammatical), the use to which a locution is put always being clear to Braithwaite but not Wittgenstein (PI 251 etc).
Phillips' Critique of Braithwaite

Now that Phillips' interest in Braithwaite has been articulated by virtue of these dilemmas, more can be said about Phillips' critique.

Of course, Phillips pleaded his own cause. Importantly, in so doing, he consistently identified his position to be different from that adopted by Braithwaite. That is, in contrast with his conception of Braithwaite’s approach, Phillips promoted a philosophy of religion purportedly based on the Wittgensteinian dictum (*PI* 124) to leave everything as it is. Phillips' conception of religion, so that religion may be left as it is, is critical here. So, and to continue, what kind of philosophy of religion did Phillips reject by criticising Braithwaite? What can be said precisely about Phillips' own approach? And what are the religious consequences of Phillips' particular position? As a preliminary, it may be useful to notice some relevant Wittgensteinian perspectives and to identify what Phillips did not do in his treatment of Braithwaite.

Wittgensteinian Perspectives

It is being suggested here that in order better to articulate the view to which Phillips became committed, it is important to compare his philosophy of religion with that proposed by Braithwaite. This is the case largely because, as already noted, from the outset Phillips himself did precisely that. In *The Concept of Prayer* (*CP* 68) Phillips described Braithwaite’s account of religious belief as 'hopelessly inadequate':

> According to Braithwaite, Christian belief is simply a matter of resolving to lead an agapeistic [divine love] way of life; resolution is all.

Notably, Braithwaite’s agapeistic account of religious belief was cited with approval by an English bishop, the notorious Robinson J A T *Honest to God* SCM London 1963, p.128. But Phillips (*WR* 34) made only tangential reference to 'the late Bishop of Woolwich'.

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Notably, Phillips emphasised Braithwaite's inclusion of moral resolution. This is important in the face of C B Martin's observation that:

The man who says, "I know what I ought to do here, and I intend, to the best of my ability, to avoid doing it," does not obviously contradict himself.

Martin's point would seem to contradict Braithwaite's idea that resolution is all. That is, resolution can be made contrary to moral intuition. In which case, the intuition may trump the resolution from an ethical perspective. Indeed, in 1965 at least, Phillips was unimpressed by Braithwaite's emphasis on ethical resolution perhaps because on its own resolution does not necessarily amount to much. As Martin had made clear in 1959, moral resolution may not be acted upon. Further, for Phillips, the identification of religious belief with moral resolution is reductionist: reliance upon ethical resolution would be in reduction of the grammar disclosed by religious locutions. Where would lie the scope for dogma (LC 57; RWE 144)? That asked, and given Braithwaite's significance for Phillips, a comprehensive account of Phillips' criticism is necessary. First, however, another comment about Wittgensteinian doctrine.

As already noticed, according to the later Wittgenstein (PI 251), to mistake grammar (or, rules for locution use) for empirical statements is a blunder. And the earlier Wittgenstein certainly is recorded to have cautioned against mistaking ethical prescriptions for locutions like those of science:

Ethics so far as it springs from the desire to say something about the meaning of life, the absolute good, the absolute valuable, can be no science.

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295 Cf: Braithwaite R B op.cit., pp.78,79.
297 'Blunder' being Wittgensteinian terminology: see LC 59. For an example of Phillips following Wittgenstein on 'blunder', see RWE 108, 111.
Critically, here Wittgenstein went on to assert about ethics:

What it [ethics] says does not add to our knowledge in any sense.\(^{298}\)

This raises a question about Wittgenstein’s developing belief that moral assertions should be properly understood as language-game rules disclosed by grammar (in the same way in which Phillips took Wittgenstein to allow for the identification of a locution like ‘God is love’ with a rule of grammar). Certainly, the ‘Lecture on Ethics’ is believed to have been delivered by December 1930\(^{299}\) and grammar, having been mentioned in the *Tractatus* (3.325), was in more comprehensive play for Wittgenstein by the *Blue Book* (*BB* 1, 19, 26-27, 135) in 1933. Whatever the stage of development of grammar, before 1931 Wittgenstein is recorded as advocating that ethical judgements (concerning absolute value) be acknowledged as performing an entirely different function from statements of facts:

Now what I wish to contend is that, although all judgements of relative value can be shown to be mere statements of facts, no statement of fact can ever be, or imply, a judgement of absolute value.\(^{300}\)

So, if ‘empirical’ statements must be separated from grammatical, and ‘empirical’ from judgements of absolute value (both ethical and religious) then, both ethical and religious locutions might remain identifiable with language-game rules disclosed by grammar.\(^{301}\) The question is whether, Wittgensteinian warrant being


\(^{299}\) Note by the Editors in ‘Wittgenstein’s Lecture on Ethics’ *The Philosophical Review* Vol 74 No1 (Jan 1965), p.3.

\(^{300}\) Wittgenstein L ‘Wittgenstein’s Lecture on Ethics’ op.cit., p.6.

\(^{301}\) In the *Philosophical Investigations* Wittgenstein exploited the distinction between empirical and grammatical propositions by employing grammar in the analysis of mathematics and psychology; the task of applying grammar similarly in ethics and religion remained. (Of course, in the application of grammar to religion Phillips discovered his vocation.) Cf: Baker G P and
established for the separation of 'empirical' statements from religious statements and other judgements of absolute value, religious and ethical assertions nevertheless can be 'assimilated' (as Braithwaite would have it).

Importantly, in the context of the debate between Braithwaite and Phillips, the suggestion that religious locutions 'assimilate' with moral assertions (as language-game rules) continues at this stage of this discussion. Further, and to Braithwaite's apparent comfort, Wittgenstein (in 1929/30) argued that ethics, at least, concerned 'absolute' not 'relative' value. Of course, if ethics is about 'absolute' value and can be 'assimilated' with religion, then religion would also be 'absolute' in those terms. But the rejection of Braithwaite's 'assimilation' precluded the option of that sort of argument for Phillips. And this raises an issue concerning what Phillips did not do in his (Wittgensteinian) response to Braithwaite.

What Phillips Did Not Do

In considering what Phillips did not do in his responses to Braithwaite, two matters are relevant.

First, in indicating (by 1976) that he had identified that the difficulty presented by Braithwaite was a dilemma (but without then employing that term), Phillips did not dispute the empiricist ground of the first (factual truth) horn. Nevertheless, by the time (1988) that he had published his recognition of the dilemma raised by Braithwaite, Phillips continued with the conviction that religious locutions were not like empirical fact. Problematically here, it has been suggested that Phillips (perhaps like Wittgenstein) consistently revealed a tendency to allow empiricist

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Indeed, acceptance of the Humean assault on religious belief was the founding premise of Phillips D Z  *Religion and Friendly Fire*  Ashgate Aldershot 2004.

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criteria for the identification of (object) reality. Whatever is the case in that regard, Phillips certainly argued that the first horns of both Braithwaite's dilemma and Mackie's dilemma were unacceptable.

Second, attention is drawn to the ways in which the second horn of each dilemma challenged Phillips. Whether or not Phillips elided over a criterion of factual propositions, he maintained that religious locutions could not be factual in the empirical sense. If he were to avoid Braithwaite (as well as Mackie and Roberts) Phillips needed an option in avoidance of characterising religious locutions as ethical (because metaphorical) statements pursuant to the second horns of these dilemmas. Notably, at least one option to those horns was clearly available: by our blik we decide the status of purported explanations of locutions, either factual or ethical. So, what are blik? R M Hare's notion now will be explained.

Although Phillips (CP 94, 95) was aware of the (1950-51) rejoinder by Richard Hare to Anthony Flew's 1950s falsificationalist credo, Phillips did not support Hare in his exchange with Flew about John Wisdom's garden allegory. Relying upon a falsificationalist criterion of substantive difference should there be any meaning in a

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303 Phillips D Z 'Philosophy, Theology and the Reality of God' in The Philosophical Quarterly Vol 13 1963, reproduced in WR 2: 'When the positivist claims that there is no God because God cannot be located, the believer does not object on the grounds that the investigation has not been thorough enough, but on the grounds that the investigation fails to understand the grammar of what is being investigated – namely, the reality of God'. That is certainly the case: for theists, the grammar of 'God' might embrace objecthood understood beyond empirical scrutiny. Compare with Scott M and Moore A 'Can theological realism be refuted?' Religious Studies Dec 1997: 'Phillips does seem to advocate a variety of positivism which declares a statement to be vacuous if its truth cannot be verified by publicly observable evidence ... '; and comment about Phillips' adherence to empiricist conceptions of reality in Religion and the Hermeneutics of Contemplation reviewed by Byrne P in Religious Studies 38:4 December 2002, p.500: 'Phillips's endorsement of Feuerbach’s contention that 'God' cannot refer to a metaphysical subject appears to be based firmly on the equation of real subjects with empirical subjects'.

competing hypothesis, Wisdom had proposed that if the effect of a gardener on a garden could not be detected, then nothing was contributed by the invisible gardener (theistic) hypothesis. In Basil Mitchell’s account, a dilemma was presented by Flew:

Either theism is meaningless because unfalsifiable, or it is meaningful but in fact falsified.\textsuperscript{305}

Hare, however, had proposed an option in avoidance of that dilemma’s horns. By employing the notion of bliks Hare attempted to demonstrate that there was substantive meaning in contexts of competing hypotheses even where there was no possibility of a determining test: by our bliks we decide what is and is not an explanation. And religious locutions functioning as bliks have three consequences: first, they do not assert anything about empirical fact, so are neither verifiable nor falsifiable; but, second, they nevertheless confer a certain kind of behaviour; and, third, are justifiable.\textsuperscript{306}

Notably, Phillips could have appropriated the notion of bliks in characterising religious locutions in the ways in which he wished to present his perspicuous representations. This he could have exploited as an option for resolving the dilemmas of Braithwaite, Mackie and Roberts: by our bliks we can rule out a locution as description (or expression of fact), but represent the locution as a rule simpliciter. Phillips did not articulate his reasons for not finding Hare’s option attractive. Nevertheless, it might be asked, why was not Hare’s objective seductive to Phillips, certainly in the mid-1960s? And what remained Phillips’ tactic? If the dilemmas posed by Braithwaite, Mackie and Roberts were to be avoided, the horns of those dilemmas being unacceptable in their various ways, Phillips would need to identify an option for avoiding each of the dilemmas’ horns. That is, for Phillips,


religion discloses a different grammar. Beyond his early response to Braithwaite, at least, over time Phillips sustained that position. We can turn now to adjudication.

The Early Phillips (from mid-1960s)

Now, Braithwaite had submitted that religious belief, such as that concerning the Last Judgement, must not be taken as 'empirical'. Because he considered it an agapeistic aid to moral endeavour, he did not allow that religious belief could be (empirically) factual, as in the dawning of the day of Last Judgement. For Phillips, however, and Braithwaite's first horn being unacceptable, Braithwaite's second horn (concerning moral resolution) results in a reductionist modification of religion.\(^{307}\) Indeed, it was in this regard that the early Phillips (CP 68) argued for recognition of a difference between grace and moral striving.\(^{308}\) Through moral striving, the individual seeks self-improvement. By contrast, through grace and by confession (CP 67), the limits of moral self-improvement are recognised and the individual, nevertheless, is able to continue through life in peace; for Phillips (CP 68):

... the very reason behind the believer's dependence on God is the recognition of the limits of moral resolution. One cannot resolve to be the kind of person one would like to be; but we do decide to be the people we are.

\(^{307}\) Similarly, Phillips attempted to demonstrate that John Wisdom's notion of God was inadequate; see Phillips D Z. 'Wisdom's Gods' in *The Philosophical Quarterly* Vol 19 No 74 January 1969, pp.24ff.

\(^{308}\) This could be understood to be consistent with, or parallel to, Phillips' reading of Wittgenstein's distinction (*PI* 251) concerning empirical and grammatical propositions. But it will be submitted that Phillips' later complaint lies in Braithwaite's failure to recognise the particular character of divine reality that is revealed by the grammar of religious locutions.
The early Phillips considered this important for comprehending the grammar of religion. And on whatever grounds he may have chosen, Phillips' identification of a difference between divine grace and human moral striving might be granted. The point of that acknowledgement would be that religious and moral attitudes are indissolubly different; and the purported 'assimilation' of those notions is not viable. In short, for the early Phillips 'assimilation' results in reduction. (In that case the ultimate question for Braithwaite, as posed by the later Phillips, concerned whether the maintenance of such a difference undermined Braithwaite's identification of religious locutions with expressions of moral resolution because the proper apprehension of grammar precludes the acknowledgment of such religious locutions as moral imperatives.) Clearly, in order to avoid the (reductionist) second horn of Braithwaite's dilemma, Phillips would need to articulate the (religious) option beyond that proffered horn. But before addressing that matter, more should be said about the second horn.

It has already been noted that, for Phillips (*CP 68*):

> If any sense is to be made of the grace of God, one must take account of the fact that the believer contemplates something other than himself.

Did the early Phillips write this way in reference to the religious state of the believer, or was Phillips understanding 'something other than' in another way? This part of *The Concept of Prayer* might be read as allowing that Phillips (*CP 68*) was referring to more than the religious psychology of the believer. As part of Phillips' rejection of Braithwaite's reductionism, he was referring to dependence on God without whom grace would lack its contrast with moral resolution:

> ... the very reason behind the believer’s dependence on God is the recognition of the limits of moral resolution.

Whatever the reading of Phillips adopted here, this is early (1965) in Phillips' corpus. However, and somewhat awkwardly, Phillips' early treatment may have allowed (for some) the impression that religious locutions aspire to the
contemplation of God qua existent. Certainly, in The Concept of Prayer, Phillips' position is provocative in this regard (CP 70, 71):

The spirit of God which one is asking for in the prayer of confession cannot be obtained by endeavour.

At this stage, then, it may be understandable that Flew noted a ‘confusion’ in Phillips' approach. That said, Phillips' refutation of Braithwaite was attempted by demonstrating the religious reductionism in the second horn (aids to moral endeavour) of Braithwaite's dilemma. The point there is that proper regard to the grammar of religious locutions will disclose religion rather than (merely) ethics. Importantly, the outcome is that allowance is made for contemplating ‘the spirit of God’. So what should be concluded about Phillips at this early stage of his work? Clearly, in the early 1960s Phillips seems to have been in the developmental stages of his position. If Phillips were accepted there, then Braithwaite's conclusion (compelling choice of the second horn of Braithwaite's dilemma) would be avoidable but Phillips must explain his 'confusion' identified by Flew. However, the 'confusion' on this point apparent to Flew in the early Phillips is not apparent in Phillips' more mature consideration. What, then, was the argument of the later Phillips? The later (1976) suggestion by Phillips, read with the benefit of the treatment given grammar in this thesis, is that the proper application of grammar

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310 Flew A. Book Review of The Concept of Prayer in The Philosophical Quarterly Vol 17, No 66 January 1967, pp.91, 92: ‘... he [Phillips] is also and comprehensively reluctant to make a clean and open break with all traditional ideas involving the notion that there are true, and false, religious doctrines ... ’. That confusion may relate to the dilemma said by Mackie and Roberts to confront Phillips: see RHC 64.

311 Perhaps, without making reference to it, Phillips had revised his argument with the benefit of Flew's criticism (which Phillips must have read).
indicates a distinction between religious and strictly ethical locutions; they may not (or must not) be 'assimilated' as Braithwaite would have it.

The Later Phillips (from mid-1970s)

To resume on the question of description in religion, it might be noted that in Religion Without Explanation (1976) Phillips rejected criticism of (the by then quite dated) Braithwaite by those Phillips later termed the 'friends' of religion. Contrary to Phillips' approach, such criticism promotes amendment of the first horn of Braithwaite's dilemma. That is, the later Phillips (RWE 145) characterised certain criticism of Braithwaite as prescribing the referential character of religious locutions. Nevertheless, for Phillips:

   Philosophy of religion has suffered from this nest of grammatical confusions.

In Phillips' 1976 submission, then, resolution of Braithwaite's dilemma by the (first horn) alternative of appealing to the referential use of religious locutions should be rejected on the ground that such locution use does not make grammatical sense. In that claim, at least, Phillips was much more clear in 1976 than in 1965. Nevertheless, for Braithwaite, mention of Last Judgement is to be considered like mention of Creation: such religious assertions cannot be accepted as empirical statements. Indeed, as Flew emphasised, to accept them as empirical risks their factual falsehood; whereas, for Braithwaite at least, to regard them as moral encouragement preserves their invulnerable (because unfalsifiable) religious status. For his part, the essence of Phillips' 1976 criticism (RWE 142) was that Braithwaite believed that religious assertions must be considered either empirical statements about a certain kind of event or psychological aids to moral endeavour. This Phillips continued to reject (RWE 143) on the ground that it is reductionist:

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312 Braithwaite R M op.cit., p.86.
Because he [Braithwaite] shares the same conception of truth and falsity as the philosophers he disagrees with, he cannot call the religious stories true or false. He simply speaks of them as psychologically efficacious in supporting moral conduct. Braithwaite does not realise that in these religious beliefs, the grammar of ‘belief’ and ‘truth’ is not the same as in the case of empirical propositions or the prediction of future events.

Nevertheless, in regard to the first horn of Braithwaite’s dilemma, for Phillips by 1976 Braithwaite was at least singing from an approved hymn book; for Phillips, as for Braithwaite, the argument was about the dilemma’s second horn. And it is here that Phillips, in considering that Braithwaite was off tune, drew a distinction between conscious and unconscious reductionism. He (RWE 142) graciously identified Braithwaite as an unconscious reductionist. Whatever Braithwaite’s intentions, and Phillips’ identification of them, the point at issue is the validity of Braithwaite’s treatment of religious locutions as moral resolution. Crucially, the suggestion from Phillips is that reductionism is a grammatical mistake: Phillips, with the strong implication that he was not similarly reductionist, did not approve of Braithwaite’s lapse. Accordingly, from RWE 143-145 at least, what might be expected from (the later) Phillips by way of nominating his substantive difference from Braithwaite would swing upon the proper application of grammar. That is, where grammar is properly (therapeutically) employed, certain religious locutions would be identifiable as ‘dogmas’ or ‘absolutes of faith’ (RWE 144, 164) rather than assertions of moral resolution. So Phillips would advocate that his option be preferred to Braithwaite’s (reductionist) second horn. Religious locutions, for Phillips, may be ‘assimilated’ (to employ Braithwaite’s term) with language-game ‘dogma’ but not with moral resolution (except by reduction). But on what grounds can that be argued?

As has already been noted, by 1976 Phillips still criticised Braithwaite on the ground that he was reductionist. Phillips (RWE 141) challenged Braithwaite with religion’s embarrassing wealth concerning creation, providence, judgement ‘and so
on'. The question was how Braithwaite would explain the difference between locutions of this kind and resolutions concerning moral conduct. Here Phillips dismissed Braithwaite on the ground that he was reductionist in regard to the wide range of religious locutions that comprise the Judaeo-Christian story. Notably, however, late in his lecture Braithwaite had given the following definition of 'religious assertion':

A religious assertion, for me, is the assertion of an intention to carry out a certain behaviour policy, subsumable under a sufficiently general principle to be a moral one, together with the implicit or explicit statement, but not the assertion, of certain stories.\(^{314}\)

It may be regrettable that Braithwaite did not provide this definition of religious assertion until towards the end of his remarks. Here his definition of religious 'assertion' drew an identification of religious with moral 'belief'. For Braithwaite, religious assertions and moral beliefs are assertions of intention; while being 'empirical', they are not exposed to verification/falsification of their content. But 'religious belief' also includes the entertainment of 'certain stories':

... a religious belief is an intention to behave in a certain way (a moral belief) together with the entertainment of certain stories associated with the intention in the mind of the believer.\(^{315}\)

Because he defined both religious assertion and religious belief around 'certain stories', Braithwaite is not exposed to criticism that takes as its premise that he considered religious stories without discrimination to be assertions of moral intention. Although he was most hesitant to give any religious story in detailed example, Braithwaite\(^{316}\) cannot be accused of reductionism as sweeping as that.

\(^{314}\) Braithwaite R B op.cit., p.89.
\(^{315}\) Braithwaite R B ibid.
\(^{316}\) References to 'certain stories' that appear in Braithwaite's lecture/article are limited to: Elijah (p.75); the Good Samaritan (p.82); and Jesus of Nazareth (p.86).
In regard, then, to ‘certain stories’ (albeit largely unspecified) that Braithwaite considered assertions of moral intention, is anything asserted? That is, are Braithwaite’s assertions (made by religious locutions) expressions of a moral resolution? Phillips would argue against such an interpretation of Braithwaite. Indeed the later Phillips (RWE 143) claimed:

He [Braithwaite] never considers the possibility that the religious belief is itself the expression of a moral vision.

For the 1976 Phillips (RWE 150), religious expressions were expressions; and Braithwaite could not appreciate that point. Braithwaite advocated ‘assertion’; and Phillips was adamant about ‘expression’: so, what work is their assert/express difference meant to do here?

Conventionally, it would be considered possible to assert beliefs, including religious beliefs. That is, religious beliefs (even understood by Braithwaite as moral intentions based upon the entertainment of ‘certain stories’) may be asserted. And Braithwaite certainly promoted that. Indeed, he maintained that religious stories present sets of ‘empirical propositions’ capable of different interpretations. But while the story should consist of ‘empirical propositions’, it is not necessary for the asserter of the story to believe in the (empirical) truth of the story. The proposal that ‘certain stories’ assert ‘empirical propositions’ that may not be believed true seems prima facie to introduce grounds for Phillips to make a case for unclarity in Braithwaite’s account. So what kind of unclarity did Phillips discover?

Regarding religious stories, Phillips (RWE 141) noted that Braithwaite provided a psychological and causal account of the relation between religious stories and moral conduct: the stories provoke moral resolution. Phillips’ response (RWE 143) was to accuse Braithwaite of failing to appreciate that the grammar of ‘belief’ and ‘truth’ is not the same for religious beliefs as it is for empirical propositions. (In which case resort by Phillips to something like Hare’s blik could have been

317 Braithwaite R B op. cit., p. 89.
318 Braithwaite R B op. cit., pp. 84, 85.
useful.) For Phillips, any proper understanding of religious belief requires knowledge of the (perhaps unique) grammar being used. If Braithwaite's position may be cast similarly in Wittgensteinian terms, Braithwaite relied (perhaps unconsciously in Phillips' estimation) on a more general grammar, the grammar of moral suasion.

Here, it needs to be emphasised that Phillips progressed from a description (CP 68) of Braithwaite's position as the 'assimilation' of religious belief with moral resolution, to the representation of Braithwaite as having given a psychological and causal account (RWE 141) of the relation between 'religious stories' and moral resolution. While Phillips seemed to progress to that representation over the period of a decade, Braithwaite's own account itself warrants Phillips' later (1976) description. If Phillips had wished to demonstrate that his developed account of Braithwaite was justified, and to argue that his later characterisation of Braithwaite was faithful to the lecture/article in question, Phillips might have referred to Braithwaite's statement:

... I shall argue ... that the religious assertion is used as a moral assertion ...

and noted the subsequent definition:

... a religious belief is an intention to behave in a certain way (a moral belief) ...

Further, Braithwaite articulated a causal account later in the article. In referring again to 'certain stories', and perhaps with allegories like the parable of the Good Samaritan in mind, Braithwaite asserted:

It is an empirical psychological fact that many people find it easier to resolve upon and to carry through a course of action which is contrary to their

319 Braithwaite R B op.cit., p.78.
320 Braithwaite R B op.cit., p.89.
natural inclinations if this policy is associated in their minds with certain stories.\textsuperscript{321}

So, although Braithwaite remained a much more conscious reductionist than Phillips described, his view did approach the kind of causal account of purportedly 'assimilated' assertions that the later Phillips identified. That is, religious assertions are used as moral assertions in the provocation of ethical behaviours. But is Braithwaite believable about religious stories, and the 'assimilation' between 'certain' religious stories and moral assertions as provocations for action?

As an empiricist, and inconsistently with Wittgenstein, Braithwaite considered that it is straightforwardly an empirical matter to determine how a statement is used. Nevertheless, consistently with the later Wittgenstein, for Braithwaite use was critical. And, for Braithwaite this will be the case for empirical statements:

\ldots the use of an empirical statement derives from the fact that the statement is empirically verifiable.\textsuperscript{322}

But what of non-empirical statements? Braithwaite confirmed that both religious and moral statements are not verifiable/falsifiable by standard methods. So, they are distinguishable from empirical statements. Braithwaite is less than clear here, but it cannot be accepted that he considered the Creation and Last Judgement stories to be \textit{false}, a notion with which Phillips (\textit{RWE} 141) toyed in his exegesis of Braithwaite. Rather, Braithwaite advocated that religious statements be understood as 'assimilated' with moral statements because they are similarly not verifiable/falsifiable but similarly used; to repeat:

\ldots the religious assertion is used as a moral assertion.\textsuperscript{323}

\footnotesize
\begin{itemize}
  \item[\textsuperscript{321}] Braithwaite R B op.cit., p.86.
  \item[\textsuperscript{322}] Braithwaite R B op.cit., p.77.
  \item[\textsuperscript{323}] Braithwaite R B op.cit., p.78.
\end{itemize}
In Braithwaite’s conception, then, while religious and moral assertions differ from empirical assertions, the discovery of their religious/moral use is an ‘empirical’ matter because it concerns language use. Further, religious assertions, having a propositional element are ‘empirical’, and interpretations of religious stories will be understood in empirical terms. Nevertheless, in both religion and ethics, the question of (empirical) truth and falsehood does not arise in these contexts for Braithwaite:

... it is not necessary, on my view, for the asserter of a religious assertion to believe in the truth of the story involved in the assertions: what is necessary is that the story should be entertained in thought, i.e. that the statement of the story should be understood as having a meaning. I have secured this by requiring that the story should consist of empirical propositions. [emphasis added]\(^{324}\)

And, Braithwaite confirmed:

... my contention is that belief in the truth of the Christian stories is not the proper criterion for deciding whether or not an assertion is a Christian one. A man is not, I think, a professing Christian unless he both proposes to live according to Christian moral principles and associates his intention with thinking of Christian stories; but he need not believe that the empirical propositions presented by the stories correspond to empirical fact. [emphasis added]\(^{325}\)

So, Phillips was tempted to toy with the notion that, for Braithwaite, the religious stories concerning Creation and Last Judgement were ‘empirical’ but false. Braithwaite may have clung to an ‘empirical proposition’ status for ‘certain’ unfalsifiable religious ‘stories’, but he gave no indication of the ways in which he would have treated the ‘history’ accounts of Christianity’s gospels. Ancient

\(^{324}\) Braithwaite R B op.cit., p.85, 86.

\(^{325}\) Braithwaite R B op.cit., p.86.
Historians would conventionally treat much of the gospels as presenting historical states of affairs. In historical terms it is either true or false that Tiberius was in his fifteenth year as Emperor (Luke 3.1) at the time that the account of Jesus' ministry commences in the Gospel of Luke.

But, clearly, Braithwaite considered that 'certain' (perhaps other) religious stories, while not representing 'empirical' fact, present states of affairs that can only provoke moral action. As such, qua extended metaphor, they would be allegorical. And, those 'certain stories' need to be identified. Being contrary to conventional scriptural scholarship, it would be unacceptably reductionist to regard the complete deposit of scripture as strictly allegorical because, in addition to its allegorical stories, Christian orthodoxy would claim to promote propositions of a conventional historical kind, especially about Jesus of Nazareth. To suit Braithwaite's agenda, whatever story was to be 'assimilated' with moral assertions must be clearly allegorical, an allegory being a story told for metaphoric (including moral) purpose. Braithwaite's conception, then, seems to prompt a major question. Which religious documentation should be classified as myth and parable, amounting to moral allegory: and, how can the allegorical be identified?

Braithwaite proffered his dilemma to be resolved: either religious assertions are truth-apt (and may be false), or (being neither true nor false) they provoke morality. Braithwaite chose and advocated the latter horn but his explanation remains problematic. It is problematic because, being moral provocations, religious assertions are nevertheless 'empirical' for Braithwaite, leaving 'empirical' to be defined and explained. Whatever their moral utility, 'empirical' locutions that are not descriptions are candidates for allegory, and little if nothing may be gained by the 'empirical' notation unless that is meant to suggest that those locutions must be representational in order to be allegorical (by way of extended metaphor). But, then why continue with the 'empirical' notation (especially if it has nothing to do with truth)? Further, to regard the entire deposit of Judaeo-Christian scripture as allegory would be an affront to orthodox historical (not just religious) scholarship.
By contrast, Phillips’ Wittgensteinianism promotes a distinctive notion of truth in religion; religious locutions are ‘true’ in their particular language-games. Here perhaps is revealed the essence of comparison between Braithwaite’s philosophy of religion and the position embraced by Phillips. Braithwaite cannot say that a ‘certain’ religious story is true or false because those categories do not apply to (unverifiable/unfalsifiable) allegory. But (to Flew’s frustration^325) Phillips (RWE 143) proposed that a religious story was ‘true’ where notions of truth and falsity have particular meaning in religion.

In response to Braithwaite’s dilemma, then, the later Phillips did not consider himself obliged to choose between religious stories as either descriptions or metaphorical/moral assertions. He could consider them (contentiously) without reduction in his view, as something altogether different: ultimately, ‘dogmas’ that characterise religious language-games (with unique notions of truth). Both should have allowed scope for recognising historical accounts (including many of Braithwaite’s ‘certain stories’) in the religious literary inheritance. But Braithwaite was an unashamed and conscious reductionist of certain unspecified religious stories to moral assertion; Phillips, not without considerable difficulty, aspired (non-reductively) to leave everything as it is.327 So, on this matter, what was Phillips’ final word?

The Final Phillips (from late-1980s)

In seeking to reject Braithwaite, then, Phillips was faced with a dilemma. Phillips (FAF 319) acknowledged that Braithwaite had been supported (by Mackie and Roberts) in his contention that religious belief/assertion must be construed either as a factual proposition or as a metaphorical assertion (of an ethical type). And in

^326 Flew A The Philosophical Quarterly January 1967, op.cit. FAF 218. It has already been noted that PI 124 is considered to relate to grammar in leaving everything as it is: Baker G P and Hacker P M S An Analytical Commentary on Wittgenstein’s Philosophical Investigations Vol1 Blackwell Oxford 1980, p.236.

^327 FAF 218. It has already been noted that PI 124 is considered to relate to grammar in leaving everything as it is: Baker G P and Hacker P M S An Analytical Commentary on Wittgenstein’s Philosophical Investigations Vol1 Blackwell Oxford 1980, p.236.
1982 Mackie formulated Braithwaite’s dilemma in general terms. The dilemma was put subsequently by Roberts in 1984 as follows:

Either religious assertions are factually true or they are not; if they are not factually true, then they are not true except in some metaphorical sense.

Critically, Mackie’s response to Phillips’ resolution of Braithwaite’s dilemma was to claim that talk of a different grammar of ‘truth’ was a ‘vain attempt’ to avoid the dilemma. That, however, is what is under consideration here. Notably, and consistently with his suggestion of a different grammar for ‘truth’ in religion, in order to reject the exclusive alternatives of Braithwaite’s dilemma Phillips considered that he could reject the ‘simple choice’ offered by Mackie and Roberts. He proposed an option in avoidance of the two purported horns. But Phillips may not have required that option, at least for some religious locutions. Phillips’ approach, it might be suggested, was not the only way of dealing with both Braithwaite’s dilemma and Mackie’s subsequent version.

Just because there is an optional (grammatical) treatment for religious locutions beyond the horns of these dilemmas does not mean that such locutions may not be candidates, in particular cases and where appropriate, for descriptions (true or false) of God. Consistently with the first horn, that is what their grammar might disclose: in Wittgensteinian terminology, it is necessary to ‘look and see’. Indeed, at this point at least, Phillips (especially at WR 239) might be accused by the ‘friends’ of religion of failing to have taken the language of religion seriously enough in that regard. This is a possibility to which this thesis will continue to refer. It will be considered in reflecting upon the choice between descriptions and rules offered by ‘God is love’. While it will be a major consideration for chapter 7, we continue here with the description of Phillips’ Wittgensteinianism as has been revealed by his criticism of Braithwaite.

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328 Mackie J L. *The Miracle of Theism* op cit., p.225.
329 Roberts T A. ‘Crefydd a Rheswm’ in *Y Traethodydd* April 1984, p.77.
Now, at least from 1988 (FAF) if not 1993 (WR), Phillips seemed to have rested confident in his campaign in response to the challenge of Braithwaite's dilemma (and the Mackie/Roberts alternative). Nevertheless, as late as 2001 Phillips maintained his rejection of Mackie's claim that appeals to the grammar of 'truth' are a 'vain attempt' to evade that dilemma. Phillips' 2001 response (RHC 64) to Mackie was to argue (employing grammar although he did not say so) that the choice that Mackie offered is a conceptual impoverishment of language:

... the primary use of language in religion is not factual, idiomatic or metaphorical.\(^{331}\)

In identifying the essence of his interest in Braithwaite, Phillips protested against Braithwaite's failure to observe the Wittgensteinian requirement to leave everything (which, as already noted, must mean everything disclosed by grammar) as it is. By contrast with Braithwaite, Phillips claimed to resist reductionist approaches that result in a failure to acknowledge that religious locutions are entitled to the full range of their intended use. (Importantly, he nevertheless rejected what he considered the importation of reference into certain religious locutions by the 'friends' of religion.) As a consequence Phillips (FAF 146) considered 'God is love' to be neither factual description nor ethical provocation nor metaphorical expression. Rather, 'God is love' is a grammatical rule. As will be noted below, ultimately Phillips (RHC 65) relied upon the expression 'ways of thinking' to characterise 'absolutes of faith' as his option to the horns of Mackie's dilemma.

**Phillips Distilled**

What now should be distilled about Phillips' philosophy of religion by his sustained and emphatic response to Braithwaite's dilemma? To what extent should Phillips' resolution of that dilemma be taken as a characterisation of his final position?

\(^{331}\) Phillips' reliance on Wittgensteinian 'use' (that is, grammar) is clear; see Godlove T F Review of *Religion and the Hermeneutics of Contemplation* in *The Journal of Religion* January 2004 Vol 84, p.125.
Further, can he resist the Wittgensteinian ‘friends’ of religion who maintain that religious locutions can be both descriptions and language-game rules?

Embracing the second horn of the dilemma that he proposed, Braithwaite ‘assimilated’ certain religious assertions with moral intention. By contrast, Phillips did not concede that he must choose one horn or the other of the proffered dilemma. Phillips considered that religious locutions are not captured by either of the horns of that dilemma. He had an option to the dilemma’s horns. Phillips (RWE 144, 164) had identified (certain) religious locutions as ‘absolutes of faith’. Where Braithwaite said that religious assertions cannot be empirically true, Phillips would concur. But where Braithwaite maintained that their function is to express a moral conviction along with a resolution to live a certain kind of life, Phillips claimed that Braithwaite had reduced religion to something that lacked some of the fundamental characteristics of religious belief. It is not what the believer intended it to be.

In order to resolve Braithwaite’s dilemma, then, Phillips initially (1965) tried to show Braithwaite’s presentation to have been reductionist. Subsequently (1976) and much more clearly for the treatment of a dilemma, he presented an option to the exclusive and unacceptable horns, enabling avoidance of them both. The option is to regard certain religious locutions as rules: ‘dogmas’ or ‘absolutes of faith’. And later (1988) he confirmed (FAF 320) that he had taken that approach. Importantly for this thesis, in 2001 he characterised ‘God is love’ as a ‘grammatical rule in dogmatics’ (RHC 95).

So, for Phillips, Braithwaite’s proposed dilemma can be resolved by a grammatically disclosed option; for Phillips (FAF 319) neither horn threatens because an option is available:

In discussing the ‘dilemma’ I rejected the exclusive alternatives it seeks to impose on us. ... Braithwaite did not take the language of religion seriously enough in his second alternative.

Although Phillips did not express it this way, his point is that while Braithwaite bowed in the right direction, Braithwaite failed properly to appreciate the grammar of religious locutions. The grammar of religious locutions is neither description nor moral resolution; rather, grammar discloses ‘dogma’ (as rules of religious language-games). Failure to appreciate that fact is consequential upon a failure to take seriously enough the language of religion.

In interim summary, then, Phillips rejected the horns offered by Braithwaite’s dilemma. That is, he did not succumb to the essential dilemma proposed by Braithwaite and Mackie: he considered that, in providing exclusive horns only between truth-apt (descriptive) and metaphorical (ethical) uses of religious locutions, that dilemma was spurious. He was not bound by the dilemma because he had an option. In fact, to characterise locutions as rules allowed for that option; and that option is provided in response to Braithwaite’s dilemma (and Mackie’s formulation).

There is, nevertheless, an important additional matter that arises here. And it is prompted by Phillips’ option in avoidance of the exclusive alternatives proffered by Mackie and Roberts. That is, in identifying his option, in 1982 Phillips (FAF 323) claimed that it too has to do with fact and truth:

If Mackie and Roberts think that only empirical, factual statements can be true, or convey truths, that is their problem.

In the face of this assertion, there is a need to understand Phillips’ option for religious locutions as ‘dogmas’, ‘absolutes of faith’ and ‘ways of thinking’ as embracing particular understandings of ‘fact’ and ‘truth’ where applicable. But how should that be comprehended?
By 2004 Phillips was concerned to publish further on what it meant to settle the ‘fact of the matter’. His opponents, the ‘friends’ would maintain that a fact is a fact is a fact. But in the fifth chapter of Religion and Friendly Fire Phillips sought to show the kind of trouble that results from understanding ‘factuality’ without regard to context (RFF 91-111). As Phillips (RFF 91) has put it:

Those ... concede that the ways we come to find out what the facts are will vary, but insist that this does not affect what we mean by the ‘fact of the matter’.

So, what might argument look like to the conclusion that the nature of a fact is determined by the manner of its discovery? In Wittgensteinian terms, how does the grammar of discovery reveal the nature of an ‘object’ qua locution about fact?

Take, as Phillips does, the New Testament question (Matt 16.15) from Jesus to Peter: ‘who do you say I am?’. As Phillips (RFF 91) correctly observes, Peter proceeded to make a confession: ‘you are the Messiah, the Son of the living God’. But what kind of confession has Peter expressed? Phillips considers that because Jesus affirmed that Peter’s confession could only be made by the grace of God, a particular kind of confession was involved.

Now, it is not difficult to agree with Phillips (and Jesus) that a particular kind of confession has been made. And the Judaeo-Christian religious believe that confessions embracing adoration or worship are divinely induced. However, it is another matter whether the nature of the confession is comprehensively characterised by its inspiration. That is, the question remains whether Peter was confessing that Jesus is the Christ. If it is possible to confess that, confess to the truth of a proposition, then Phillips is in difficulty.

Why, in all the blessedness of Peter’s condition, was he not expressing by ‘you are the Christ’ a fact of the same kind as ‘you are a carpenter’s son’? That is, in the same way in which it might be true that Jesus was a carpenter’s son, it might be true that he was Messiah. So, it might be possible to agree that knowledge of the
reality of God is a matter of the heart as well as the head without conceding that such knowledge is unlike the knowledge that a man is a carpenter's son. And Peter's confession may have involved knowledge both of the 'heart' and the 'head'.

Indeed, there are various ways in which knowledge may be a matter of the heart as well as the head. There is intellectual knowledge that is life-transforming. The knowledge that I have a brain tumor is that kind of knowledge; because of its emotional effect, it is also deeply a matter of the heart. By contrast, however, there is knowledge that is accessible only because it is 'heart' knowledge. This seems to be what Phillips (RFF 91, 93-4) is on about. Peter's confession may be in that category. But the means of accessing the knowledge need not determine the kind of knowledge involved. If I intuit that I have a brain tumor, and I do have such a tumor, the truth-aptness of my belief (unlike my confidence in it) remains unaltered in its character by any subsequent confirmatory medical diagnosis. Similarly, Peter's conviction (expressed by confession) that Jesus is the Messiah may have been the consequence of a religious intuition (by God's grace). That does not mean, however, that it is not a true belief about a state of affairs similar to true belief in the state of affairs comprehended by Jesus being the son of a carpenter. And that may have been one ground of Jesus' commendation of Peter's confession.

This responds to Phillips' point (RFF 95) that it is a 'spiritual question' whether Jesus is the Son of God. It certainly can be a 'spiritual question' eliciting a confession by way of answer. And the confession is a matter of believing in (trusting) the person so confessed. (The same goes for belief in the Incarnation.) Nevertheless, there may be another question to be identified here and it is not a 'spiritual question'. It centres on concern for common intelligibility and employs the concept of believing that as opposed to believing in. And here Phillips (RFF 96) himself confessed to the point on which he is vulnerable:

... Rhees ... sees that whether one accepts Jesus as the Son of God is the same question as whether one accepts Christ as one's Redeemer.
Phillips’ vulnerability relates to the (repeated) use of ‘accepts’. In the terms of the Christian religion, it is certainly the case that accepting Jesus as the Son of God is part of what it means to accept Christ as Redeemer. That is all about believing in, but believing that might also be involved. Phillips (RFF 97) knew that Rhees was aware of this distinction. But Rhees’ position was to claim that religious confessional belief is strictly belief in, never belief that. The critical question here, then, concerns whether religion does embrace both kinds of belief in confessions like that of Peter, or should do. Eminent Christian scholarship would certainly claim so, witness Rudolph Bultmann’s classic essay Zwischen den Zeiten V (1927).333

Phillips (RFF 98) considered this issue carefully. And, as Rhees and Phillips took pains to argue, religion is certainly characterised by acceptance (trust, or believing in). But how is believing that ruled out? Importantly, Phillips’ characterisation of ‘God is love’ as a rule (‘dogma’) discloses the manner in which religious locutions can be ‘true’ for him. They are ‘true’ qua rules. That is, they are true of religious language-games rather than true qua description. But given the shortcomings of his argument about Peter’s confession, Phillips was unable to disqualify such religious locutions as belief that, in which case the ‘friends’ of religion would consider that the grammatical choice of description remains viable for religious locutions like ‘God is love’. Contrary to Phillips’ argument that religious locutions must be regarded only as language-game rules, his Wittgensteinian opponents contend (perhaps especially in ‘philosophy’s cool place’334) that they are entitled to regard religious locutions (sequentially) as both descriptions of reality and language-game rules. For them, the grammatical choice is also resolved: they attempt to embrace ‘God is love’ not only as rule but also as true description.

The Phenomenon of Religion

**Grammatical Contemplation**

So, Phillips' particular and late resort (RFF 91-111) to contextual understandings of 'factuality' is problematic. And 'dogma' (as context-dependent 'factual' locutions) remains to be substantiated. As a consequence he remained in need of an option to the horns of the Braithwaite/Mackie dilemma: religious locutions are either factually true or true in a metaphorical sense. Perhaps his most ambitious option was set out in response to the horns of another dilemma. Phillips confronted that dilemma and purported to resolve it. As will be explained, the dilemma is:

Religion either considers (by 'recollection') divine reality in truth-apt terms, or religion is analysable (from 'suspicion') in Freudian/ Marxist/other terms.

This dilemma comes under review because it reveals what is most at stake from Phillips' final perspective. The phenomenon of religion continues to be the essential issue.

In his (2001) *Religion and the Hermeneutics of Contemplation* Phillips (RHC 4) gave an account of the hermeneutics (interpretation) of 'contemplation' as an option in avoidance of the horns of his dilemma. In applying to religion the more general character of philosophy, for Phillips the hermeneutics of 'contemplation' lies beyond the hermeneutics both of (truth-apt) 'recollection' and (reductionist) 'suspicion'. Notably, and while not having formally nominated this choice to be a dilemma, here Phillips effectively conceded the unacceptable nature of both horns quite directly. 'Recollection' will not do, because it allows that believers are in touch with some thing real (RHC 1); and 'suspicion' will not do because it denies reality in religion (RHC 1); it characterises religious faith as an illusion (RHC 33).

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Significantly, it has been noted that an expose of the 'false dilemma' between recollection and suspicion was offered by Ninian Smart's *The Science of Religion and the Sociology of Knowledge* in 1973. Cf: Byrne P 'Review' of *Religion and the Hermeneutics of Contemplation* in Religious Studies 38:4 December 2002, p.500.
The option Phillips advocated beyond the exclusive horns of his dilemma is the 'hermeneutics of contemplation'. That is, Phillips (RHC 10) again purportedly put to use the Wittgensteinian dictum (PI 124) already noted - to leave everything (grammatical) as it is:

... the hermeneutics of contemplation is not a presupposition one brings to the phenomena in question, but the result of giving the phenomena the attention they deserve.

Now, undoubtedly, Phillips was religious in respecting the phenomena in question. Over a lifetime he demonstrated a consuming interest in religion and religious believers. And he accepted a particular significance and relevance for religious locutions in 'distinctive' language-games. Nevertheless he maintained that 'God is love' is not descriptive. That has significance for philosophers whose objective is to establish the credentials of atheism. Phillips would deny them that option. However, Phillips needed to comprehend religion: he required an hermeneutic. And two philosophers are most prominent here for the further explanation of Phillips' particular position: Ludwig Feuerbach (1804-72) and Rush Rhees (1905-89); O K Bouwsma (d.1978), together with Rhees a student of Wittgenstein, is also relevant. Reference has already been made to these philosophers; more detailed attention now is appropriate before final consideration in the next chapter. In particular, reference will be made to Feuerbach in regard to Phillips' need to identify religion.

**Ludwig Feuerbach**

Phillips (RWE 87) described Feuerbach as wanting to discover the essence of religion. And Phillips (RWE 86) noted that it is central to Feuerbach's position that establishing talk about the divine can only be done by some kind of inferential or analogical link with the human. Phillips (RWE 87) maintained against Feuerbach, however, that religious belief is certainly not the product of some kind of projection:
This no more follows than the conclusion of the argument that because human traditions and movements are social in character, they must have ‘society’ as their object. ... Yet Feuerbach does want to say that man created God in his own image; that religious belief is the product of projection.

Language for Phillips (RWE 94, 95) is analogical but does not present projection in all cases. The fact that language is spoken by humans does not entail that when humans speak they always speak about humanity. So, for Phillips, the essence of religion was not settled by Feuerbachian projection. But, for Phillips in 1976, that was not Feuerbach’s only mistake. His other mistake is mentioned here to foreshadow the attention it will receive in chapter 7.

In 1976 Phillips (RWE 96, 97) addressed himself to the question of Feuerbach’s philosophical orientation. And, at that point, Phillips comprehended Feuerbach as having accepted the Humean ‘terms of reference’ concerning the existence of God. That is, Phillips understood Feuerbach to have advocated that religious belief was false; for Feuerbach God did not exist. By 2001, however, Phillips (RHC xii) had come to the view that his earlier remarks on Feuerbach were ‘cursory and misleading’. But they were clearly other than that; as will be explained, by 2001 Phillips should have considered his earlier understanding of Feuerbach misconceived. In his 2001 mea culpa, Phillips (RHC 92) noted that the negative part of Feuerbach’s analysis claimed that the divine predicates could not be attached to the metaphysical subject, God. Expressed another way, God could not be regarded as a thing (RHC 92):

‘God’, in order to be the object of religious worship, cannot be an object among objects.

Feuerbach’s conviction was that, God being worthy of worship, divine reality would persist beyond any other reality. At the same time, Feuerbach protested, the attribution of divine predicates to a divine subject is problematic because that is to
treat God as a thing beyond the divine predicates. The problem is that the notion of subjects ontologically elevated beyond predication does not make sense.

In his approach to religion, then, Phillips required an argument against understanding 'God' as a proper noun that refers: and he accepted the Feuerbachian argument that God is not an object (about which a proper noun could be used as a name). That is, Phillips purported to present an argument from depth grammar that God cannot be an object. Nevertheless, any argument against the 'is' as a verb of predication for a description would need to identify by depth grammar what alternative has been presented. Phillips' appeal (RHC 95) is that the verb is a predication only from the following perspective. Being a grammatical predication it cannot be a predication of an existent. 'God', then, may name the word 'God' itself; the word would be the object named and 'God' would be considered a 'grammatical object'. However, if the verb performs grammatically as an 'is' of non-descriptive predication, why must the expression be taken just as Phillips (RHC 95) described (if not prescribed)? His appeal is that:

... the predicates become grammatical predicates of a grammatical object, not descriptions of an independent existing object of which they happen to be true.

But predication _qua_ (definitional) rule need not prevent the same locution being taken subsequently as a (true) description of an existent. Why would such a _sequential_ characterisation be proscribed in this case? In particular, what is to substantiate Feuerbach's conviction that divine reality would persist beyond any other reality? Problematically, at least at this stage of this consideration of Phillips' position, Phillips' characterisation of 'God is love' stands in need of substantiation. That is, Phillips considered in _Religion and the Hermeneutics of Contemplation_ that where a locution is taken to present grammatical predication (and therefore must be a rule), the same locution cannot be considered subsequently a description of an existent. But what if 'God is love', while providing predication _qua_ rule, may
nevertheless sequentially be taken as description? This most significant issue will be resumed in chapter 7.

The nature of Phillips' (2001) revision of his (1976) opinion about the significance of Feuerbach aside, there are two significant points to be made about Feuerbach here; and both will receive attention later in this thesis. First, what reasons can be given in support of Feuerbach's notion that God cannot be an object if God is to be worthy of worship? If this is an intuitive appeal, it may be questionable on the grounds of alternative, contradictory intuition. Second, it has been suggested that there seems to be nothing from Feuerbach to prevent a theist from affirming that God is like other objects in being the subject of predication, but unlike them because God possesses all attributes essentially. That predicates adhere necessarily rather than contingently may not entail that the subject of the predication is different in ontological kind. Differences between objects have to do with the detail of the predication not with whether the predication adheres contingently or necessarily. Cannot one existent possess characteristics necessarily although other existents do so contingently? If so, and in Feuerbach's terminology, God need not be thought to be an existent beyond the predicates that apply (necessarily) to God.

While these are matters for further consideration, here it is important to emphasise that Phillips ultimately united with Feuerbach. For both Feuerbach and (the 2001) Phillips God certainly is not an object that can be the subject of predication and that might not exist. For Phillips (RHC 94), the notion of a thing and its predicates has no correlate in religious conception of divine reality. Phillips concluded that atheism is an inappropriate description of an option in contexts where God's

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337 In this regard, and in contrast with a ‘predicative’ (or adjectival) treatment, an interesting ‘adverbial’ reflection is made by Brunton A ‘A model for the religious philosophy of D Z Phillips’ Analysis Vol 31 No 2 December 1970.
existence cannot be denied. Rather, the 'hermeneutics of contemplation', purporting to exploit Wittgensteinian grammar, has fully emerged.

That said, and 'God' being disclosed as a 'grammatical object' in Phillips' advocacy, a conclusion from chapter 4 can be confirmed: for Phillips, religious locutions (even rules of religious language-games) comprehended grammatically and contemplated with the appropriate emotion (RRC 5), are what amounts to religion. And given its significance for his position, Phillips' (depth grammar) argument is of critical importance in regard to each aspect of the reading that he proposes for 'God is love'. This thesis will critique those arguments; the next chapter in particular considers whether it makes sense to allow 'God is love' as description or whether such locutions can only ever express by 'grammatical objects' a 'grammatical rule in dogmatics' (RHC 95). As has already been noticed, in support of his conclusion, if not those arguments, Phillips deferred to Rush Rhees. So Rhees should be considered. But first, given that it will subsequently be relevant, it is appropriate to turn briefly to Phillips' reliance on (the Wittgensteinian) O K Bouwsma.

O K Bouwsma

Bouwsma quite properly has taken actual locutions from the Hebrew scripture as example statements for drawing in principle grammatical conclusions. And the surface grammar form of certain example locutions appears to be in the indicative mood; for instance: 'Great is Jehovah and greatly to be praised. And his greatness is unsearchable' (Psalm 145). Nevertheless, Bouwsma considers that while such locutions have the form of an indicative, they are used as an imperative (to praise).

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338 In Phillips' 1976 judgement: 'It is not a concern to defend religion against objections which would entail atheism.' (RWE 100)

339 Phillips' references to Bouwsma include (in publication order): RWE 179, 180, 182, 184-8, 191, 193; FAF 231, 237, 255, 264, 271-2, 289, 322, 332, 334; FTF 105, 108; WR 18, 21, 99, 100, 102, 196, 199, 210, 211, 215, 218; PCP 27, 34, 35, 42, 43; RHC 97-99; PEPG 157, 163, 166; RFF 65.
The surface grammar of a sentence displays its form. But depth grammar analysis relies upon the identification of a locution’s use; clearly, form and use must be distinguishable for this to be acceptable. And Bouwsma provocatively asked of locutions like ‘Great is Jehovah ...’:

When removed from their surroundings and cooled for the purposes of proof, they may be mistaken for sentences about God, as though they furnished information or descriptions. But they are no more statements or descriptions than the sentences just quoted. ... The sentence, ‘Great is our God above all other gods’ is not to be mistaken for such a sentence as, ‘High is the Empire State Building above all buildings in New York’. Or is it? I’m afraid so.340

The intriguing last sentence of this quotation may show that Bouwsma considered that religious locutions can be mistakenly understood to be just like those about buildings. Accordingly, one answer to his query that Bouwsma was rejecting (much to Phillips’ approval) proposes that the religious locution can properly be used just like a sentence about the Empire State Building. The grammatical significance of religious locutions then would be inconsistent with the apparent (surface grammar) form.

Nevertheless, Bouwsma’s claim seems contentious; the ‘friends’ would argue that it remains possible for the depth grammar of ‘God is love’ to reflect the (apparent) indicative form of description. For these examples, indicative or imperative moods seem the likely candidates for the grammar of religion. But what would render an indicative understanding invalid; what would defeat description on that point? On such a question, Phillips deferred to Rhees.

340 Bouwsma O K ‘Anselm’s Argument’ in Without Proof or Evidence University of Nebraska Press 1984, p.47. Quoted by Phillips at RWE 181; RHC 98; PEPG 157.
Significantly, like Feuerbach, Rhees had emphasised the contrast between the normal and the religious in regard to a thing and its predicates:

Winston Churchill may be Prime Minister and also a company director, but I might come to know him without knowing this. But I could not know God without knowing that he was the Creator and Father of all things.\footnote{Phillips D Z (ed) Rush Rhees on Religion and Philosophy Cambridge University Press 1997, p.48.}

And in application of that point to the locution ‘God is love’, Phillips (\textit{RHC} 94) concluded:

Rhees is bringing out the internal relations between spiritual realities and the expressions he mentions. ... Another way of putting the same point is to say that ‘love’, for example, in ‘God is love’, is not a predicate contingently related to its subject. If it were, God’s love would just happen to be true of God at some time, while the actual character of God could be quite different.

Somewhat dogmatically for Rhees and Phillips, then, there is only one kind of predication of existents: contingent predication. Only where God does not have the ontological status of an existent is God properly the subject of divine and necessary predication. On that understanding and in his revised opinion of Feuerbach, Phillips found significant support against understanding ‘God is love’ as description. Phillips (\textit{RHC} 96) considered that Rhees made ‘grammatical’ points in favour of Feuerbach’s conclusion that the divine predicates cannot be understood as factual descriptions of a divine subject. Phillips quoted Rhees:

‘God exists’ is not a statement of fact. You might say also that it is not in the indicative mood. It is a confession – or expression – of faith. This is recognised in some way when people say that God’s existence is
'necessary existence', as opposed to the 'contingency' of what exists as a matter of fact; and when they say that to doubt God's existence is a sin, as opposed to a mistake about the facts.\textsuperscript{342}

Now, if 'God exists' is a confession, it is undeniably expressed in the surface grammar form of indicative mood. But what can be said of the depth grammar? That is, if confessions are not in the indicative mood from the perspective of depth grammar, in what (depth grammar) mood are confessions expressed? The subjunctive mood may not make sense in this context without the user's (hortatory) intention to be directing behaviour. Indeed, has religion ever been considered by orthodoxy to be expressed in the subjunctive, the mood not only of wishes but of doubtful assertion? That would be to misrepresent the nature of the religious faith that Phillips characterised as 'dogma', 'articles of faith' and 'ways of thinking'. The only conceivable remaining candidate is the imperative. Bouwsma, as already noticed, was attracted to that (depth grammar) alternative.

Critically, there is a significant point that here should be noted. Wittgenstein (PI 664) drew a clear distinction between surface grammar and depth grammar, and Wittgensteinians need to admit that very considerable caution needs to be taken in proposing that there are particular links identifiable between surface grammar and depth grammar. Or, at the least, that surface grammar has a determining role to play in revealing the depth grammar of any locution. Just because a locution has a surface grammar indicative mood does not entail \textit{ipso facto} that its grammar is indicative. 'Friends' of religion need to address the question: what indications are there in Wittgenstein that surface grammar has particular functions in regard to depth grammar? Even in the \textit{Tractatus} (TLP 3.325) Wittgenstein made it clear that a proposition's surface grammar may not be the same as its logical grammar.\textsuperscript{343} And the \textit{Investigations} (PI 664) confirmed that idea. So, and with respect to Bouwsma's claims (about the indicative and imperative moods for the locutions


that he considers), the question remains whether a locution in the indicative mood in surface grammar has an imperative logic (and only an imperative logic) according to depth grammar.\footnote{Notably, Kenny has observed that the distinction between assertion, question and command is on a different level from the other distinctions drawn by Wittgenstein. Cf. Kenny A. Wittgenstein op.cit., pp.166,167.}

Of course, it was in Phillips' interest \textit{(RHC 98)} to support Bouwsma and Rhees as they united in their conviction that to ask whether God exists is not to ask a theoretical question:

If it is to mean anything at all, it is to wonder about prayer and praise; to wonder whether there is anything in all that.

And, as noted above in chapter 4, Phillips \textit{(RHC 98)} claimed:

Praising, … , may have meant little to a man. But then, it means everything to him. He says that God has become a reality in his life. Has this come about by his discovering an object? Hardly. What has happened is that he has found God in a praise …

That may be an articulate suggestion. But, assertion will not make it true. If this is grammatical analysis comprising evidence, other purported grammatical claims might emerge, and commonly are proposed. Whatever the truth about God's reality, Phillips' man in this example may mean that God qua existent has become real to him. That is, the grammatical task confronting Bouwsma, Rhees and Phillips is clear. They must establish that no object can possess its attributes necessarily; nor can any object persist necessarily. Such an argument was not made out by them. Alternatively, they must establish on other grammatical grounds that God cannot be considered a reality among the universe of existents so that the man cannot mean what he wants to mean \textit{(RFF 13)}. And, in deference to Wittgensteinian philosophy at least, they must allow everything (grammatical) to
be left as it is. That matter will be considered in chapter 7. It is clear on the argument presented by Phillips that it warrants the attention it will receive.

In interim summary, then, conclusions about the depth grammar implications of religious locutions may not be able to be determined by mere surface grammar features. Surface grammar should be observed by way of indicating the syntactical and morphological correctness of a locution, with its depth grammar characteristics remaining to be determined. After all, the surface grammar of a locution need not reveal whether it is truth-apt or rule-specifying: for Wittgenstein, inattention to that fact explains frequent confusions and mistakes. This, despite it being considered that there are no arguments from grammatical propositions in Wittgenstein's work. Any determination about a locution's grammatical use will be the outcome of analysis (PI 251).

For the later Wittgenstein (PI 370, 371), that is a feature of the work that philosophy is called upon to do: philosophical rather than linguistic analysis discloses grammar. In which case the identification and exploitation of certain surface grammar features of any locution may be of considerably limited utility in regard to the philosophical task. And both Phillips and Bouwsma exploited this feature of Wittgenstein. So the uniqueness and significance of locutions about God are next of interest. For both Phillips and the 'friends' the identification of religion is at stake. However, before taking Phillips to a concluding assessment in chapter 7, further description of his religion can be offered. We turn now to that.

**Phillips' Challenge**

Now, and as already considered, what is here called Mackie's dilemma offers the exclusive horns of truth-aptness or metaphor for religious locutions. And in 2001 Phillips (RHC 64) noted that Mackie's dilemma could be expressed as follows:

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Either God is some kind of object which has to be conceived anthropomorphically, or [Phillips'] use of language is metaphorical, and religion is something else, perhaps morality, in disguise, as the hermeneutics of suspicion has always suspected.

In effect, Phillips confirmed that he was challenged to show how religion could be described and identified. Clearly, for Phillips, the point of religion would need to be sought beyond any existent that could display divine qualities. But according to this expression of Mackie's dilemma, God as the object of religion must be identified anthropomorphically. Or, religion has to be identified with morality or something similar.

Phillips, however, considered that he had an option to the horns of this dilemma. Indisputably, locutions that contain the word 'God' must be prime candidates for the religious. Nevertheless, it was a central claim by Phillips (RHC 64) that the primary use of language in religion is not only not factual, but it is also neither idiomatic nor metaphorical. In Phillips' submission, while metaphor is potentially factual, any attempt to cash factually any metaphorical religious locutions leads to nonsense. So (RHC 65):

... although there are metaphors in religious language, its primary use is to offer us a way of thinking about our relation to the world. It is as though religion says to one, 'Think like this'. ... in ancient and Christian religion, we are offered a way of thinking about the mixed character of our lives.

Phillips' challenge was to maintain the significance and relevance of religion without God as an existent. Clearly, an option to the horns of Mackie's dilemma in its alternative versions was necessary for Phillips. Ultimately, for Phillips, in religion a 'way of thinking' is offered. That being the case, what in religion would comprise provocation to 'think like this'?

A religious 'way of thinking' (RHC 65) was Phillips' ultimate characterisation of what he had previously referred to as 'dogmas' or 'absolutes of faith' (RWE 144,
164); and that ‘way of thinking’ characterises his ‘hermeneutic of contemplation’ (RHC 65). Most significantly, in his final submission on the matter, a religious ‘way of thinking’ was Phillips’ proposed option in avoidance of both horns presented by Mackie’s dilemma, and the ‘hermeneutic of contemplation’ was the option for resolving Phillips’ own dilemma from Religion and the Hermeneutics of Contemplation. Much then, for Phillips, depended upon the credibility of a religious ‘way of thinking’/‘hermeneutic of contemplation’. Nevertheless, even if that is how religious language-games should be regarded, questions reasonably arise concerning ways of understanding a religious ‘way of thinking’.

In Phillips’ submission, ‘God is love’ qua religious locution would not refer to an existent; but questions about its meaning, and therefore application, are not foreclosed. Given that he did not accept argument to the existence of God, that seems to have been the issue that Braithwaite addressed in his ‘assimilation’ of religious assertion with expressions of moral intention: the resolution to lead an agapeistic (divine love) life. However, before any assessment can be made of the (‘way of thinking’/‘hermeneutics of contemplation’) options that Phillips ultimately gave in order to avoid characterising religious locutions as ethical provocations or descriptions analysable in Freudian/Marxist terms, the question of relevance arises. That is, even if religious locutions can be shown to be identifiable (itself a challenge) the point of characterising religion by virtue of a ‘hermeneutic of contemplation’ as a ‘way of thinking’ needs to be established. Such ‘ways of thinking’ have been thought to flirt with Wittgensteinian ‘fideism’: that there are distinct forms of language-games in forms of life with their own meanings and rationality. In that respect, a comment made by Phillips (RWE 143) in response to Braithwaite is important:

Braithwaite does not realise that in these religious beliefs, the grammar of ‘belief’ and ‘truth’ is not the same as in the case of empirical propositions …

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What can be meant by an appeal to a distinct meaning of 'truth' in religion? For Phillips, maintaining that religious locutions are 'true' in their own way purportedly enables both the acknowledgement of the status of religious assertions and the avoidance of characterising religious locutions as description from case to case. But this convenience may have come at a significant cost once articulation and explanation are attempted. That cost calls the supposed benefit into question; it relates to the distinctiveness and significance of religious locutions understood in Phillips' terms. The critical question, then, concerns the status of particular language-game locutions that are not truth-apt. Argument is required to establish that locutions of religious language-games are not only distinctively religious but also significant for a 'form of life' that is relevant to non-religious language-games. Given his extended response to Braithwaite, it is clear that, for Phillips, truth in religion depends upon the ways in which rules can be true.

The Distinctiveness and Significance of Religion

Could Phillips, then, maintain as an option the distinctiveness of religious locutions together with their avoidance of description on the one hand, while advocating their significance on the other? Like the rules of chess, religion understood as language-game rules is free of description. And Phillips seems unavoidably confronted by the need to consider whether religion is only as significant as any other language-game not entertaining truth-apt descriptive locutions. By presenting his own options in avoidance of Braithwaite's dilemma (by 'absolutes of faith'), Mackie's dilemma (by a 'way of thinking') and the dilemma that he himself conceived (by the 'hermeneutics of contemplation'), did Phillips present grounds for both significance and uniqueness in religion? Importantly, here the persisting question concerning the identification of religion and religious language-games will come into even sharper focus.

In response to that challenge, Phillips drew upon another concept, that of religious 'sense'. Indeed, for Phillips (RHC 53), the 'hermeneutics of contemplation' tries to elucidate what it is like to 'see' the world (perhaps exploiting a particular 'sense') in
a religious way. Such ‘seeing’ would always relate to language-game activity, inclusive of religious locutions. And Phillips (RHC 25) expressed his understanding of the need to articulate both connection (or common intelligibility) and distinction in religious locutions:

One of my central themes will be that although there are distinctive religious meanings, these cannot be what they are independent of their relation to other aspects of human life and culture.

Perhaps following both Rhees and Winch, the later Phillips (BR 24) was acutely aware of what was required if his ‘hermeneutics of contemplation’ was to find religion both distinctive and significant. Indeed, one profound difficulty recognised by Phillips was that he was faced with a dilemma articulated by Eugene Kamenka. And Kamenka’s dilemma challenged Phillips’ options in avoidance of the dilemmas prompted by Braithwaite and Mackie. How so? Phillips early observed (RWE 96) that Kamenka emphasised that theology finds itself in a contradictory state of affairs:

If it presents God as supernatural, it presents a being who is indescribable and of no interest to human beings. If, on the other hand, God is presented as a natural God, the belief can be analysed in purely human terms without any supernatural residue.

Because Phillips accepted Feuerbach’s argument dismissing the sense of an existent God, Phillips was not impaled on the first horn of Kamenka’s dilemma. And because Phillips rejected Feuerbach’s argument that God was a projection of human conception, Phillips cannot be considered vulnerable to the second horn of Kamenka’s dilemma. Nevertheless, Phillips required an argument in support of his advocacy of religious locutions as ‘absolutes of faith’, ‘ways of thinking’ and ‘hermeneutics of contemplation’ that would confirm their relevance in a religion without God qua existent.
Without theism's God, then, are there religious locutions (of the Judaeo-Christian tradition) that are nevertheless distinctive and significant? That is, is religion distinctive and significant according to Phillips' 'hermeneutics of contemplation' (RHC 30)? This would require an argument from Phillips; and he presented one in 2001. The relevance difficulty needing to be resolved (RWE 97), Phillips' ultimate objective (RHC 39) was to question the generality of various assumptions made by the 'hermeneutics of suspicion' and, in so doing, to give reminders of the possibilities of religious 'sense':

In short, it is an exercise in the kind of attention to the world which is central to the hermeneutics of contemplation.

Here we are requested by Phillips to pay a particular kind of 'attention' to the world. 'Paying attention' (RHC 39), for Phillips, is seemingly consistent with the other religious affectations of 'seeing' (RHC 53), 'sensing' (RHC 57) and 'thinking' (RHC 65) in pursuit of the 'hermeneutics of contemplation'. And those postures relate to religious puzzles including, as will be mentioned below, Wittgenstein's 'riddle of existence'. So, with Phillips (RHC 45), we should consider types of answers to the questions that provoke religion, in particular we should consider answers different from those of a scientific kind.

For instance, a scientific answer can be provided to questions about the cause and effect of, say, the (2004) Boxing Day tsunami that hit South-east Asia. Tectonic plates and their movements can be described as cause; and the subsequent sea disturbance and onshore waves can be articulated as effect. The scientific question why the tsunami occurred can be answered in those terms. But a mother who has lost her infant child to the tsunami seeks an answer that is not scientific; even where understanding the science, ultimately she may have no interest in the causal story. And that may be the case not because she does not accept scientific explanation, but because she may be asking a different kind of question. Were he to respond to this incident, for Phillips (RHC 39, 45), contrary to analysis pursuant to the 'hermeneutic of suspicion', the mother's cry would be part of the
bewilderment that Wittgenstein called 'the riddle of existence in space and time' which Phillips (RHC 45) noticed:

This is not to say that everyone does, or must, experience this bewilderment. It is to say that one cannot argue that there is something confused about it. Neither is it to deny that there are various responses to this bewilderment. Among these are religious responses which, I want to say, cannot be shown, philosophically, to be the product of confusion and illusion.

Whether bewildered or not, it is of interest here that Phillips would align the mother's cry with the 'riddle of existence' which, popularly conceived, is considered one element of religion. And it presents questions that would be regarded as existential in type. But they are not necessarily religious; being at times bewildered if not confused about the facts on offer, those questions challenge both the religious and non-religious alike. Nevertheless, a religious posture has been sought by Phillips against the 'friends' of religion; the uniqueness if not significance of religious locutions would otherwise be at stake. That is, unless religion can be considered uniquely to contribute to comprehension of the mother's distressing question, significance is left wanting in Phillips' resort to religious 'seeing', 'sensing', 'thinking' and 'paying attention'. That is, we want the identifiably religious nature of that question to be demonstrated. If not, there would be no justification in advocating anything beyond a secular comprehension. An argument to substantiate that vulnerability in Phillips' position can be offered; we now do so.

It should be accepted that science and religion are very different instruments of understanding. Certainly, that would be an orthodox Wittgensteinian approach (LC 57-59) to scientific and religious locutions. Regrettably, however, like Wittgenstein Phillips elided over an identification of (distinctive) religion. Nevertheless, somewhat controversially, fate for Phillips (RHC 45) was a distinctly religious
And he appealed to it in this context. For Phillips, it is a mistake to seek to replace fate by appeals to science. Fate possessed the virtue, in response to mention of anthropomorphic approaches to religion in both Mackie’s dilemma and Kamenka’s dilemma, of not being anthropomorphic (RHC 40). Fate, in Phillips’ conception, seems beyond anthropomorphism but grounds human experience. Would Phillips, then, have considered that the (religious) notion of fate promised an acceptable option to the horns of both Mackie’s dilemma and Kamenka’s dilemma?

The challenge of demonstrating the significance of the concept of fate is formidable. One problem, at least, that can be raised for Phillips here (RHC 40, 45) is that, in promoting the significance of religion, his use of the notion of fate seems to flout orthodox conceptions of morality. The conundrums surrounding moral desert in tsunamic tragedies would be resolved were resort made to fate. It is certainly one way to resolve the problem of evil over which so much ink has been spilt by theists. But, convictions about moral desert (critical to Judaeo-Christian religion at least) are offended by any entertainment of the idea of fate (where it is ethically indiscriminate). Further, through the clear absence of ethical paradox by dissolving the problem of evil, any religious significance for the concept of fate loses its essential point where some variety of causal determinism may take its place. That is, fate seems a stranger to moral considerations and might be reducible to scientific, rather than religious, understanding. At least, where religion entertains fate, religious and scientific understanding flirt with reconciliation. Which would offend Wittgenstein.

Compounding his difficulties here, and in reference to an openness to options entailed by the ‘hermeneutics of contemplation’, Phillips (RHC 50) admitted that philosophical openness itself belongs to a moral/political perspective. This moral shadow is a difficulty for the same Phillips who struggled so strenuously with Braithwaite. The final Phillips may be thought to have admitted that the religious

Barrett C Wittgenstein on Ethics and Religious Belief Blackwell Oxford 1991, p.94. Of course, while fate may be consistent with Islam, it is a stranger to the orthodox Judaeo-Christian worldview.
'sense' can be associated (although not 'assimilated') with the moral dimension of human experience. Indeed, and contrasting somewhat with his approach to Braithwaite's account of religious stories, Phillips (RHC 51) referred to a comment by Winch that certain stories are told not merely for entertainment but to convey important insights into the 'human condition'. Phillips reacted:

If this is so, we cannot say ... that 'the way we live our lives' excludes such insights, since such insights will determine, for some, how, in certain respects, they live their lives.

Effectively, over a significant period Phillips maintained that he could not be held to the second horn of Braithwaite's dilemma assimilating religious assertions with ethical incentives; but in order to secure the significance of religious locutions, he advocated freedom to choose to identify religious locutions with 'insights' (which might include those that are ethical) where that may be appropriate under the rubric of an 'hermeneutics of contemplation'. While here the later Phillips (RHC 57) encouraged the contemplation of possibilities of religious 'sense', Braithwaite would have been entitled to interest in this particular final claim. For religious locutions, significance was finally secured by Phillips. That is, Phillips found an (ethical) 'insight' option to the horns of Mackie's dilemma, but in order to do so he risked contradiction of his earlier rejection of the second horn of Braithwaite's dilemma. Indeed, it was quite hazardous for Phillips to engage in his particular discussion of fate and religious/ethical 'sense' in demonstration of the 'hermeneutics of contemplation'.

Put more sharply, either (contrary to Braithwaite) there is a distinctiveness about religious locutions that requires religious assertions to be identified separately from others including ethical sentiments, or (consistently with Braithwaite) there is not and religious locutions may be associated with ethical 'insights', at least in

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348 In this context it is also of interest to consider the argument put by Phillips (RWE 112) concerning the action of risking life in order to save another, and the purpose of religious language in those circumstances.
significant cases. Religion, in those cases, would be inseparable from moral ‘insight’. In that regard Phillips' own final advocacy (RHC 63), through reference to Simone Weil, was of the agapeistic (divine love) way of life. Phillips, in paraphrase of Weil, noted:

The only power God has is that of love. Compassion in human beings thus becomes a participation in that love; a love which involves turning one's back on human power, and the realisation that life itself is a grace. It is this love, love of the beauty of the world, which, in believers, draws them to itself, as well as being that by which they see themselves as judged.

Apparently, and in following Weil, something like the agapeistic characterisation of religion advocated by Braithwaite seems to have achieved final acceptance, at least in principle, by Phillips. Religion appears to be the provocation to agapeistic behaviour. In comparing Phillips with Wittgenstein, Cyril Barrett has put that position:

... some of [Wittgenstein's] remarks give the impression that there is nothing more to religious life than a way of life and a picture to guide it by. And it has been interpreted in this way by ... D Z Phillips in particular. Thus religious beliefs are reduced to certain practices ...

For Barrett, that ultimately would have to be Phillips' point even about worship and prayer.

Nevertheless, if a case were established that that is a religious 'way of thinking', the religious status of certain locutions is at risk consequent upon that 'assimilation' of religion with compassion, divine love and even grace. But his reference to love leaves Phillips (RHC 106) exposed to Feuerbach's accusation that the Christian religion contains a 'contradiction' (to be discussed in chapter 7) between faith and love:

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In faith there lies a malignant principle.\textsuperscript{350}

That is, not only does the assimilation of religion with love give rise to difficulties of identifying religion, but it is exposed to ridicule by Feuerbach. And Phillips (RHC 99, 100) related the devastating power of Feuerbach’s argument. Obviously referring to the humanity of Christ and God’s abandonment\textsuperscript{351} of him at Calvary, and since God would only renounce (through incarnation and death) his divinity out of love, that kind of (divine) love is clearly more important than God (qua existent):

> Who then is our saviour and redeemer? God or Love? Love; for God as God has not saved us, but Love, which transcends the difference between the divine and human personality.\textsuperscript{352}

\textit{Prima facie}, an argument for the reduction of religion to divine love; there would remain no further sense in the identification of religion other than as divine love. That being the case, Feuerbach’s argument raises the need to identify what might be distinctly religious about religion without God \textit{qua} existent. How can the divine nature of religious love be identified? Without such identification, religion cannot enjoy particular significance; its significance is inseparable from that of various other ‘practices’.

\textbf{Now}, Feuerbach’s point about the reduction of religion is given poignancy by the Judaeo-Christian isomorphism ‘God is love’, the locution of particular interest to Phillips (FAF 146, 216, 218; WR 17; RRC 216; RHC 95) and to this thesis. But, there was a response to Feuerbach that Phillips attempted; and it relies on two features particularly applicable to Feuerbach. First (RHC 40, 105, 109), Phillips claimed that Feuerbach’s doctrine of projection (rejected by Phillips, as considered earlier in this chapter) constrained him within a human concept of love.


\textsuperscript{351} ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’ (Matthew 27.46; Mark 15.34).

\textsuperscript{352} Feuerbach L \textit{The Essence of Christianity} op.cit., p.53.
Consequently, and second (RHC 53), Phillips claimed that Feuerbach had no concept of divine love; for Feuerbach, divine love was just like human love. Early in Religion and the Hermeneutics of Contemplation Phillips (RHC 40) criticised Feuerbach’s religiously inadequate understanding of love:

What is more, how can creation or the gift of life be thought of in anthropomorphic terms?

Phillips’ point is that there is no anthropomorphic sense to gifts that are beyond human capacity to be given. The notion of ‘gifted people’ precludes the idea that their talents were given by fellow humanity according to Phillips’ argument. Gifts of days and lives on this view also require the religious realm to be qualified to endow the function of divine giving. These notions cannot be thought of in anthropomorphic terms but require religious context. And the same would be true of divine love (RHC 41, 43).

In his consideration of Feuerbach, however, here Phillips is not beyond question. At the certain cost of offending Phillips’ appeal (RWE 147) that the sense of gift in these contexts should not be interrogated, that can be done. It would not be considered unintelligible, for instance, for gifted people to be regarded as having received their gifts courtesy of their genetic inheritance. And genetic inheritance is bestowed, anthropomorphically, by the accident of parentage. That is, it may be to insist dogmatically upon a religious gloss to require any understanding of genetic inheritance to rely upon divine endowment.

Similar comment would be applicable to the notion (RHC 40) of the gift of days and lives. A day is a day; to use locutions that employ the notion of ‘gift’ in regard to days may be meaningful but requires a mythopoeic religious attitude to be so. On Earth, days follow days because the universe has not yet succumbed entropically. But the fact that days will cease does not mean that the days already past or left to

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353 Here Phillips further developed his view of the Christian apprehension of ‘gift’ that he had earlier presented at RWE 147.
come are a gift from anyone; that idea requires an attitude that is not part of what it means to understand the sequence of the motion of Earth around the sun that results in days. It is, through Phillips' 'hermeneutics of contemplation' (to make special appeal to religious 'sense'), a religious picture of reality which is not necessary for understanding that reality itself.\textsuperscript{354} That is, anthropomorphisms aside, non-religious explanation can obviate religion conceived in this manner.

And the same suggests itself in regard to creation. Phillips (RHC 53) argued that belief in creation was belief in an act of renunciation on the part of the divine:

\ldots we must return to the concept of creation as an abdication, the creation of a world in which something, perfection, is necessarily lacking.

That might be a religious view. But to express it requires broadly comprehensible concepts and vocabulary. And how does that allow for a religious 'sense'? Further, if a common vocabulary is applicable, then, for those unfamiliar with a religious 'sense', the concept of (divine) creation is not only distinctly strange but also unnecessary for describing and appreciating the universe.\textsuperscript{355} Indeed, without a particular kind of Creator (\textit{qua} existent), it is simply bizarre to consider the universe as 'an abdication' of anything. (Where there is no entity to perform an abdication, what is the grammar of abdication?) But Phillips cannot concede the activity of a Creator. While it may have been Phillips' (final) objective to recommend (if not prescribe\textsuperscript{356}) religious ways of 'seeing' the world consequent upon his 'hermeneutics of contemplation', it is even unclear why that hermeneutic might produce that particular result.

\textsuperscript{354} Phillips was aware of these points at RHC 66, 67.
\textsuperscript{355} Phillips (RWE 16-18) acknowledged this kind of point in his description of arguments by David Hume, Norman Kemp Smith and Philo.
Conclusion

Phillips' extensively developed Wittgensteinian position presented a particular characterisation of 'God is love' in 'distinctive' language-games. Because of the continuing questions that relate to his position, however, Phillips remains threatened by the horns of Mackie's dilemma and also the dilemma that he himself proposed. That is, because religious 'ways of thinking' (in response to Mackie) and the 'hermeneutics of contemplation' (in response to Phillips' own dilemma) are unconvincing options for avoiding the horns of those dilemmas, the apparent choice remains the exclusive horns: between fact and metaphor (for Mackie's dilemma), and (for Phillips' dilemma) between 'recollection' (truth-aptness) and (Marxist/Freudian/other modes of) 'suspicion'. Critically, where truth-apt fact remains an alternative in regard to 'God is love', that locution might be characterised as description.

Despite his discussion of Braithwaite, Feuerbach, Bouwsma and Rhees, then, Phillips' case about the distinctiveness and significance of the language-games of religion without theism's God remains to be established. Indeed, argument has been introduced to the effect that Phillips' views on the nature of religion\(^\text{357}\) are problematic to the point where, despite his aspiration to identify the truly religious, religion itself has not been comprehended.\(^\text{356}\) That is, Phillips has set an ambitious project if religion should be identified through 'seeing', 'sensing', 'paying attention' and 'thinking' in pursuit of the 'hermeneutics of contemplation'.

At this stage, then, Phillips continues challenged. That is, it remains to be shown how his religious 'way of thinking' can be articulated that gives his particular 'perspicuous representation' (FAF xiv; WR xviii, 200; BR 25) of 'God is love'. Further, on that basis and considering his particular submissions concerning 'God is love', Phillips has not shown that 'God is love', being truly religious, must be

\(^{358}\) Notably, in consideration of Phillips' rejection of Braithwaite, J L Mackie came to a similar conclusion. Cf: Mackie J L The Miracle of Theism op.cit., pp.226-229.
characterised as a rule and not a description. His option to the horns of the Braithwaite/Mackie dilemma being unconvincing, and, pending further consideration of Phillips' reliance on Feuerbach to disqualify 'God' as a referent (to be addressed in chapter 7), 'God is love' continues as a candidate for description. Of course, if the grammar of 'God' demonstrates that 'God' does not refer and accordingly proscribes characterisation of 'God is love' as description, then the locution might be a language-game rule pursuant to the description/rule distinction. But that would depend upon Phillips' elucidation of the grammar of 'God is love'. And that is the agenda of the next two chapters.
CHAPTER 6
DESCRIPTION/RULE GRAMMAR

... the harmony between thought and reality is to be found in the grammar of the language.  

Significance of the Description/Rule Distinction

It now may be useful to recall the significance of the description/rule distinction. It provides the ground on which Phillips' characterisation of 'God is love' is being considered. For language-games, including those of religion, the distinction presents a choice for characterising certain locutions: they may be descriptions or language-game rules. In regard to 'God is love', Phillips (FAF 146, 216, 218; WR 17; RRC 216; RHC 95) would characterise that locution as a rule simpliciter.

Notably, other choices have been offered. Braithwaite's dilemma purports a choice between 'empirical' and 'moral' characterisations of religious locutions. Mackie's dilemma, essentially following Braithwaite, offers a choice between factual and metaphorical characterisations (FAF 319). But for Phillips (FAF 323), religious locutions are distinctively religious. To consider them factual would amount to superstition; and to understand them as metaphorical expressions requiring pervasive moral characterisation would be reductionist. Ultimately, then, for Phillips (RHC 65) religious locutions are 'ways of thinking' (in contemplation of religious language-game rules). Indeed, Phillips exploited that characterisation of religious locutions by way of avoiding choice between truth-apt 'recollection' and

\[359\] PG 112 p.162.
Freudian/Marxist/other 'suspicion'. Phillips employed the spurious nature of this choice to facilitate the presentation of an option (the 'hermeneutics of contemplation') in its avoidance. So, what is the point at which this consideration of these issues has now arrived?

Unless (by articulation of his 'ways of thinking') Phillips can avoid Braithwaite's dilemma, choice is limited between description and moral characterisation of religious locutions. And unless Mackie's dilemma can be avoided, choice is limited to description or metaphor (perhaps, as Mackie suggested, moral metaphor of the kind offered by Braithwaite's dilemma). That is, unless Phillips can provide a grammatically justified option beyond the exclusive alternatives of Mackie's dilemma (exploiting Braithwaite's dilemma) then, mutatis mutandis, the horns of those dilemmas threaten. Indeed, religious locutions, where metaphorical (under Mackie's dilemma) might remain (by virtue of Phillips' own proffered dilemma) under a cloud of Freudian/Marxist/other 'suspicion'. So, the description/rule distinction must be available for Phillips' purpose of advocating his particular rule characterisation option to the horns of these dilemmas. The distinction must be critical to his 'ways of thinking'.

Indeed, the option identified by Phillips in avoidance of these dilemmas, allowing for distinctive religious language-games, must also argue significance. Phillips' proposed options based on the description/rule distinction ('ways of thinking' in avoidance of Mackie and the 'hermeneutics of contemplation' in avoidance of his own dilemma) must be substantiated. That is, in response to those dilemmas, Phillips needed to articulate a religion without God qua existent. Any choice of the

360 A 'scalpel' metaphor has been used in regard to the critique of religion given by Nietzsche, Lyotard, Derrida and Foulcault in Lamb WW H Living Truth – Truthful Living ATF Press Adelaide 2004. Cf: Grundy Peter C 'Is religion just about believing, or is it also believing about ...?' in St Mark’s Review 2005 (1) No 198 pp.51, 52. Lamb (pp.34-39) allows Hume in the company of those wielding that 'scalpel of suspicion'. Phillips (RHC 1) follows Ricoeur in employing a 'recollection'/suspicion' bifurcation. Nevertheless, Phillips (RHC 55, 56) also allowed Hume as 'a master of suspicion'.

horn of Mackie's dilemma that allows for description might be thought to resolve the question of significance. But, in avoidance of Mackie's horns, to choose to characterise a locution as a rule raises the question whether its game is significant; or whether participation in that particular game might be declined simply on the ground that the game is unimportant to the point of irrelevance. By analogy, it would be unremarkable for someone to decline to play Patience; and many regard religion in the same way. However, it is Wittgensteinian to consider religious language-games profoundly important. So 'God is love' qua rule must be articulated for the blasé. While that issue continues pervasive upon the conclusion of chapter 5, choice pursuant to the description/rule distinction nevertheless remains central. That is, the justified characterisation of 'God is love' as rule simpliciter would exploit the Wittgensteinian grammar by which, for Phillips, an option to the horns of the dilemmas put by Braithwaite and Mackie would be available. For those reasons, the focus of this thesis remains the grammar that Phillips promoted on the ground of the description/rule distinction identified in the post-Tractatus Wittgenstein.

There is a supplementary but important point to be emphasised here. Phillips dismissed (RWE 149) the possibility of atheism. And consistently with his response to these dilemmas Phillips aspired to the rejection of description for characterising 'God is love'. For Phillips, the rule alternative is the only justifiable choice in regard to 'God is love'. Indeed, Phillips needed to deny the 'friends' of religion their preference under the description/rule distinction: the sequential choice of both alternatives in a case like 'God is love'. So, in addition to arguing (from grammar) for identifying that locution as a rule (and showing its significance), the challenge for Phillips also would be to find reasons against choosing to identify it as a description. (And Phillips summoned Feuerbach to that second task.) Crucially, and particularly in response to Braithwaite and Mackie, Phillips needed to convince about his Wittgensteinian religion. But even if he could not, that does not mean that the Wittgensteinian alternative proposed by the 'friends' of religion might be viable: reasons would also need to be advanced in favour of that position. Which confirms attention on the description/rule distinction. By virtue of grammar, what Wittgensteinian conclusion should be drawn about 'God is love'? What
grammatical considerations might inform the choice to be made concerning the alternative characterisations as description (which, believed true, is also a rule) and rule *simpliciter*?

As has been established, any (grammatically disclosed) separation of rules from descriptions in the manner discussed so far is Wittgensteinian (*PI* 248, 251, 295). And for Phillips (*FAF* 146, 216, 218; *WR* 17; *RRC* 216; *RHC* 95), ‘God is love’ is a rule *simpliciter* for its language-games. Many rules, like ‘Seraphim are six-winged’ (Isaiah 6.2), are difficult to regard as (true) descriptions. There, like anyone else, the ‘friends’ should not be willing to run the risk of nonsense (by incorrect choice). But the ‘friends’ would argue for other rules (like the doctrinal formulation ‘God is love’) to be (true) description. So, as was made clear in chapter 3 above, grammar has profoundly significant disclosures to make. Given that some rules are rules *simpliciter*, it is apparent that unless grammar is capable of disclosing rules *simpliciter*, in a range of cases nonsense could not be discriminated. Of course, here nonsense is not the nonsense of factual error; it is not the nonsense of ridiculous falsehood. It is where language goes completely on holiday (*PI* 38). It is to treat a meaningful locution, contrary to its language-game’s grammar, in an inappropriate manner. Any failure to perceive the description/rule distinction in the presentation of various locutions and, upon the disclosure of grammar, failure to choose correctly, results in Wittgensteinian nonsense.

Crucially, such nonsense could only be revealed upon grammar’s ‘perspicuous representation’ (*PI* 122):

A main source of our failure to understand is that we do not *command a clear view* of the use of our words. – Our grammar is lacking in this sort of perspicuity.
So Wittgenstein did not consider the discovery of nonsense to be straightforward. But in Phillips' exegesis (FAF 218), when nonsense is revealed by the apprehension of grammar, philosophical confusion is avoided. For Phillips, and as was clear from his argument with Braithwaite, the description/rule distinction purports to facilitate the evaporation of philosophical confusion about the status of what is being said. Recognition of that distinction, and choosing correctly pursuant to it, is critical for Phillips' (non-atheistic) case in rejection of description for 'God is love'. He would also need to substantiate choice of 'God is love' as 'confession' (FAF 146) or 'grammatical rule in dogmatics' (RHC 95) in avoidance of nonsense. The logically prior question, however, is whether perspicuous representation (P1 122; FAF xiv; WR xviii, 200; BR 25) of grammar can be given in the interests of valid choice.

The Centrality of Grammar

Now, choice is only possible when the alternatives are clear. Clear alternatives, in turn, are articulated by the drawing of distinctions. Crucially, failure to choose one alternative or the other may be a failure to comprehend that a choice is necessary. Intellectual engagement with the language-game context must eventuate: in appropriate contexts choice must be made. And over an extended period Phillips pressed for acceptance of his firmly convinced choice concerning 'God is love'.

But the act of choice can be complicated by confusion over the nature of the alternatives. And, whatever the aspirations for grammar, Wittgenstein's now classic examples (BB 55; Z 69; PI 58, 248, 251, 295) demonstrate the risk of confusion. In pursuit of his agenda, Wittgenstein needed not merely to articulate the grammatical discrimination of rules and their role in language-games. He also needed to show how, in particular language-game contexts, grammar facilitates correct choice. That is, even if grammar can discriminate rules (that might also be

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true descriptions) and rules *simpliciter*, the apprehension of grammar itself might be an uncertain undertaking. Otherwise there would be no issue between Phillips and the ‘friends’: they would apprehend the same grammar for ‘God is love’.

Of course, some meaningful locutions do present language-game rules *simpliciter*. In religion, for instance, most Wittgensteinians might agree that ‘Seraphim are six-winged’ is a Hebrew mythopoetic rule and not (pace ‘friends’ of an obscurantist type) also a (true) description of the angelic host. But if, as Wittgensteinian ‘friends’ maintain, in religious language-games certain rules may be also considered (sequentially) true descriptions, then a religious locution (like ‘God is love’) needs to be scrutinised concerning its possible status: there is a need to ‘look and see’ (P/I 340). And, Wittgensteinians propose grammar as the instrument of disclosure.

So, in Wittgensteinian orthodoxy, for Phillips (*WR* xviii) the philosophical requirement is one of learning ‘the differences’ and complying with them. Nevertheless, unless grammar actually provides perspicious representation, although they might appeal to grammar there is no reason why either Phillips or the Wittgensteinian ‘friends’ should be believed in regard to religious locutions. Significantly, disputes over any resolution of ‘God is love’ will depend upon features additional to the locution itself. That locution’s language-game use (following Cavell) reveals its depth grammar, grammar being normative.

On that basis, then, how might grammar disclose that a locution is a rule *simpliciter* or both a rule and a description (believed true) in characterisation of ‘God is love’?

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364 Cavell S *Must We Mean What We Say?* Cambridge University Press 1969, p.56.

Grammar's Promise

Some statements (including supposed historical statements as in *PI* 79: ‘Moses was the man who led the Israelites through the wilderness’) contain what surface grammar seemingly would present as descriptions by virtue of definite articles and nouns. Some rules also employ the definite article and common nouns (as in ‘the kings are used for drawing lots’: *PI* 567); and other rules (like ‘one plays Patience by oneself: *PI* 248) may also contain proper nouns. Without nouns, proper or common, no locution could amount to a rule of that type (a rule of a game). But if the game were only about its own locutions (like ‘in a hole in the ground there lived a hobbit’), then for Phillips (RHC 95) ‘grammatical objects’ would be the subject of the grammatical rules. That is, ‘in a hole in the ground there lived a hobbit’ discloses more than the rules of English grammar. Nevertheless (despite the use of nouns) it is not a (real world) description. Ideally at least, its language-game should show by its revealed grammar (properly comprehended) that the locution is a rule for its terms and that its language-game is the story itself.

Problematically, then, nouns make surface grammar appearances both in descriptions and language-game rules. This may be the point that is exploited in Wittgenstein’s now classic example (PI 251): ‘Every rod has a length’. By virtue of that locution a language-game rule, employing (what Phillips calls) ‘grammatical objects’, also looks like a description of reality. Although McCutcheon has suffered significant criticism in not having identified in detail the instability that (as has

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366 Note that in this regard Wittgenstein did not much refer to ‘reality’; and when he did, he was constrained by his approach to language and grammar. Cf: *PG* 55, p.97:

The connection between “language and reality” is made by definitions of words, and these belong to grammar, so that language remains self-contained and autonomous.

Also see OC 191:

Well, if everything speaks for an hypothesis and nothing against it – is it then certainly true? One may designate it as such. – But does it certainly agree with reality, with the facts? – With this question you are already going round in a circle.

367 Scott M Review of *Religion Within the Limits of Language Alone* www.arsdisputandi.org. Lack of ‘stability’ in the distinction was earlier
been explained from chapter 1 onwards) she found in Wittgenstein’s distinction between rules and descriptions, it may be considered that this is an initial opening for characterising such an instability. Presumably, an instability between alternatives hazards choice. And, the instability of Wittgenstein’s distinction teases whether the justified characterisation of the locution is as rule *simpliciter* or (sequentially at least) both rule and description (believed true). Indeed, even were it believed with Phillips that once the grammar has been comprehended there is no possibility of failure to discern nonsense, the grammar still needs to be correctly comprehended. But how can that be achieved?

The difficulty, here, is pressing. Even if the function of grammar were articulate, allowing choice consequent upon the description/rule distinction to be made, it must be asked whether Phillips successfully argued the unacceptable nature of the approaches to religion taken by the ‘friends’. Unless Phillips could be considered successful in that, his particular Wittgensteinian rejection of the ‘friends’ would fail. Prior to presenting such an adjudication, however, the point has been reached at which an attempt might be made to clarify grammar’s promise. That is, and further to the introduction of this matter in chapter 4, how is grammar’s promise delivered? How does it tell (*Pl* 373) what the ‘objects’ of the locution are? If we comprehend grammar’s promise, we might then contemplate how it may be delivered.

As has been noticed already, in his *Lectures on Religious Belief* Wittgenstein condemned Father O’Hara for a ‘blunder’ during a BBC broadcast lecture in 1930: Father O’Hara failed to distinguish religion from science. In criticising O’Hara and articulating a distinction (*LC* 57-59) between religious and empirical locutions, Wittgenstein may have foreshadowed the possibility of the grammatical identification of religion itself. If Wittgenstein was to consider that the discrimination of religion and science was a matter for grammar, then he may have based that on the view that grammar discriminates language-games (and not merely kinds of locutions within them) because language-games reveal their

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grammar. And any ‘blunder’ (LC 59) would be a failure to comprehend the grammar of a religious language-game.

In the *Brown Book* (BB pp.vii, 81) Wittgenstein considered that language-games were complete in themselves. So Rhees considered that agreement or disagreement with reality would be something different in the different languages (or language-games). Problematically, differing kinds of agreement with reality may permit the spectre of differing realities. But there, for Wittgensteinians like Gaita, grammar must be the determinant. Despite the unclarity\(^{368}\) of Wittgenstein’s account of grammar, then, and if they are to persevere in their convictions, Wittgensteinians must continue reliant upon the disclosures of grammar. And the disclosures of grammar are consequent upon its competence. That is, upon the revelation of grammar by language-games, grammar is clearly expected to disclose the rules and any descriptions articulated in the locutions of a language-game.

Despite Wittgenstein’s own unclarity, Wittgensteinianism of any sort depends upon grammar’s promise. Commenting on Wittgenstein’s reference (*PI* 373) to theology as grammar, and in regard to Wittgenstein’s aphorism that grammar tells what kind of object a thing is, Raimond Gaita\(^{369}\) has observed that grammar, as Wittgenstein spoke of it, is not a theory of reality, nor does it assume a theory of reality. Grammar ‘determines’ what it means to speak of reality, existence, understanding, belief, knowledge and so on. Gaita has proposed that careful and detailed attention to grammar will show how conceptually various are concepts of truth and reality and the critical concepts which mark what it is to think well or badly: for Gaita that is why, in regard to ‘the differences’ already mentioned, Wittgenstein promised ‘I will teach you the differences’.\(^{370}\) At this point, the cry goes up for that

\(^{368}\) Articulated in chapter 3 above.


heuristic: being crucial, it will characterise much of what remains to be said in this thesis. The question is how, for Wittgenstein, 'God is love' can be subject to the grammatical distinction between locutions as descriptions and as rules. (The significance of that question is elevated by the fact that Wittgensteinians differ adamantly over its answer.)

Three major issues, then, continue in the face of that promise: the function of grammar, description in religion, and the status of rules in language-games. Reserving until later Phillip's arguments against description in religion and those in favour of religious locutions as rules simpliciter, we return first to the specific question about the function of the grammar revealed by language-games: its disclosures. Grammar continues central.

**Grammar's Disclosures**

*The Grammatical Issue*

Once the nature of a locution is properly recognised then, for Wittgenstein Unsinn nonsense can not prevail. In religion, it will be known how locutions should be understood. And Phillips would purport to be capable of, and justified in, choosing against 'God is love' as description. So, the critical question concerns the disclosure of grammar. How is it possible to identify the grammar of 'God is love' in order to appreciate what it discloses?

Before proceeding, and with the presumption to finesse Wittgenstein, first a development of an important distinction already drawn above. Whether or not it ever amounts to a description, in Wittgensteinian terms 'God is love' is a grammatically disclosed rule for the orthodox religious language-game: it is true of that religious language-game. And if it is to be established that it is a language-
game rule *simpliciter*, then that also would be shown grammatically. That is, it would be indicated by virtue of a rule of grammar that the locution should be treated only as a language-game rule. Importantly, the game rule and the rule of grammar differ. The game rule is something like the following: ‘treat “God is love” in this way ... ’ or ‘in this game, do this ... ’. The rule of grammar might be something like ‘use “God is love” as a language-game rule’. The essential difficulty here is that, for any language-game rule to be identified as a rule or rule *simpliciter*, the grammar by which they are rules must be comprehended. But how can the rule of grammar, identifying the locution as a language-game rule, be recognised?

For his part, and consistently with Wittgenstein, Phillips gave such an account. Phillips' early (1965) account in *The Concept of Prayer* included the claim (CP 8) that:

> Depth grammar is made explicit by asking what can and cannot be said of the concept in question.

Critically, this might be the essence for Phillips of what it means to 'look and see' (*PI* 340, p.175). That is, 'looking and seeing' is essentially a grammatical exercise about what can and cannot be said. But without clarity about grammar and its function, the point of 'looking and seeing' would not be comprehended. What is being looked for? Without an answer to that question the objective in contemplation of 'God is love' would not be appreciated, hazarding correct characterisation of 'God is love' as rule *simpliciter* or rule and description.

Notably, and in chronological order, Pitcher, Hallie, Hacker and McCutcheon have made proposals of interest for the identification of the grammars disclosed by language-games for which the description/rule distinction is relevant. They are of interest because the publication of these views spans Phillips' publication history from *The Concept of Prayer* (1965) to *Religion and the Hermeneutics of Contemplation* (2001). Prior to further consideration of Phillips, then, we turn to them.
George Pitcher

In his (1965) proposal, published in the same year as Phillips' *The Concept of Prayer*, and in addressing the identification of grammar, George Pitcher employed examples from Lewis Carroll that might be taken to apply Wittgenstein's *exemplar* (*PL* 251): 'I can't imagine the opposite of this'. Take Alice's statement 'I can't remember things before they happen'. Clearly, assures Pitcher (consistently with *PL* 251, although Pitcher does not say so), it is not an empirical but rather a logical necessity that one can't remember things before they happen.\(^{371}\) Hence, and to extrapolate from Pitcher, not to take Alice's statement as the expression of a rule *simpliciter* leads to nonsense such as 'I don't (as a matter of fact) remember things before they happen'.\(^{372}\) Rather than being false, in countenancing memory of an event that has yet to transpire, this is nonsense of the grammatically mistaken variety. And that blunder would have resulted from treating a rule as a description. The grammar, which shows the nature of the locution, has been revealed.

Accordingly, Pitcher presented an understanding of grammar that exploits the differentiation of descriptions and rules. Although Pitcher did not formulate it so, that understanding would be: if nonsense is the consequence of treating an otherwise articulate locution as a description, then that locution is only a rule. That is, to discriminate (by virtue of nonsense) between rule and description is to utilise a locution's grammar: grammar shows what makes sense and what does not on the ground of the description/rule distinction.\(^{373}\) Conveniently, this is a conception

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\(^{373}\) Importantly, whether Pitcher thought so or not, if nonsense is not to result, then the locution's grammar needs to indicate that it is a rule *simpliciter* as opposed to a rule and a description (believed true).
of grammar that not only embraces rules but countenances description. But it is not without the following difficulty.

What consideration might be given to the possibility that Alice's locution ('I can't remember things before they happen') could operate as a description? That locution certainly looks like a rule of a language-game, both for Wonderland and beyond. But it might be argued (against Pitcher's grammatical test) that Alice's locution could be understood to be commenting descriptively on the fact that time only operates in a particular (forwards) direction. Alice could be taken to be asserting from experience that she does not remember things before they happen. That locution, it might be suggested, may be a true description about the direction of time (and its implications for memory and reality) and not a language-game rule simpliciter about the use of words like 'remember' (although it may inform such use). The kind of instability already mentioned between rule and description seems to emerge with consequent difficulties for determining with Phillips (CP 8) what can and cannot be said.

Philip Hallie

Turning to Philip Hallie, two journal articles are relevant. Because its focus is 'instability' in the description/rule distinction itself, consideration of the first (1963\textsuperscript{374}) article should wait until argument is presented in the next chapter concerning instability in that distinction. Here attention may turn to Hallie's later (1966) position. Hallie's (1966) proposed identification of Wittgensteinian grammar apparently relied upon \textit{PI} 251: \textit{a grammatical statement makes a claim whose opposite cannot be imagined}.\textsuperscript{375} And somewhat misleadingly, Hallie decided that grammatical assertions must be 'logical tautologies'. There his view is questionable. Just because rules are certain (as, for Wittgensteinians, are the


\textsuperscript{375} Hallie P  'Wittgenstein's Exclusion of Metaphysical Nonsense' \textit{The Philosophical Quarterly} Vol 16 No 63 April 1966, p.101.
rules of grammar), that does not mean that all rules are tautologous. ‘Use this locution as a language-game rule’ is a rule of grammar but it is not tautologous; neither is an alternative rule of grammar: ‘use this locution as a description’. Their negations do not self-contradict. Not all rules, then, are tautologous and rules of grammar are among those that are not.

Consider now a particular rule of a game (as opposed to a rule of grammar). Hallie’s concept of imagining the ‘opposite’ is unclear. But it is certainly not possible to imagine the ‘opposite’ of Wittgenstein’s ‘every rod has a length’ if that means to deny it. To deny that locution would be to self-contradict; it is a tautology. Because its ‘opposite’ cannot be imagined, for Hallie it is grammatically disclosed to be a rule. So the grammar of that locution has been disclosed. But while ‘every rod has a length’ is inconceivably false, that does not elevate inconceivable falsehood into a criterion for identifying game rules by rules of grammar. Consider the following. In Phillips’ advocacy ‘God is love’ is a rule simpliciter. Qua rule, it cannot be false. And it is certainly a rule. But for the ‘friends’ of religion ‘God is love’, while a language-game rule, is conceivably false qua truth-apt description. While ‘God is love’ cannot be denied without offending the orthodox language-game, its truth status can be questioned. In the face of tsunamis it might even be considered false and subsequently rejected as a rule, provoking withdrawal from the (orthodox) game. So what grammatical criterion can be identified that would allow rejection of a rule because, qua description, it can be considered false? Inconceivable falsehood will not do it. So Hallie’s criterion of grammar does not discriminate the grammar of rules that might be descriptions whether or not it is competent to discriminate the grammar of rules simpliciter. It is inadequate to identify the grammar of locutions.

376 In the next chapter, reference will be made to an argument by Debra Aidun to the effect that in certain cases, speaking about words and speaking about objects ‘come to the same’. While Aidun’s argument will be considered in the adjudication of the dispute between Phillips and the ‘friends’, here it is relevant to note that one conclusion drawn by Aidun is that any suggestion that grammatical rules are analytic is not correct. Contrary to Hallie’s criterion of grammar, if Aidun is accepted, when it comes to grammar, if grammar is certain, its certainty would not depend upon analyticity.
To this point the grammar which discloses language-game rules has not been clearly identified. But with Hacker (1996), we might contemplate 'metaphysical' propositions.\(^{377}\)

Now, in the *Brown Book* (*BB* p.81), Wittgenstein confirmed that language-games are languages complete in themselves. And Hacker\(^{378}\) has noted that Wittgenstein (*BB* p.55) considered the philosopher's role to be one of identifying rules in propositions:

... what we always do when we meet the word "can" in a metaphysical proposition. We show that this proposition hides a grammatical rule. That is to say, we destroy the outward similarity between a metaphysical proposition and an experiential one.

In this quote from the *Blue Book*, Wittgenstein made it clear that 'metaphysical' statements, employing the word 'can', convey grammatical rules. This might be taken as an early acknowledgement by Wittgenstein of the grammatical distinction between locutions as language-game rules and as statements about empirical reality. If so, it foreshadowed *Pl* 248, *Pl* 251 and *Pl* 295 in that regard. Importantly, Hacker\(^{379}\) acknowledged that 'metaphysical assertions' are often cast in modal form. And Wittgenstein (*RFM* 88), according to Hacker (1996), argued that 'metaphysical' propositions, asserting connections, are always connections in grammar:


\(^{378}\) Hacker P M S *Wittgenstein’s Place in Twentieth-century Analytic Philosophy* op.cit., p.120.

The 'necessary proposition' that red is more like orange than it is like yellow is not a description of a property of red, but a licence to describe any red object as more akin in colour to any orange object than to any yellow one. It is not a truth which follows from the meaning of the word 'red', but is partly constitutive of its meaning, for it is the expression of a rule for the use of that word.\textsuperscript{380}

It emerged for Hacker that the apparent certainty of 'metaphysical' propositions reflects on the role that such rules fulfil in linguistic practices. Importantly, they also reflect the determination to employ the relevant expressions in accord with rules which are misleadingly expressed in the form of assertions about reality.\textsuperscript{381} In short, and to return to Phillips' lament, a locution can be taken (mistakenly) as an assertion about reality when it is (exclusively) expressing a rule for the use of concepts employed by the locution.

The point can be demonstrated by considering modal locutions employing possessive pronouns. 'My pin' and 'my pain' seem to present the same surface grammar: that of ownership.\textsuperscript{382} Several confusions can arise in consequence. Hacker\textsuperscript{383} has described the error of projecting the surface grammar of ownership (qua rule) on to the grammar of sensation (qua reality); and the similarly misguided notion that to feel a pain is to perceive a pain just as to feel a pin is to perceive a pin:

The patient accumulation and arrangement of such grammatical differences will yield a perspicuous representation of the grammar.

\textsuperscript{381} Cf. \textit{RFM} 170; Hacker P M S \textit{Wittgenstein's Place in Twentieth-century Analytic Philosophy} op.cit., p.119.  
\textsuperscript{383} Hacker P M S \textit{Wittgenstein's Place in Twentieth-century Analytic Philosophy} op.cit., p.108.
This matter was considered (by Wittgenstein's own patient accumulation) in the
Blue Book (BB p.49):

... it is this troublesome feature in our grammar which the realist does not
notice. It is conceivable that I feel pain in a tooth in another man's mouth;
and the man who says that he cannot feel the other's toothache is not
denying this. The grammatical difficulty which we are in we shall only see
clearly if we get familiar with the idea of feeling pain in another person's
body. For otherwise, in puzzling about this problem, we shall be liable to
confuse our metaphysical proposition "I can't feel his pain" with the
experiential proposition, "We can't have (haven't as a rule) pains in another
person's tooth".

Here, of course, modal terms are used in such propositions. Wittgenstein noted
two uses of (the modal) 'can't'. The first, in an expression that one can't feel
another's pain and, second, in an expression that one can't have pain in another's
tooth. In the second example (BB p.49):

... the word "can't" is used in the same way as in the proposition "An iron
nail can't scratch glass". (We could write this in the form "experience
teaches that an iron nail doesn't scratch glass", thus doing away with the
"can't".)

The second example, then, presents a conclusion reached on the basis of
experience; it is about empirical possibility. The first example, however, is a
'metaphysical' proposition that is not known by empirical experience; it is about
(modal) necessity and must be a rule. In Hacker's summary, that first proposition
is the expression of a convention for the use of words. That is: modal terms in
'metaphysical' propositions disclose rules for the use of words. In other words,
modal terms are indicators of grammar. Modal terms, as expressions of possibility
or necessity, would disclose rules of grammar.

384 Cf: BB p.54.
Even if this seems clear, there is a most significant difficulty. Hacker has observed that ‘metaphysical’ locutions are often cast in modal form. The question concerns the ways in which various statements must be regarded, whether descriptions, or as rules simpliciter. Provided that modal terms are not removable from any ‘metaphysical’ assertions, a convenient ‘modal sift’ for locutions as ‘metaphysical’, at least, may be promised: the depth grammar of locutions qua rules, although not necessarily rules simpliciter, would be disclosed by their surface grammar. That, however, does not appear to be the case. The reason is as follows.

Hacker has said that putative ‘metaphysical’ assertions are often cast in modal form. As examples of those that do present in modal form, ‘I can’t remember things before they happen’ is a candidate given the preceding discussion. Its modal form, disclosing its grammar, would give an indication that it is a language-game rule. But it has already been noted that Alice’s locution might be understood as a description. And consider from the range of religious locutions, assertions about God like ‘God is the strength of Israel’ (from 1Samuel 15.29). This locution must certainly be regarded as a language-game rule; for Judaism it is a theological essential. Nevertheless, ‘God is the strength of Israel’ also looks like a description of the kind ‘Phillips is the strength of Claremont’. Critically, despite their (surface grammar) rule form such rules might also be candidates for the expression of descriptions. At the least, the description option needs to be ruled out if a locution is to be disclosed as a rule simpliciter. And the ‘modal shift’ would not be a comprehensive indicator of grammatical rule.

Now, universal relegation of language-game rules to rules simpliciter should be resisted. Otherwise, Wittgensteinians among others would be in trouble where it is desirable to identify rules that provide descriptions in, say, science. How, then, can grammar be comprehended such that it can be employed to identify religious and scientific rules simpliciter or rules that might also be descriptions? Before turning more fully to that question, and the Pitcher, Hallie and Hacker approaches to the

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identification of grammar having been considered, we next turn to McCutcheon and then finally to Phillips.

*Felicity McCutcheon*

It was noted in chapter 4 that, for her part, (in 2000) Felicity McCutcheon (*RWLLA* 107) suggested an interrogative ‘criterion’ of grammar (which, like Pitcher’s understanding of grammar, also exploits the notion of nonsense). She has proposed that the Wittgensteinian criterion for identifying grammar is that it would not make sense to ‘question’ a proposition when one is playing the game to which it belongs as a rule; the identification of the game being given by context not content. The following, then, might be considered McCutcheon’s understanding: *if nonsense is the consequence of questioning a locution, then grammar identifies the locution as a rule.*[^386] That is, according to this understanding, the outcome of the process of questioning shows the applicable grammar and grammar is discerned when a rule is disclosed.

By way of interpretation of McCutcheon, if questioning a language-game locution does not make sense while the game is being played (and rules, necessarily, characterise some game locutions), then grammar discloses the locution to be a rule of the game. (A rule of grammar has been revealed also: that the locution is a language-game rule.) However, the same kind of question might be put to McCutcheon as to Hacker: can McCutcheon’s ‘criterion’ distinguish between a rule that might also be a description and a rule *simpliciter*? She would need to be able recognise rules *simpliciter* where they appear in religious language-games. But as a ‘friend’ of religion, she would want to leave open the possibility of description in some contexts (like ‘God is love’).

[^386]: Note that by ‘question’ McCutcheon means ‘doubt’ not ‘flout’.
[^387]: Although McCutcheon does not claim so, it is possible that such a ‘criterion’ could be justified by part of *OC* 56:

| Doubt gradually loses its sense. This language-game just is like that. |
| And everything descriptive of a language-game is part of logic. |

Reference to this quote will be resumed at chapter 7.
Now, the critical point here concerns the kinds of locutions that it does not make sense to question. So in what sense is it a nonsense to question any such rules? For Aidun, the rules of grammar (which would include ‘treat “God is love” as a rule’) are certain. And it is incontrovertible that nonsense would be the consequence if what is certain were questioned: it is irrational to be sceptical about what is considered to be certain. When it comes to grammar, ‘rock-bottom’ (OC 116) has been disclosed: that is the way the world is (PI 124). But what of game rules?

In considering McCutcheon’s proposal, and in regard to game rules, it does not make sense to question whether the rules of the game are the game rules. When playing chess, it is nonsense to question (or doubt) whether bishops move diagonally: to do so is either to indicate that the game is not understood or to play a different game. So, the rules of the game are disclosed by McCutcheon’s criterion. And the criterion can be understood to articulate the locution’s grammatical disclosure. But unlike the game rule status of ‘bishops are diagonal movers’, the grammatical status of other rules, like ‘God is love’ is not so clear. That is, for certain religious language-games it is a nonsense to question whether ‘God is love’ is a game rule. However, what particular grammatical rules govern this locution? Is the locution a game rule which (believed true) may also be a description, or a game rule simpliciter? Phillips was certain that ‘God is love’ is a rule simpliciter. But the ‘friends’ of religion want to characterise it as a rule and description.

In summary, it is not feasible to accept McCutcheon’s criterion for the grammatical identification of rules unless it were meant only to identify rules in general and not rules that might also be descriptions. By her interrogation criterion, only rule locutions qua rules would be disclosed. Her criterion would not disclose game rules that might also be (true) descriptions from rules simpliciter.

Phillip's Perspicuous Representation

This, of course, should have been of critical interest for Phillips. In aspiring to Wittgensteinian 'perspicuous representation' (PI 122), Phillips (WR xviii, 200) was the advocate of a grammatical disclosure of 'God is love' as language-game rule *simpliciter* (FAF 146, 216, 218; WR 17; RRC 216; RHC 95). Crucially, however, to this point a (criterion of) grammar has not been discovered for the disclosure of rules *simpliciter*. The articulation of such a criterion would inform the ground of grammatical understanding. And, where grammatical grounds cannot be established for disclosing rules *simpliciter*, a fundamental aspect of Phillips' Wittgensteinianism '" would require support.

The onus here, then, being on Phillips, what did he propose about the disclosures of grammar? While Phillips (eg: FAF 203, 218; PCP 26, 27; RHC 92-95) regularly pointed to the grammatical tasks facing philosophy of religion, and while he consistently conceived his philosophising to be done within the context of grammatical analysis, he did not clearly describe the concept or function of grammar, and he was certainly not interested in its explanation (WR 17):

I am not offering explanations. I offer elucidations.

Here Phillips gives the appearance of committing the sin that he so rigorously identified in others: in regard to grammar, and contrary to Wittgenstein's warning (PI 89), he seems to have 'sublimed the measure'. Any reply along the (purportedly Wittgensteinian) lines that an understanding of grammar cannot be articulated but only shown by the pursuit of philosophical activity merely confirms the disputants in the argument between Phillips and the 'friends' about 'God is love'. That certainly could be the response of the 'friends' to Phillips' straightforward claim (FAF 218):


\[391\] BR 18; RHC 19, 23.
... grammar is explicated ... in the roles religious ideas have in the lives of the believers.

Conclusion

To this point, a Wittgensteinian criterion of grammar has not been elucidated from among notable philosophers who reflected on the matter throughout Phillips' publication history (from 1963). So the grammatical ground for discrimination of language-game rules from descriptions remained hidden (PI 91, 92). But that may not be surprising for Wittgensteinians; after all, Wittgenstein (eg: BB 41, 52, 55, 58-59, PI 109, 251) nominated it as a source if not 'the origin' of philosophical confusion.\textsuperscript{392} Not only is the status of many rules \textit{simpliciter} less than obvious; as a consequence, the locutions in which they appear tempt language users into nonsense. And there Phillips (for example: FAF 214, 215) concurred.

Critically for those who are Wittgensteinians, the distinction between rules and descriptions (FAF 216) needs to be maintained in the interests of revealing \textit{Unsinn} nonsense. That distinction gives rise to the pivotal issue. Without clarity in its application, it is difficult to imagine how the distinction can be utilised by Wittgensteinians of any stripe. The fact is that the distinction needs to be stable where rules and descriptions must be discriminated. And it needs to be unstable if some rules are to be (sequentially) characterised as descriptions by philosophers like the 'friends'. But that raises the critical question whether in principle instability in the description/rule distinction may provoke difficulties for (what has been taken to be) Wittgensteinian approaches to religion altogether. It is a matter for the next chapter to consider ways in which the distinction may be unstable and the consequences of such instability.

\textsuperscript{392} Hallie P 'Wittgenstein's Grammatical-Empirical Distinction' op.cit., p.565.
Nevertheless, to observe the description/rule distinction (where appropriate) is considered Wittgensteinian. Phillips (FAF 218) employed it to characterise ‘God is love’ as a rule *simpliciter*. (And to characterise ‘God is love’ as both rule and description is to be a ‘friend’ of religion.) So, despite the deep hiddenness of the operation of grammar itself, Phillips’ position in favour of religious locutions as rules *simpliciter* and those against description in religion will now be contemplated in the shadow of in principle instability in the description/rule distinction. The point is that, even if Phillips (like any Wittgensteinian) must endure uncertainty concerning the function of language-game grammar itself, by virtue of the description/rule distinction he could identify a locution as a rule *simpliciter* if he could disqualify it as a description.

We turn then, in the next chapter, first to problems inherent in disqualifying ‘God is love’ as a description, and second to those associated with the characterisation of religious locutions as rules *simpliciter*. It will be discovered how vulnerable Phillips was in relying on Feuerbach in order to disqualify locutions like ‘God is love’ as description, enabling them only to be rules *simpliciter*. Importantly, exploitation of the distinction continues at issue. If the description alternative available under the description/rule distinction cannot be disqualified for locutions like ‘God is love’ because elucidation of the grammar has not been achieved, then (given instability in the distinction) Phillips cannot identify rules *simpliciter*. In which case, how is it possible for Phillips to insist upon that characterisation of ‘God is love’? Indeed, how is it possible for the ‘friends’ to insist upon theirs?
Consequent upon chapter 6, this chapter turns attention more fully to the notion of instability in the description/rule distinction. It does so by first considering whether Phillips has been successful in ruling out descriptions of God. And it then contemplates Wittgensteinian understandings of rules. Only if descriptions and rules are comprehensible in distinction is the question of instability in the distinction itself articulate.

Religious Locutions and Descriptions

*Phillips and the ‘Friends’*

For the ‘friends’ of religion, it is acceptable to consider that God exists: so ‘God is love’ is a description of God. Nevertheless, and as this thesis is considering, Phillips does not entertain ‘God is love’ as a description because he has argued that God is not an existent.

To this point it has been considered whether general grammatical grounds were available to Phillips for his characterisation of ‘God is love’ as rule *simpliciter*. Such grounds not having been discovered, the alternative for Phillips concerns his entitlement to characterise ‘God is love’ as a rule *simpliciter* because it is not possible to refer to God. And that is the issue now for determination. Two considerations will be relevant here in the context of Phillips’ rejection of God as existent; they relate to criteria of ostension and sameness, as well as consideration of the nature of divine predicates.
So, first, if ostension is inapplicable to God (as would be expected), then to the extent that sameness relies upon ostension, the same God could not be identified from time to time. Second, then, another identifier of divine reality is necessary in order to confirm sameness. One obvious option is the employment of divine predicates: the same predicates identify the same existent. However, if it makes no sense to refer to God (qua existent) by the uniquely divine predicates, then that concept of God is unavailable; the meaningfulness of God qua existent would be undermined, perhaps terminally. We turn now to consideration of those matters.

\textit{Ostension and God}

In contemplating whether God might exist like any other existent, and because it has been canvassed in the relevant literature, an initial matter for clarification relates to ostension. Where considered viable, ostensive identity applies in cases that concern the world of empirical experience. And where it is accepted, ostensive \textit{identity} may enable ostensive \textit{definition}. So, for instance, pointing or showing will indicate (identify) the object that is meant (defined) by the term ‘Bishop Rowan’. But the question remains whether connotation can be taught only by ostension.\footnote{Cf: \textit{PI} 157.} And does ostension itself ‘match’ language to reality both for definition (as one kind of rule or convention) and description?

Of course, it is clear that many objects can be \textit{identified} ostensively. The Archbishop of Canterbury can be pointed out. But ostensive identity does not apply to all purported existents.\footnote{Many, such as those that inhabit the universe of particle physics, are not ostensively identifiable. Ostensive definition certainly does not suit the physics of photons which are referred to by a mixed (wave/particle) metaphor. And, the ‘superstring’ extension of quantum field theory profoundly limits contemporary use of ostension in physics.} As Wittgenstein (\textit{LC} 59) maintained, this is the case for religious locutions: as a consequence of the purported nature of God, it would not be possible to point out God, should God exist. The same goes for subatomic physics. There should be understandable resistance, then, from both
theologians and physicists towards any tendency to rely on ostension as the sole criterion of identification of existents. What, then, might be said about the notion that a non-ostensive divine existent persists? And what would be an orthodox Wittgensteinian approach to locutions about such a purported divine existent?

Now, Wittgenstein observed (PI 30):

So one might say: an ostensive definition explains the use – the meaning – of a word when the overall role of the word in language is clear.

But he rejected the notion that the meaning of language ever depended merely upon ostensive definition. What may have satisfied Augustine, did not adequately describe how language is in fact learned. Rather, the language-game discussion from the outset of the *Investigations* attempted to explain the meaning of language in terms that include the 'ostensive teaching of words', but only in particular training-dependent contexts (PI 6). Notably, further to her assertion (104) that for Wittgenstein there is no such thing as a proposition whose meaning is given by 'experience', McCutcheon is correct in noting that Wittgenstein denied the *primacy* of ostension for meaning. How, then, might Wittgenstein's approach to ostension be characterised? What might he have had in mind about the role of a word used ostensively for both meaning and reference?

To begin, allusion is necessary to the *Tractatus*. Three *Tractatus* doctrines were accepted by the Vienna Circle: propositions are (i) translatable into elementary propositions, and are (ii) truth functions of elementary propositions which (iii) represent states of affairs. For Moritz Schlick, the correlation of indefinable primitive names with existents was effected by 'concrete definitions', subsequently known (somewhat more elegantly) as 'ostensive definitions'. And Friedrich Waismann considered that ostension:
But even if Wittgenstein was attracted to an understanding of ostensive definition for the *Tractatus*, there is no account of it there. And, the Circle misconstrued ostensive definitions as forging the link between language and reality. Indeed, the later Wittgenstein (*PR 77*) demonstrated that the link was not established. The coloured object that was pointed at (in ostensively defining a colour word) should be understood as a sample belonging to the method of representation. Accordingly, ostension may not connect language and reality in that the same coloured object can be used (merely) to define the relation of 'darker than' in comparison with another coloured object. Significantly for both physics and theology, for Wittgenstein language and reality are not necessarily linked, connected or matched by ostension.

This question of reality being 'matched' by suitable language is important. McCutcheon concedes the Wittgensteinian position that language limits thought, and that it is not possible to get outside language. But she contends (*RWLLA 27*) that the later Wittgenstein did not deny that true statements about reality (descriptions) 'match' reality. If a criterion of ostension is inappropriate for precluding God from reality, and if Wittgenstein allowed at least some language to 'match' reality, is there nevertheless an argument concluding that religious locutions cannot 'match' empirical reality? Here Phillips (*RHC 93-94; PEPG 188-190*) referred to an argument presented by Rhees in consideration of the term 'same'.

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Rhees’ argument can be put as follows. In both religious and philosophical discourse, it must be possible to refer to ‘the same God’. Otherwise it would not be possible to claim that religious belief was shared with anyone. Perhaps even moreproblematically, nor would it be possible to claim consistency in one’s own religious convictions: as individuals, theists claim to know the same God over time. (Notably, sameness is a critical characteristic for the Judaeo-Christian deity. God is defined from Moses in the book of Exodus as ‘the same yesterday, today and forever’.) Indeed, without confidence in God’s immutability, worship would be a less than rational activity: while today God is worthy, tomorrow that might not be the case. And Rhees argued that ‘meaning the same’ in regard to the names of physical objects is connected with the kind of criterion used in saying that something is the same object. For Rhees, an ostensive criterion can be employed for identifying an object as the same over time:

But nothing of that sort could be said in connexion with any question about the meaning of ‘God’. It is not by having someone point and say ‘That’s God’.\(^{397}\)

To what does this amount? For the following reason the criterion applicable for identifying the ‘same’ cannot be identical between God and other (albeit dissimilar) existents should they persist.

The notion of sameness, necessarily, is applicable across a range of contexts. But were it essential to employ an ostensive criterion in order to refer to anything as the same over time, it would not be possible to refer to a concept (like the concept of sameness) as the same from one day to the next. And same concepts, identified only by their content, demonstrate that the term ‘same’ can be employed according to different criteria in particular contexts. So, while sameness is applicable across

contexts, and must be applied consistently for sameness to be generally meaningful, an ostensive criterion of sameness is not universally applicable.

Now concepts, of course, do not have the character of existents; forgiveness is quite unlike a forgiven penitent. Nevertheless, concepts and existents might enjoy one idea of sameness. Indeed, on the basis of that idea, non-ostensive identification might be drawn on grounds different from ostensive identification. Importantly, that God is not subject to ostensive identification then might not be problematic. Even as an existent among other existents, and while not ostensive, why should God be denied application of the concept of sameness? After all, other existents are not constrained in that way. 'Same God' then might be as legitimate as 'same academic' on the same ontological plane as 'same quark'. And even should it be submitted that it makes no conceptual sense to refer to sameness in regard to quarks, that can be accommodated (if not exploited). Axiomatically, yesterday's quarks are the same as today's quarks. At the least, quarks could be subject to ascription of sameness from moment to moment. In that event, so might God; at the least, the possibility of introducing an argument to that effect would remain.

Critically, the question from Rhees in Phillips' account concerns the applicability of sameness to existents beyond empirical objects. So the point here concerns grounds applicable for legitimate uses of 'same'. And it is not clear that the term cannot be used legitimately in various contexts consistently with different grounds of use. The identifier of the same God (were there such an existent) could differ from that applicable to academics (also as existents): certainly, an ostensive ground is applicable to academics but not to God. But that does not mean that God and academics are on different ontological planes and that sameness is only applicable to the plane on which academics persist. The point is that a

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398 Consider the question of identifying Bishop Rowan from time to time. Certainly this may be done ostensively: in sighting Bishop Rowan at Lambeth, he may be identified from memory of his appearance, sound of voice, mannerisms and so on. An inquirer can be advised as to the features (balding, straggly grey beard, benign smile) of Bishop Rowan that could be used to identify him. By contrast, many existents of accepted ontological
A purported single ground for identifying sameness amongst existents would require supporting argument. That was not submitted by Phillips.

Accordingly, in his (1996) *Introducing Philosophy* Phillips presented an argument that advocated a *kind* of divine reality, a unique reality rather than an existent within the same universe of reality in which empirical objects persist. It is perhaps true, as he suggested (*IP* 144) that we usually speak of 'existence' in connection with empirical objects. And the conditions of Newtonian reality are foreign to divine reality. That is, we know what it means for a Newtonian object to exist. We are aware that such objects are finite and contingent. And it is certainly the case that divine reality does not conform with the conditions of Newtonian objecthood: we do not come across God like we do an academic or a monkey. As Phillips (*IP* 144) rightly said:

> We cannot ask how God came to exist, how long God has existed or when God will cease to exist.

But, the same can be said of certain non-Newtonian entities. Should Phillips' comment have meant nothing more than that God is not a Newtonian object? It is most precipitate to concede thereby, as Phillips (*IP* 144) does, that we cannot comprehend what is meant by saying that God exists. As has already been noted in chapter 3, descriptions of God challenge theologians. But the challenge cannot be discredited *a priori* in the (quasi-Newtonian) manner that Phillips has accepted.

So, having reached a questionable conclusion from a misconceived argument, Phillips attempted a quite unnecessary move. He noted that there is an option to conceding the atheist's conclusion against belief in God as an existent. In avoiding the clutches of such an opponent, and as already indicated, Phillips' tactic (*IP* 145) was to interpret all talk of divine reality as talk of a *kind* of reality. But just because it does not make sense to talk of God in Newtonian terms does not mean that it status would be unidentifiable except by established predicates. Theoretical physics would remain a much less well-populated universe were this not the case. So would theology.
makes no sense to talk of God as persisting in the same universe of reality that includes objects that can be comprehended in Newtonian terms. Indeed, if Stephen Hawking can be accepted, the universe may be a fuzzy spacetime egg without a singular point at which it all began. And Hawking has striven to show how it makes sense to talk of the reality of the universe in that way. If the reality of the universe is comprehensible thus, then divine reality might also be comprehensible in similar terms: an existent without a temporal point of commencement or a spatial edge. (This is a remark drawing an analogy between mundane and divine reality, not a lapse into pantheism.) Similarly, and just as in reference to God, it is a misconception to ask when quarks came into existence, how long they have existed, and when they will cease to exist. Because there is no answer. But that does not mean that neither quarks nor God are existents. Contemporary physics maintains that knowledge of existents embraces Newtonian objects, but not Newtonian objects exclusively. And in theoretical physics, objects beyond Newtonian identification are conveniently nominated by their predicates. Similarly, in orthodox religion divine reality is represented in predicate terms. Indeed, it may be possible to allow unique objects like God, should God be one, to be identified (by means of appropriate and specific predicates) as the same existent enduring through time. Is it coherent, then, to consider that God is identifiable on the basis of applicable predicates? Or is there a convincing argument against predicate identification of God?

**Predication of God**

Phillips certainly argued that predicate identification of God (qua existent) is not credible. In this regard, and as was foreshadowed in chapters 1 and 5, Phillips

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399 Hawking S *A Brief History of Time* Bantam London 1988, pp.143, 144.
400 Of course, such a conception might mean that religious orthodoxy needs to reconsider the Genesis account.
401 For the account of an eminent physicist here, see Polkinghorne J *Science and Christian Belief* SPCK London 1994.
(RHC 92-99) ultimately relied upon a view put by Feuerbach. Phillips supported Feuerbach’s negative account to the effect that even ‘divine predicates’ cannot attach to a metaphysical subject, God. The reason given is that a deity on the same ontological plane as all other objects would not deserve worship. In Phillips’ formulation (RHC 92):

Put another way: Feuerbach argues that ‘God’ cannot be regarded as a thing; ‘God’, in order to be the object of religious worship, cannot be an object among objects.

As Feuerbach would have it, an existent that is worthy of worship by virtue of the divine predicates elevates God beyond the status of objects (rather than beyond any other object). The conclusion is that God cannot be among the universe of existents; by virtue of the nature of the divine predicates, there can be no existent to which the divine predicates are applicable. They are not predicates applicable to an existent. Shadowing the Lockean difficulty of nominating an object for the purposes of predication (see chapter 1 above), then, Feuerbach’s compelling point is that any consideration of the ontological status of a divine object must reflect the nature of its applicable predicates, the uniquely divine predicates (such as ‘holiness’) being critical in the consideration. That is, for Feuerbach, the character of all predicates (including ‘merciful’ and ‘loving’) should determine the ontological status of the object that they define; and uniquely divine predicates count against the existence of any divine object to which those predicates might be thought to adhere.

Critically, it is the thingness of existents that is at issue. What, then, might be said of the argument that the grammar of the divine predicates themselves precludes the existence of any thing (even a divine thing) to which they might adhere? Feuerbach exploited a particular intuition. And as an intuition it is not beyond

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dispute. Of course, if Feuerbach is entitled to his intuition, then others may be entitled to theirs.

Now, worship of objects certainly occurs. That this is acknowledged by the Judaeo-Christian tradition can be shown by the fact that warnings against such practice are commonplace: not least, it is proscribed by the Hebrew Decalogue. The logic behind the proscription of worship of physical objects may be that, while it is possible to offer worship to them, worship belongs properly and exclusively to God, God being the only object worthy of worship. Otherwise, why should God be jealous of idol worship? On these grounds, even an holy God as an existent (albeit divine) would be indistinguishable (in ontological terms) from the golden calf that so troubled Hebrew worship inclinations and infuriated Moses at Sinai (Exodus 32).

There is, accordingly, acknowledged religious tradition that requires God, among existents of the same ontological status, to be the legitimate and sole focus of worship. *Ceteris paribus*, in ontological terms, God traditionally has been considered to persist like the universe of objects. Indeed, unless God (*qua* existent) is like the universe of existents, orthodox proscriptions against the wide range of idolatrous practice might not make sense. Humankind would be permitted to worship artefacts in this world (even, pantheistically, this world itself) and also, without contradiction, at the same time worship the divine presence in another ontological plane (or none). That, certainly, is orthodox neither for the Hebrew tradition nor its Christian derivation. Apparently, worship of (mundane) objects is proscribed in part at least because God (although divine) shares their ontological status in the religion of Judaeo-Christianity.

That said, it is hardly difficult to devise a secular allegory to parallel this account of religious conviction. The point of the allegory is that certain existents persisting in the universe of objects can deserve to be worshipped as a consequence of their unique qualities; and unique means unique. Consider the following. A primitive tribe could assign to its Chief qualities that were not shared by any other person. And it would be highly improper to pay deference (to the point of obeisance) to any other person if such deference were dependent upon the proper acknowledgement
of those qualities. A unique deference would be applicable upon the attribution of
unique qualities. But there is clearly no need to propose that the Chief exists on a
different ontological plane in order to possess uniquely elevated qualities. As a
matter of religious fact, then, an intuition against any (worship-deserving) God as
persisting among objects need not be acknowledged beyond being, at best, eccentric. And an alternative intuition is available in orthodox Hebrew theology at
least. More than Feuerbachian intuition, then, is required against the idea that God
has the same ontology as an object. Feuerbach's argument is unacceptable in
proposing that, consequent upon the divine predicates, divine reality would require
a subject beyond normal existents. He has not presented a predicate criterion for
divine reality that would require the subject of divine predicates to persist beyond
the universe of (Newtonian and non-Newtonian) existents. That is, the orthodox
predication of God survives Feuerbach's intriguing argument. Even predicates
uniquely applicable to God (such as 'holiness') do not require that God possesses
a unique ontology. The tribal chief's predicates are uniquely applicable; but he
remains ontologically the same as his subjects. So, why may not God be an
unique existent, the only one suitable for divine predicates?

In summary, ostension is (quite unsurprisingly) no criterion for the identification of
God. Ostensive and non-ostensive existents are candidates for ascription of
sameness. Further, Feuerbach's clever argument concluding that the divine
predicates would necessitate a being beyond the ontology of objects is
unacceptable. Critically, unless God cannot be an existent among the universe of
objects then (mutatis mutandis) 'God' can refer and 'God is love' can be a
description. The argument presented by Phillips (relying on Feuerbach) being
problematic, the possibility of God on an ontological plane with mundane existents
remains to be excluded. And on the analysis given the arguments considered
here, the 'friends' of religion would survive Phillips' particular critique.
Nevertheless, Wittgensteinian 'friends' require particular locutions (like 'God is
love') to be both rules and descriptions. In other particular cases (perhaps those
like 'Seraphim are six-winged') the Wittgensteinian 'friends' may need to make
sense of certain religious locutions as language-game rules simpliciter. While,
against the 'friends', Phillips was insistent that 'God is love' is a rule simpliciter, he
shared with the ‘friends’ the need to be able to identify many (other) language-game rules as rules simpliciter.

Rules and Grammar

In any significant consideration of Phillips’ insistent characterisation of ‘God is love’ as language-game rule simpliciter, it is important to note the kind of Wittgensteinian disputation that has persisted about language-game rules and rule-following. This account of the prevailing central dispute is provoked by Phillips’ interest (RHC 304-317) in a concern expressed by the later (1990) Winch\textsuperscript{403} about the ‘fragility’ of the (‘ethico-cultural’) conditions under which rule-following occurs.

The matter was introduced in chapter 3 above. There it was noted that Phillips (BR 26) relied upon Rhee’s suggestion that intelligibility between language-games was centred upon ‘conversation’: language has sense if living has sense. In that case, it might be suggested, the Wittgensteinian notion of ‘form of life’ would also be seminal. So the focus turns upon the conditions under which language-game ‘conversation’ in forms of life takes place. In this consideration, and given that rule-following religious language-games continue as the centre of concern for Phillips, those conditions are now significant if the nature and role of rules in Wittgensteinian religious language-games are to be more comprehensively understood.

Both game rules and the rules of grammar are in focus. And Anthony Kenny has made clear that the significance of language-game rules for Wittgenstein was demonstrated in considering the game of chess:

\textsuperscript{403} Winch P \textit{The Idea of a Social Science} (1958) 2\textsuperscript{nd} ed Routledge London 1990, p.xviii.
The game is not about the wooden pieces, and yet the pieces stand for nothing; the significance of each piece is given by the rules for its movement.\footnote{Kenny A *Wittgenstein* Allen Lane The Penguin Press London 1973, p.10.}

The rules governing each piece comprise the game. The game rules are governed by the rules of grammar; and, as has already been articulated, recognition of the relevant game rules is distinct from the identification of the rules of grammar. In this regard Wittgenstein expressed the significance of grammatical rules in *PG* 184:

Grammar is not accountable to any reality. It is grammatical rules that determine meaning (constitute it) and so they themselves are not answerable to any meaning and to that extent are arbitrary.

Now the sense in which grammar might be arbitrary (as Wittgenstein has suggested above) needs to be explained. For instance, can the rule disclosures of grammar be modified (through training) according to the disposition of the trainer; or is there a more significant basis for grammar? In what might be taken as indicative of a reply, at the conclusion of the *Investigations* Wittgenstein (*PI* p.195) asked:

If the formation of concepts can be explained by facts of nature, should we not be interested, not in grammar, but rather in that in nature which is the basis of grammar?

In this, Wittgenstein implied a view that he had expressed earlier (*Z* 186; *PI* pp. 148, 190, 194) in regard to the nature of dogs, cats and lions. Animals do not share human nature, nor human forms of life (*PI* 148, 192): even if animals could talk, humans could not understand them. Accordingly, it was in human nature that Wittgenstein suggested grammar itself might be grounded. And Wittgenstein (*Z* 404...
employed the term 'arbitrary' in the context of signifying that concepts are inexplicable: it is not possible ultimately to justify grammar. For Wittgenstein (PI 497):

The rules of grammar may be called "arbitrary" if that is to mean that the aim of the grammar is nothing but that of the language.

This being the case, rules of grammar (including those governing religious locutions) are beyond justification; the chain of reasons (PI 326) just comes to an end. Critically, of course, this need not preclude rational choice between language-games and their grammars. A choice can be made not to engage in the game of chess with its grammar. Or cooking, or religious language-games.

However, because training in language-games is possible, the rules of grammar can be taught (PI 162); and given the significance of rules of grammar for language-game rules, not following the rules correctly means not engaging in the language-game.

That said, and presuming that rules of grammar and game rules have been taught, one central issue concerns the ways in which Wittgenstein should be understood on the notion of following a rule. Here concerns for rule-following and 'correctness' may seem to have a natural coincidence. And it is acknowledged that Wittgenstein accepted that possessing a procedure for determining correctness is an important part of knowing how to use a word. In this regard, Hacker has proposed certain elements as leitmotif of Wittgenstein. The following is indicative of Hacker's formula:

Cf: RHC 324: 'We need to see the importance of the distinction between making a mistake within a moral or religious viewpoint, and coming to regard one's viewpoint as mistaken.'
the meaning of an expression is given by what are accepted as 'correct explanations of meaning'; and

‘correct’ explanations constitute rules for the use of the expressions explained; but

rules for the use of expressions are neither true nor false, they are not answerable to reality for their ‘correctness’.

Forster\textsuperscript{409} has usefully commented on the notion that grammar is neither true nor false. That is grammar, being neither true nor false, is rather antecedent to correctness and incorrectness, truth and falsehood.\textsuperscript{410} (Its antecedence may be consistent with the certainty of grammar.) Nevertheless and while certain, against any suggestion that grammar is ‘arbitrary’ in regard to any particular purpose specifiable \textit{within} language-games, Wittgenstein’s response (PG 133, pp.184,185; Z 320) would be to point to the various kinds of consequences that apply in regard to rule-following in different contexts. In particular, in chess not to follow the rules conscientiously is to play another game. Critically, that is analogous to following the rules of grammar. For Wittgenstein (PG 184,185):

... and if you follow grammatical rules other than such-and-such ones, that does not mean you say something wrong, no, you are speaking of something else.

Two points emerge. First, in two ways ‘correctness’ is acceptable in discussion of game rules. A language-game rule itself may be regarded as a correct rule of the game: in orthodox religion ‘God is love’ is a correct rule and ‘God is dead’ is incorrect. Further, correct moves can be made in religion in following the rule ‘God

\textsuperscript{409} Forster M N \textit{Wittgenstein on the Arbitrariness of Grammar} Princeton University Press 2005, p.48. This is consistent with the view articulated by Gaita above.

\textsuperscript{410} Perhaps grammar ‘presupposes’ correctness rather than helps to explain it: Boghossian P ‘The Rule-Following Considerations’ \textit{Mind} New Series Vol 98 No 392 (Oct 1989), p.517.
is love'. That is, the possibility of incorrect rule-following emerges: just as in chess the bishop might not be moved (correctly) in accordance with the (correct) rule. On this reading, to the extent that many language-games are like chess, they have correct rules and moves. And where correctness is involved, mistakes are possible. By contrast, and second, it is unacceptable in Wittgensteinianism to talk of the grammar of language-game rules as correct. Rather, grammar (disclosing language-game rules) enjoys Wittgensteinian certainty. Nevertheless, while grammar is certain, its apprehension is hazardous. And not to apprehend a language-game rule qua rule is a grammatical mistake. The grammar may be certain; its apprehension and observance is not. Grammatical rule-following itself is hazardous and, like the observance of a game rule, can be attempted fallibly.

What, then, of the consequences for 'God is love'? Clearly grammar, while certain, nevertheless must be apprehended in order for a locution to be identified qua rule (or rule and description). Further, even in regard to rules correctly apprehended, there can be mistakes in following the orthodox rules (of religion). Just as in cooking where not to follow the recipe can produce an inedible meal: the failure of a chocolate soufflé would not be the invention of a weird gustatory delight according to alternative criteria in another game, but a genuine culinary disaster. And the equivalent of that would be religious heresy; or unsanctified behaviour. But is there another way in which deviation from game rules can be conceived? Is disregard of rules applicable in other language-games allowable in religious language-games because of the particular status of religion?

That is certainly on Phillips' agenda (WR 57, 61, 67) at this point. To utilise the term introduced in chapter 2 above, Phillips (WR 56-60) proposed the recognition of religion as 'distinctive' language-games, rules being central to that conception. And to take up the issue first raised in chapter 3 above, C B Martin would require the language-games of religion also to comply with rules applicable broadly across appropriate games. It would be no defence of a failure to conform with common

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intelligibility to claim that a distinctive language-game was being played. It is comprehensible to predicate love of God because predication itself is understood, as is the predicate both within and beyond religious language-games. That is, theologians aspire to say what the features of divine love are. So do many (published) mystics. And many of them would hope to be comprehended beyond the adherents to religion. For his part, Martin would not countenance the conceptual mess that he has identified in religious belief being defensible as an alternative rule-following activity with unique predicates, grounded by unique grammar, in distinctive language-games. So, what might be Wittgensteinian in this context?

As is well known, in 1980 Crispin Wright pointed out that, for Wittgenstein, there is in our understanding of a concept no rigid, advance determination of what is to count as its correct application. So, according to Wright, the ‘butt’ of Wittgenstein’s reflections on rule-following is the idea (perhaps similar to that promoted by Martin) that understanding an expression is ‘grasp of a pattern of application, conformity with which requires certain determinate verdicts in so far unconsidered cases’. Problematically for that ‘butt’, Wright argued (on the basis of PI 210) that it has to be acknowledged that the ‘pattern’ is strictly inaccessible to definitive explanation:


413 Martin C B Religious Belief op.cit., p.vi: ‘There will be those who will complain, whenever anything is shown in a clear light, that seen clearly it is no longer what they saw in darkness. For those who place value upon obscurantism, I have no argument.’


416 McDowell J ‘Wittgenstein on Following a Rule’ op.cit., p.231.
For, as Wittgenstein never wearied of reminding himself, no explanation of the use of an expression is proof against misunderstanding; ... So we move towards the idea that understanding an expression is a kind of "cottoning on"; that is, a leap, an inspired guess at the pattern of application which the instructor is trying to get across.417

Indeed, Wittgenstein (PL 210; Z 304) clearly made reference to guessing in such contexts. And Stanley Cavell has emphasised how precarious this 'leap' may be. Cavell has pointed out that we learn and teach words in certain contexts, and then we are expected, and expect others, to be able to project them into further contexts. Somewhat disturbingly, nothing ensures that this will take place (in particular, not the grasping of universals nor the grasping of books of rules), just as nothing ensures that we will make, and understand, the same projections:

That on the whole we do is a matter of our sharing routes of interest and feeling, senses of humour and of significance and fulfilment, and what is outrageous, of what is similar to what else, what a rebuke, what forgiveness, of when an utterance is an assertion, when an appeal, when an explanation – all the whirl of organism Wittgenstein calls "forms of life." Human speech and activity, sanity and community, rest upon nothing more, but nothing less than this. It is a vision as simple as it is difficult, and as difficult as it is (and because it is) terrifying.418

For Cavell, this would appear to apply whether the game in question is baking cakes, playing chess or praying: following rules would depend upon (precarious) communal apprehension. That is, correct use is neither grounded in, nor justified by, other more basic notions such as articulate conventions or pattern; at the most,

417 Wright C Wittgenstein on the Foundations of Mathematics op.cit., p.216.
a sharing in the pattern is involved. Crucially, any rule would be both apprehended and followed in community or not at all.

More precisely for our concerns, rule-following (on Wright's 1980 interpretation of Wittgenstein) is shared interest in understanding meaning. So Phillips' position should require 'God is love', as rule *simpliciter*, to be communally articulate and thereby recognisably significant; that is why anyone would trouble with it at the outset. But the fulfilment of those requirements (of articulation and significance) is in question. Wright's conclusion suggests that, if it can be established that there is no correct application of a rule beyond communal recognition, then the significance of language-game rules resides in the language-game. That is, there may be game specific significance for religious locutions taken as rules *simpliciter*. While it is intelligible for any who will participate in religion, 'God is love' is significant only for religion. So, as a Wittgensteinian Phillips might be thought to have committed himself to 'God is love' as a locution whose significance is invulnerable to philosophers like Martin. Nevertheless, because Phillips' position limits 'God is love' to a rule *simpliciter*, is there an obligation on him to demonstrate how, at the least, that rule plays an intelligible and significant role in its distinctive religious language-games?

At this point, and quite predictably, we turn to Saul Kripke. Since 1982 Kripke has been responsible for drawing attention to questions about the Wittgensteinian ways in which an activity might be considered to accord with a rule. He is generally considered to have taken the central conclusion of the *Investigations* to be that there can be no fact of the matter concerning what it is that someone means or intends. And the question is whether this raises profound difficulties for philosophers like Martin who want to embarrass the users of religious locutions on the basis of the common meaning of words across language-games. Or does it

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raise difficulties for Phillips in arguing for the significance of religious language-games? Those difficulties will now be canvassed.

Kripke is considered to have read Wittgenstein as allowing that the sceptic's position on the problem of rule-following is unanswerable:

There can be no such thing as meaning anything by a word.\(^{421}\)

That is, in Kripke's reading of Wittgenstein, there are no facts concerning the meaning of locutions. In David Finkelstein's summary of this interpretation of Kripke:

... Wittgenstein concedes to the skeptic that a sentence like "Jones means plus by 'plus' " (or "Jones intends to add") cannot be used to state a fact because there is nothing about Jones's behaviour or state of mind for such a fact to consist in. What saves assertions about meaning from being pointless is that such talk may be used for purposes other than stating facts. While a sentence like "Jones means plus" cannot be true, it may yet have a kind of correctness: its utterance may be justified within a communal language-game.\(^ {422}\)

Phillips' position, against philosophers like Martin, might hang upon that last clause. But we should consider the vulnerability of his position in that regard. If this reading of Wittgenstein by Kripke\(^ {423}\) be accepted, then as Wright (1984) has expressed it:


\(^{423}\) McCutcheon (86,87) has noted that Norman Malcolm was critical of Kripke's account of Wittgenstein's position: Malcolm N *Wittgenstein: Nothing is Hidden* Basil Blackwell Oxford 1986.
... Kripke's Wittgenstein may be seen ... , by the sceptical argument, confounding the ordinary idea that our talk of meaning and understanding and cognate concepts has a genuinely factual subject matter.\(^{424}\)

That is, and by analogy with ethical locutions, no religious locution could be regarded as stating a fact about intended religious meaning. And if there are no facts about meaning of the form 's means that p', then (the locution lacking truth conditions) it is difficult to see how there can be any reference to p as a fact. Notably, and problematically for Martin, a case could not be made out against the sense of 'God is good' (Martin's example) based on the use of 'good' in contexts beyond the religious. Further, Wright's (1980) notion of 'cottoning on' might be seized upon by some commentators as a consequence of its similarity with one conception of religious faith. That is, on this showing, religious locutions are meaningful (if not justified) as a result of conforming with the conditions understood to apply in a Wittgensteinian approach to the intuitive apprehension of rules in language-games. Indeed, Wright's (1989) proposal that rules are justified by stipulation may be thought to confirm that position. So, does this support Phillips?

As has been suggested, Phillips might be assisted by the 1980 Wright in that he pursued a Wittgensteinian account of the significance of rules within communal language-games. For Phillips the characterisation of 'God is love' depends upon grammar and rule-following for the identification of that locution as rule simpliciter for distinctive and significant language-games. Notably for Phillips' case, however, John McDowell (1984) criticised Wright (1980) for succumbing to a temptation about which Wittgenstein warned. Here it could be suggested that the position originally articulated by Wright (1980) is not strictly Wittgensteinian. In 1984 McDowell argued that Wright's version of the intuitive ('inspired guess') picture of meaning and understanding cannot be attributed to Wittgenstein.\(^{425}\) In the exegesis of Paul Boghossian, McDowell considered that Wittgenstein advocated

\(^{424}\) Wright C 'Kripke’s Account of the Argument Against Private Language' op.cit., p.761.

\(^{425}\) McDowell J 'Wittgenstein on Following a Rule' op.cit., p.223.
resistance to a temptation: the formation of an invalid picture of 'bedrock'. Or, in McDowell’s own formulation of Wittgenstein:

... it is a mistake to think we can dig down to a level at which we no longer have application for normative notions (like “following according to the rule”).

For McDowell, Wright had succumbed to precisely the temptation that Wittgenstein (RFM VI-31) warned about: the difficult thing is to recognise the ground as what lies before us, rather than digging down into the ground. To express yet another metaphor, for McDowell a course is to be navigated between the view that understanding is always interpretation, and the idea of a basic level at which there are no norms. And the course can be sailed by virtue of the idea of custom or practice (PI 198, 201, 202). In McDowell’s advocacy, while the middle course needs explication, there is clear evidence that the course itself is Wittgensteinian.

If McDowell is to be construed as having given Wittgensteinians like Phillips a compass for navigating a course for the significance of religious locutions as rules, even of distinctive language-games, then the grammatical sense of rules should be explicable in McDowell’s account. There, McDowell has given a characterisation of Wittgenstein along the lines that a measure of agreement in communal custom or practice is a precondition of (correct) meaning. Problematically for McDowell, however, Boghossian has questioned how McDowell’s reliance upon communal responses as a precondition of meaning is to be argued. That is, what could possibly ground it? Here Boghossian has McDowell in difficulty:

... as I have already noted, [McDowell] rejects the very demand for a substantive account of correctness: norms are part of the ‘bedrock’, beneath

which we must not dig. But if we are simply to be allowed to take the idea of correctness for granted, unreduced and without any prospect of reconstruction in terms of, say, actual and counterfactual truths about communal use, how is the necessity of an ‘orderly communal’ practice to be defended? From what does the demand for orderliness flow? And from what the demand for community?\textsuperscript{430}

That is, exploiting the notion of correctness as it might apply to the apprehension of the grammar of locutions, Boghossian has made the explication of McDowell’s course questionable; he could find no navigational aids in McDowell’s presentation. We seem left with the agenda set out by Wright in 1980: the justification of normative practice in language-games.\textsuperscript{431}

Is there, then, a Wittgensteinian reply to Boghossian that would allow recognition of (the grammar of) rules and rules \textit{simpliciter}? Whatever resort can be made to the communal practice of rule-following, grammar would be required to characterise ‘God is love’ as description and rule or rule \textit{simpliciter}. There, and \textit{pace} Boghossian, for some Wittgensteinians, the spade may be turned (\textit{PI} 217) by appeal to bedrock: bedrock would ground the grammar (\textit{PI} 217; \textit{OC} 248, 498). Wittgenstein (\textit{OC} 403) might very late have articulated a conclusion of that sort. And, perhaps for Wittgenstein, justification of a language-game’s grammar could take place by appealing to bedrock. The identification of language-game rules by grammar would be justified (foundationally in Avrum Stroll’s controversial account\textsuperscript{432}) by bedrock. Bedrock is bedrock: it is what we do (\textit{PI} 217); and bedrock grounds grammar. Indeed, bedrock may be the grammar of the language-game

\textsuperscript{430} Boghossian P ‘The Rule-Following Considerations’ op.cit., p.544.
\textsuperscript{431} Cavell did not come within consideration by Boghossian (1989). It would have been helpful to this discussion had he done so in that Cavell may have been launched on something like the course that Boghossian found questionable in McDowell. Cf: Cavell S \textit{The Claim of Reason: Wittgenstein, Skepticism, Morality and Tragedy} Oxford University Press 1979; and Hammer E \textit{Stanley Cavell Skepticism, Subjectivity, and the Ordinary} Polity Cambridge 2002, pp.25, 26.
where correctness is not an issue, grammar being a precondition of correctness in the following of rules and in the truth of descriptions.

Now, this might be thought to provoke further consideration of Wittgensteinian identification of grammar. Although it does not seek to establish with McCutcheon that a proposition taken as a rule cannot be subject to questioning, bedrock justification of grammar nevertheless would also centre on an interrogative test. That is, were the question asked how grammar is disclosed, the answer would be simply that that is a rule justified by bedrock: the question has gone deep enough (CV 71). And the answer is ‘the given’ [das Gegebene], that which has to be accepted (PI p.192). So, when bedrock is reached, grammar is disclosed; or, in Hallie’s less expansive but symbiotic formulation, and in regard to descriptions:

... the bedrock of empirical claims is grammatical ...

On this account, bedrock is the grammar of the locution. The suggestion might be that, by permitting no further interrogation, the locution has displayed its grammar. The nature of grammar is rule; and the rule disclosed may be ‘use “God is love” as a rule’. Importantly, should it disclose that locution to be a rule simpliciter, this would be consistent with Phillips’ ‘dogma’ approach (RWE 164) to religious faith. Nevertheless, circularity dogs this discussion. Without an adequate understanding of grammar, how could it be known that the bedrock was reached? That is, without a clear comprehension of grammar, how does appeal to bedrock justify the grammar that specifies the difference (from case to case) between rules and descriptions and the nonsense consequent upon their confusion? How do we know that, in our characterisation of ‘God is love’, we have reached the bedrock of grammar’s disclosure rather than the Unsinn of grammar’s disguise? Certainty there has not prevailed. The human intellectual form of life may be a given, but it does not transparently provide that the description/rule distinction is stable nor does it present an epistemological bedrock yielding an identification of Unsinn by

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bedrock-justified grammar. The problems raised by Boghossian against McDowell seem justified. More to the point, neither Phillips nor the ‘friends’ can appeal to bedrock to ground their grammatical inclinations.

Another tangent can be taken with that comment. Wittgenstein (PI 217) may have employed bedrock in justification of rule-following. That is, when asked for reasons for following a rule in a language-game, once any (other) justifications are exhausted, resort is made to bedrock: ‘This is simply what I do’. Further, Wittgenstein (RFM p.81) confirmed that propositions used as grammatical rules were certain. Indeed, it may be possible to justify a practice of apparent rule-following once the rules are identified. But appeal to bedrock grammar will not justify moves contrary to rule such as the vertical move of a bishop. So when I am expressing a locution I cannot claim that I am correctly following a rule, rather than speaking nonsense, simply by appeal to bedrock. There I must refer to the rule itself. Accordingly, it would be a mistake to believe that certain rule-following activity was justified by bedrock. If that is to be achieved it will require scrutiny of actions by virtue of the rules themselves in language-game contexts.

**Sustaining the Description/Rule Distinction**

The lack of a bedrock ground for the identification of rules of grammar (and hence of rules simpliciter) brings a central question into focus. Can it be argued that, given the shortcomings of Feuerbach’s argument, instability in that distinction would undermine the identification of ‘God is love’ as rule simpliciter? The point is that without grammar comprising a bedrock for identifying rules simpliciter pursuant to the description/rule distinction, instability in that distinction itself may permit (sequential) identification of ‘God is love’ as rule and description.

As will now be considered, it has been suggested by some Wittgensteinian scholars that there is a fault in any stability reading of Wittgenstein’s presentation of the distinction between descriptions and rules. That is, it has been argued that
any such reading of Wittgenstein would maintain an uncompromising dichotomy. And, it is suggested, such a reading is problematic (for reasons to be outlined).

Given that Feuerbach's argument is problematic against God as existent, if instability in the description/rule distinction can be identified, and shown applicable, Phillips' Wittgensteinian religion would be in retreat. So we give final reflection upon the question about the stability of the description/rule distinction. Under what conditions, then, might the distinction be unstable, allowing the language-game rule 'God is love' to be characterised as description?

**Stability of the Description/Rule Distinction**

By way of application in philosophy of religion, it has been made very clear by Wittgensteinians like Stephen Mulhall that Wittgenstein was concerned with the divergences between religious and empirical beliefs.\(^{434}\) Those divergences should be apparent on grammar's 'perspicuous representation' (P/122). But, as has been argued, for Phillips they depend upon a stable distinction between empirical and grammatical (normative) characterisation of locutions because he has identified the grammar of 'God is love' to be strictly normative: that locution is a rule *simpliciter*. So, the stability of the distinction between rules and descriptions is relevant. And, as foreshadowed earlier in chapter 6, Hallie's 1963 article is now ripe for consideration.\(^{435}\)

In 1963, the year in which Phillips published his first journal article and about the time that Phillips was drafting his (1965) *The Concept of Prayer*, Hallie presented a stability reading of the description/rule distinction from Wittgenstein and criticised it; significantly, it is his own stability reading that Hallie criticises. Hallie\(^{436}\) suggested that Wittgenstein always considered grammatical propositions to be 'utterly

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\(^{436}\) Hallie P 'Wittgenstein's Grammatical-Empirical Distinction' op.cit., p.567.
different' (BB 56) from empirical ones; and that Wittgenstein too often put a proposition in one or the other category. Essentially, in Hallie's critical estimation:

What Wittgenstein wants philosophers to do is to stop making fools of themselves and of philosophy by confusing an emptily, blindly grammatical proposition involving no antithesis and no criterion for choosing between antitheses with an empirical proposition that does have a plain antithesis, does involve a criterion for deciding whether it is true or false ...

And, for Hallie, that which Wittgenstein sometimes called 'plain nonsense' because it is empirically empty (although taken to be a description), is sometimes not empirically empty at all (and therefore is not that kind of nonsense at all). Hallie proposed:

I shall try to show that a grammatical recommendation or proposition can be both a grammatical proposition and an empirical one ...

Now, it has already been argued that a Wittgensteinian identification of 'blindly grammatical propositions' was not established by Hallie's 1966 article nor subsequently by Pitcher, Hacker or McCutcheon. And the suggestion that Wittgenstein expected philosophers to stop making fools of themselves, in the manner suggested by Hallie in 1963, would benefit from such identification. It will be recalled that Hallie's 1966 understanding was: a grammatical statement makes a claim whose opposite cannot be imagined. But Hallie needed a credible discrimination between grammar and descriptions if his proposed stability reading of Wittgenstein's distinction were to be proposed even for the sake of criticism.

In his 1963 article Hallie concentrated on comparing three locutions:

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(1) Only one person can play Patience.
(2) Only one grown person can sit on a bench six inches wide.
(3) Only one person can feel one's pain.

And Hallie maintained that (1) is clearly 'grammatical' (disclosed as a rule) based on Wittgensteinian bedrock. He maintained that (2) was clearly 'empirical' (disclosed as a description), also based on bedrock. In Hallie's submission, however, (3) is not so clear; so the distinction must be faulty or, in the terms being employed here, unstable.

**Instability in the Description/Rule Distinction**

In the interests of consideration of Phillips' position concerning 'God is love', the discussion now may return to the question whether Wittgenstein ultimately should have allowed instability in the description/rule distinction.

Contemplating the possibility of 'fault' in the distinction, in 1963 Hallie argued:

> Of course, Wittgenstein is not saying that there are no connections between empirical propositions and grammatical ones.\(^{440}\)

Attention, then, would centre on Hallie's example (3) 'Only one person can feel one's pain' if he were to demonstrate that there is a 'fault' in reading Wittgenstein's \((BB\ 55;\ PI\ 295)\) description/rule distinction as immutably stable. Critically, that 'fault' would apply to Wittgenstein or anyone else who did not allow for instability in the distinction. And Hallie suggested that locution (3):

> ... hangs in mid-air, neither an empirical proposition nor a full-blooded grammatical one.\(^{441}\)

\(^{440}\) Hallie P 'Wittgenstein's Grammatical-Empirical Distinction' op.cit., p.569.

\(^{441}\) Hallie P 'Wittgenstein's Grammatical-Empirical Distinction' op.cit., p.569; note that 'hangs in the air' is Wittgensteinian \((PI\ 198)\).
In order to comprehend his point, it needs to be understood more clearly what Hallie (1963) proposed here about locutions (1) 'Only one person can play Patience' and (2) 'Only one grown person can sit on a bench six inches wide'. Clearly, argued Hallie, (1) lays out a rule for using words such as 'play' in the context of 'Patience'. That should be uncontroversial. In regard to (2) Hallie pointed out its vulnerability to verification/falsification. So the 'empirical' status of (2) is also beyond sensible dispute. Turning to the critical example (3) 'Only one person can feel one's pain', Hallie pointed out that Wittgenstein emphasised that locutions like (3) had no antithesis; no matter what contrary claims were put, anyone asserting (3) could simply persist in the belief. The suggestion is that (3) seems empirical but cannot be characterised as exclusively empirical. Hallie's argument is that the distinction in Wittgenstein's presentation (grounded in reference to the Blue Book) can be too 'sharp' if it does not allow for propositions like locution (3) to 'hang in mid-air' between empirical and grammatical (as language-game rules).

In comment on Hallie's argument, his demonstration that some locutions are resistant to immutable description/rule characterisation must allow that the distinction is itself unstable. The essential point is that an instability reading of the description/rule distinction would be articulate. Any immutable stability reading of the distinction, then, should not be accepted. However, and in qualification of Hallie, for Wittgensteinians such as Phillips and the 'friends' the issue must be resolved where possible. For the case in point, 'God is love' should not be left hanging indefinitely in mid-air. Following Phillips, and to avoid nonsense, it should be characterised as rule *simpliciter* or, following the 'friends' it should be characterised as rule and description (believed true). For his part, Phillips would condemn any entertainment of the possibility of description for 'God is love'; that would be to flirt with the 'friends' of religion, a practice that Phillips would abhor.

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For their part the ‘friends’ want to identify appropriate religious locutions as descriptions. And Hallie’s conclusion, in the interests of the ‘friends’, suggests that Wittgenstein should have made allowance for instability in the distinction in appropriate cases.\(^{444}\) That is, it may be agreed that Wittgenstein should have allowed for instability in the description/rule distinction, whether or not (in his published *corpus*) eventually he did.

So, in 1963 Hallie had presented an argument for instability in the description/rule distinction. And without reference to Hallie, in the early 1980s there was a further development relevant to Phillips’ position. That development, which was proposed by Debra Aidun\(^{445}\), relies upon an interpretation of *PI* 251 (‘Every rod has a length’) and *PI* 373 (‘Grammar tells …’). The critical point, quoted by McCutcheon (*RWLLA* 106), is put by Aidun:

‘Having a length’ is an essential characteristic of those things we call ‘rods’ but it is a fact of grammar that nothing we call a ‘rod’ can sensibly be said to lack a length. This accounts for Wittgenstein’s cryptic remarks to the effect that ‘Grammar tells what kind of object anything is’ (PI 373) and ‘Essence is expressed by grammar’ (PI 371). Because talking about objects and talking about words come to the same in such cases, the grammatical rule about the use of the word ‘rod’ can be captured in an expression which is not ostensibly about words: ‘Every rod has a length’.\(^{446}\)

Following upon a suggestion by McCutcheon (*RWLLA* 106), there are two directions in which this kind of argument may travel. First, the argument can be


\(^{446}\) Aidun D ‘Wittgenstein on Grammatical Propositions’ op.cit., p.144.
taken to be about objects. That is, in consideration of the nature of particular locutions, the characteristics of objects can be comprehended:

... it is a fact of grammar that nothing we call a 'rod' can sensibly be said to lack a length.

Further, and second, the apprehended ontological nature or character of objects is enshrined in the grammar of locutions about them:

... the grammatical rule about the use of the word 'rod' can be captured in an expression which is not ostensibly about words ...

In Aidun's formula, then, locutions about objects (descriptions) and locutions about words (rules of grammar) 'come to the same'. Seemingly, this is a proposal about different (sequential) uses of the same (surface grammar) locution:

Whenever a grammatical proposition can be conceived as true, it is being used as a rule [in the sense of being allowed or forbidden] ... But then it expresses a truth about an empirical feature of grammar and is therefore not necessary. Whenever it appears to be necessary, it is being used as a rule and is neither true nor false.

Now, if a locution can be (sequentially) a rule and a description, and if it is important to make that distinction, then that may be the way in which any suggestion that they 'come to the same' (Aidun) or 'merge' (Glock) should be understood by Wittgensteinians. That is, in the interests of identifying a locution as a rule simpliciter, the distinction must be stable. But in order to (sequentially)

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447 Aidun D 'Wittgenstein on Grammatical Propositions' op.cit., p.144. This is a parallel formula to Norman Malcolm's assurance that, for Wittgenstein, describing language-games and describing grammar 'come to the same'.

448 Aidun D 'Wittgenstein on Grammatical Propositions' op. cit., p.146.

449 Aidun D 'Wittgenstein on Grammatical Propositions' op.cit., p.144.

characterise a locution as both rule and description, the distinction must be unstable (to the extent that it permits sequential treatment). There the locution does not ‘hang in mid-air’.\(^{451}\) Rather, the distinction itself should be understood as unstable.

So much for the position that Wittgenstein should have allowed. What can be said on the question whether he in fact did so?

**Wittgensteinian Resolution**

Felicity McCutcheon, as a Wittgensteinian ‘friend’ of religion and while promoting the description/rule distinction, presented an argument to the conclusion that that distinction is in fact ‘fluid’ (RWLLA 106) and that ‘religious language’ could be taken as both rule and description. That is, while McCutcheon argued that the distinction should be acknowledged for appropriate ‘religious language’, she would not advocate it ‘hard and fast’.\(^{452}\)

To this point some qualification of McCutcheon has been argued. First, contrary to her usage, there is no ‘religious language’; rather, there are religious locutions. Second, an appropriate locution might be rule and description, but only in sequence. So, and third, the description/rule distinction itself may be unstable in the sense that sequential choice of rule and description is possible. At this stage of discussion, however, it is not clear how the ‘friends’ of religion as advocates of instability draw the description/rule distinction and the circumstances in which they would do so. Importantly, on pain of Wittgensteinian nonsense, the ‘friends’ must determine the correct application of that distinction. Here the focus is

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\(^{452}\) In similar manner, as will be discussed, Winch considered that any distinction between beliefs and language was neither ‘clear cut’ nor ‘stable’. Cf. Winch P ‘Language, Belief and Relativism’ in Lewis H D (ed) *Contemporary British Philosophy* 4\(^{th}\) series George Allen & Unwin Ltd London 1976, p.336.
Wittgensteinian orthodoxy. What have Wittgensteinians *qua* Wittgensteinians ultimately allowed by way of instability in the distinction?

Importantly, in response to this question, it can be argued that there is an historical perspective that indicates a development in Wittgenstein's position. The *Investigations* (especially *PI* 248; 251; 295) is a significant document in regard to the description/rule distinction; but the question is whether the grammatical logic of that distinction was settled for Wittgenstein in the *Investigations*. It might be submitted, on the basis of what has already been put, that an instability is exactly what Wittgenstein should ultimately have discovered for that distinction. If that is right, further consideration might inform the characterisation of descriptions and rules under the distinction. Can a Wittgensteinian position be further articulated?

Notably, Monk⁴⁵³ has suggested that in the 1938 version of the *Investigations* Wittgenstein had not regarded the description/rule distinction as fixed; but neither had he emphasised its 'fluidity'. While this is less than clear, and however indeterminate in the late 1930s, the idea that the boundary between rules and descriptions lacked 'sharpness' did emerge in *On Certainty*, as has been confirmed by Rhees.⁴⁵⁴ So, how did that view develop?

Wittgenstein (*PI* 373) had continued in the first part to the *Investigations* with grammar's discriminating task: grammar was committed to 'tell' what kind of 'object' a thing is. Here, for Wittgensteinians, grammar was potentially capable of drawing the description/rule distinction. At the time (1950-51) that the aphorisms of *On Certainty* were in draft, however, there is evidence that Wittgenstein arrived at a significant development of his earlier characterisation of the description/rule distinction and the role of grammar.⁴⁵⁵ This is critically important. Pitcher, Hallie,

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⁴⁵⁵ Note that Phillips has recounted Rhees' conviction that in *On Certainty* the quotations Wittgenstein discusses go back to 1930. Cf: Phillips D Z (ed) 'Wittgenstein's *On Certainty*: The Case of the Missing Propositions' in
Hacker, McCutcheon and Phillips (FAF 62) may not have identified a comprehensive understanding of the way in which grammar discriminates locutions that are rules simpliciter. But Rhees\(^\text{456}\) has pointed out that in \textit{PI} II xi (pp.165-194) Wittgenstein showed that ‘empirical proposition’ itself is not sharply defined. This may be considered remarkable, at least for the period during which the \textit{Investigations} was drafted, if the description/rule distinction was important to the post-\textit{Tractatus} Wittgenstein. Nevertheless, the lack of a comprehensive understanding of grammar may have been increasingly problematic to him, resulting in his subsequent comments. There, and on Rhees’ assurance, it looks as though the differentiation of ‘empirical’ and grammatical judgements became, for Wittgenstein (OC 139, 140), a matter of ‘practice’ \([Praxis]\).\(^\text{457}\)

Further, McCutcheon (\textit{RWLLA} 104, 105) has much more recently tried to document part of Wittgenstein’s purported acknowledgement of an instability of the description/rule distinction. In that, for Wittgenstein (\textit{PI} 563, 564), what is essential to a language-game is dependent on context, grammar is best identified by examining the context of a locution’s use. Exploiting the notion of context, McCutcheon (\textit{RWLLA} 105) has noted that, for Wittgenstein, the same proposition can operate both as a rule and as a description. McCutcheon’s quotation from Wittgenstein’s text here is at the least uncertain.\(^\text{458}\) Nevertheless, Wittgenstein did put the following quite provocative aphorisms recorded in \textit{On Certainty}. On 10

\textit{Don’t I have to admit that sentences are often used on the borderline between logic and the empirical, so that their meaning [use] shifts back and forth and they are now expressions of norms, now treated as expressions of experience? For it is not the ‘thought’ (an accompanying mental phenomenon) but its use (something that surrounds it) that distinguishes the logical proposition from the empirical one.}

However, a similar such remark (quoted above) certainly was made by Wittgenstein (OC 319).
March 1951, only six weeks prior to his death on 29 April, Wittgenstein (OC 309) wrote:

Is it that rule and empirical proposition merge into one another?

And, on 12 March at OC 319:

But wouldn't one have to say then, that there is no sharp boundary between propositions of logic and empirical propositions? The lack of sharpness is that of the boundary between rule and empirical proposition.

Finally, on 11 April at OC 501:

Am I not getting closer and closer to saying that in the end logic cannot be described?

It might be suggested, then, that despite the fact that Hallie did not record it, his rejection of 'sharpness' in the distinction enjoys ultimate Wittgensteinian acknowledgement.459

Nevertheless, here the question concerns the validity of a reading of some apparently relevant aphorisms from On Certainty. And there, more than a decade ago, some encouragement could have been derived from H-J Glock. In comment on the fact that On Certainty specifically raises the question whether rule and empirical propositions 'merge' into one another (OC 309), Glock460 proposed three grounds for a positive answer:

- propositions with the form of empirical propositions are among the 'hinges' on which language-games turn;

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459 Cf: OC 97. Note that, at the time (1963 and 1966) of the publication of his relevant journal articles, Hallie may not have read On Certainty which was not published until 1969.

• we can imagine circumstances in which certain sentences turn from grammatical propositions into moves of the language-game; and
• that there is no sharp boundary between rules and empirical propositions.

Glock did not proceed to exploit the notion of ‘hinge’ propositions in this context; and because it is beyond its scope, this thesis follows his example. There are significant reasons for doing so. This thesis is considering the position that Phillips put concerning the grammar of ‘God is love’. In the elucidations under consideration, Phillips (FAF 216) employed the description/rule distinction. He (FAF 218; WR 17) consistently characterised ‘God is love’ as a language-game rule rather than a description. This despite the fact that in two other places he (RRC 216; RHC 95) could be considered to have sublimed a distinction between rules of grammar and language-game rules into the distinction between grammatically disclosed descriptions and language-game rules. The critical point is that, although Phillips had published (in particular FAF) on Wittgenstein’s *On Certainty*, he did not compare ‘God is love’ with ‘hinge’ propositions at FAF 216 and 218. In Phillips’ earnest advocacy, it was clearly a language-game rule *simpliciter*. And his position stands or falls on the stability of the description/rule distinction and the question whether (with particular reliance upon Feuerbach) ‘God’ refers.

That said, Glock did make two significant comments. First, the fact that a boundary is not sharp does not mean that it is unworkable. Second, regard must be had to Wittgenstein’s functional conception of grammatical rules

... the logical status of a sentence is due not to its linguistic form, but to the way it is used, and can hence change: ‘any empirical proposition can be transformed into a postulate – and then becomes a norm of description’ (OC 321).\(^{461}\)

\(^{461}\) Glock H-J *A Wittgenstein Dictionary* op.cit., p.155.
So, the stability reading conceived by Hallie (1963), and which Hallie rejected, would not be faithful to the complete Wittgensteinian corpus on Glock’s (1996) reading of On Certainty. And the justification for accepting the soundness of Wittgenstein’s position would rest upon Glock’s second point: that grammatical propositions (rules of grammar) can be conceived as turning into moves of the language-game (moves pursuant to the game rules). For his part, (in 2003) Phillips\(^\text{462}\) clearly acknowledged Wittgenstein’s denial in On Certainty that there is a sharp distinction between ‘logical and empirical propositions’. And Forster\(^\text{463}\) emphasised (in 2005) that, while he insisted that there is a line to be drawn, Wittgenstein (OC 96, 97; RC 32; WLC 90, 91) was happy to permit that the line between ‘empirical’ propositions and grammatical rules is not sharp.

But, what was Wittgenstein’s final argument for this conclusion? Wittgenstein was interested in the kind of issues raised by G E Moore’s use of ‘I know’. And Wittgenstein began On Certainty in consideration of the locution ‘here is one hand’. By OC 52 Wittgenstein compared that locution with ‘At this distance from the sun there is a planet’ and suggested that, although the assertion about a hand could not be considered an hypothesis, there was no ‘sharp’ boundary between the two locutions.\(^\text{464}\) This may be the point approached by Wittgenstein at OC 53. And the issue is put more clearly at OC 57:

Now might not “I know, I am not just surmising, that here is my hand” be conceived as a proposition of grammar?

Significantly, there were two features of these locutions that Wittgenstein then could have noted. First, the hand locution looks like a description.\(^\text{465}\) Second however, and consistently with Phillips’ elucidation of ‘God is love’ at FAF 216, that


\(^{463}\) Forster M N Wittgenstein on the Arbitrariness of Grammar op.cit., p.10.

\(^{464}\) Rhees noted the significance of On Certainty consequent upon these remarks: Rhees R (ed by Phillips D Z) Wittgenstein’s On Certainty op.cit., p.44.

locution may also be taken to be definitional: a rule is given. That is, it may be allowed\(^{466}\) that certain (definitional) locutions can be taken as both rules and descriptions; and if there is no sharp boundary between them, other descriptions including hypotheses also may be (by grammar) both rule and description.

Further, take locutions about the age of the earth (OC 92). Here, for Wittgenstein (OC 94) it is the ‘inherited background’ against which truth and falsehood are distinguished. The way in which that then happens for Wittgenstein (OC 95) is that descriptions themselves perform the function of rules in the language-game, the game being learned from its praxis. And the game can be learnt before the rules are apprehended \textit{qua} rules. It is here (and only here) that Wittgenstein (OC 96) employed the ‘fluid’ metaphor for the form of ‘empirical’ propositions. That is, their status as descriptions does not prevent them adopting the function of rules; ‘empirical’ propositions are themselves rule ‘channels’. And to further exploit the metaphor (OC 97), there is no sharp division between the (rule) ‘channels’ and the (description) ‘waters’ that they channel. Indeed, for Wittgenstein (OC 98):

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\text{... the same proposition may get treated at one time as something to test by experience, at another as a rule of testing.}
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Now, it might be considered problematic for some (including Aidun and McCutcheon) who advocate that descriptions and rules ‘come to the same’, that here Wittgenstein must be read as allowing that they do so alternately or sequentially\(^{467}\). It would be an important exegetical note to his ultimate views about the description/rule distinction; and it may be determinative of the view that should be taken about the operation of that distinction. Any Wittgensteinian ‘friends’ who would exploit instability in that distinction and maintain that

descriptions and rules 'come to the same' should regard Wittgenstein's comment (OC 98) as a definitive qualification of that view.

Here it might be noticed that Wittgenstein was referring to the notion of 'test'. If a locution is to be tested to determine whether its status is that of a description, then it would not make sense to test the locution for description if its rule status were acknowledged simultaneously. The application of different tests (OC 105) for descriptions and rules, however, would take place within the same 'system' [System] which is the context in which locutions persist. Ultimately in Wittgensteinian (OC 94) terms, it is the 'inherited background' against which truth and falsehood are distinguished. And if grammar is to be significant, it may assume its identification of descriptions in these contexts; it might identify the nature of the 'background'.\footnote{Cf. OC 461.}

In apparent rejection of PG 45, Wittgenstein ultimately (OC 82, 83) put the contrast this way:

> What counts as an adequate test of a statement belongs to logic. It belongs to the description of the language-game.

> The truth of certain empirical propositions belongs to our frame of reference.

By On Certainty, then, Wittgenstein had allowed the notion of distinct language-games from the Investigations (Pl 49, 130, 261) its full rein. Accordingly, the relevant 'background' might allow (in principle) for certain locutions to be (sequentially) descriptions and rules in their particular language-games. Were Phillips' Wittgensteinian religion to survive from this point then it would need to argue that, although the description/rule distinction can be unstable, only particular kinds of locutions can operate (being 'fluid') both as descriptions and rules in any language-game; and that 'God is love' is not among them. That is, it would need to be established that, unlike certain other locutions, that religious locution does not have the appropriate 'background'; that, considered against the 'God is love'
locution, the description/rule distinction is stable. That would require an argument disqualifying the locution as a description (so, stabilising the distinction). But the argument (from Feuerbach) upon which Phillips has significantly relied has been found wanting.

Conclusion

At what point, then, have we arrived? Phillips' particular Wittgensteinian religion is in considerable difficulty. Characterising 'God is love' as rule *simpliciter* (pursuant to the description/rule distinction) would depend upon stability in the description/rule distinction and the disqualification of that locution as a description. Glock\(^{469}\) has suggested that the lack of sharpness in the distinction does not mean that it is unworkable. But given his adamant characterisation of 'God is love' as rule *simpliciter* Phillips' adherents must show how it does not disadvantage his case. That, in the face of instability which can characterise the distinction and should be profoundly significant for any Wittgensteinian. Wittgensteinians who follow Phillips would identify 'God is love' as a rule *simpliciter*. (Given that Phillips was adamant, perhaps they must do so.) But that would require the description/rule distinction to be drawn with stability and (unless Feuerbach's argument be accepted) an argument devised against 'God is love' as description.

By the same token, any allowance for instability in the description/rule distinction should prove challenging to Wittgensteinian 'friends' of religion. And, indeed, it has. Despite agreeing with Aidun that grammar provides that descriptions and rules can 'come to the same' for Wittgenstein, McCutcheon has nevertheless continued the distinction between descriptions and rules. That is, and despite the fact that she has advocated (*RWLLA* 61) that this ladder be discarded (perhaps in *Tractarian* fashion: *TLP* 6.54) once it has been employed, McCutcheon seems loath to cast it off. For her, that distinction continues undiminished, albeit 'fluid',

\(^{469}\) Glock H-J *A Wittgenstein Dictionary* op.cit., p.155.
where that can be justified. Why (it might be asked) cling to the ladder once it has been ascended to a safe epistemic ledge? It has been acknowledged, consistently from Wittgenstein, that the description/rule distinction can be unstable. And to clinging to the analytic benefit of the distinction requires clarification. For McCutcheon \((RWLLA 112)\), that should lie in maintaining the distinction in the hope of keeping a (Wittgensteinian) ground for identifying three things: locutions that are rules *simpliciter*, descriptions of God and *Unsinn* nonsense. After all, they are most significant objectives, and not only for any Wittgensteinian ‘friends’ of religion.

So, Wittgensteinian ‘friends’ of religion, like McCutcheon, need the distinction. And they should argue for its instability where (as in ‘God is love’) rules might also be (sequentially) descriptions. The difficulty then confronting the ‘friends’ is that confusion persists about the clear elucidation of the grammar of religious locutions. If the distinction can be unstable, what would the ‘friends’ of religion propose about locutions like ‘Seraphim are six-winged’? What is its grammar? It is certainly treated as a rule in the Judaeo-Christian religious language-game. But are Seraphim existents? How can grammar tell that the word ‘Seraphim’ is referent rather than a ‘grammatical object’ without reference? How could grammar tell, rather, that ‘Seraphim are six-winged’ is a ‘grammatical rule in dogmatics’? The ‘friends’ are in a difficulty here that has its source in the instability of the distinction, an instability that otherwise supports their case. Their difficulty applies not just to Seraphim, but also to God. Grammar \((PI 373)\) promises to tell; and we call out to be told.

\(^{470}\) Kicking away ladders is not only Wittgensteinian. Cf: Lewis C S *That Hideous Strength* John Lane Pan Books London (1955) 1983, p.177: Nature is the ladder we have climbed up by, now we kick her away.
The honest religious thinker is like a tightrope walker.  

For the post-"Tractatus" Wittgenstein (PI 126), philosophy’s task is to describe rather than explain. The subjects for description are language-games, one of whose problematic tendencies is the use of words in ways that give rise to illusion ["Tauschung"] or nonsense ["Unsinn"]. Indeed, in order to describe features of language-games, it is necessary to 'look and see' (PI 340); comparing and contrasting language use is critical. Clarifying distinctions can arise from such comparisons and contrasts. Some distinctions that need to be drawn are not obvious. And some are not sharp. From within Wittgensteinianism we have been assured that distinctions need not be sharp to be workable. Nevertheless, Wittgensteinians and others must agree that, to be workable, distinctions must be identifiable.

Now, for the purposes of this thesis, and in Phillips’ interests, one distinction in particular has been notable in Wittgenstein’s account. For Wittgenstein, the distinction between grammatically disclosed language-game rules and descriptions not only originated as early as the Blue Book (BB 49, 55), but grounded one significant orientation for the Investigations (for instance, PI 248, 251, 295). That distinction also remained to inform part of what followed, including Wittgenstein’s final work which was ultimately published in 1969 as On Certainty (for example, OC 95). Among Wittgensteinians it has been considered that the post-"Tractatus" Wittgenstein put the distinction to use in seeking to identify and expose the kind of Unsinn nonsense that is consequent upon treating language-game rules simpliciter.

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471 CV 84e.
472 Cf. PI 79, 96, 110.
as descriptions. So, conceded that there are descriptions, and in order to show where rules were also taken invalidly to be descriptions, rules *simpliciter* would need to be differentiated. In this regard, and problematically, rules *simpliciter* often share the surface grammar of descriptions; hence the confusion and the task confronting Wittgensteinians. The capacity of the description/rule distinction to identify *Unsinn* nonsense would be critical: the distinction would be exploited in order to render disguised nonsense patent (PI 464, 524).

Importantly, for Wittgensteinians, such nonsense would be a consequence of failure (following a 'look and see') correctly to identify locutions (by grammar) as rules *simpliciter*. Of course, it might also be a kind of nonsense not to recognise any legitimate case (should there be one) of a locution as both a rule and description believed true. Indeed, *mutatis mutandis* and like any other locution, philosophers identified by Phillips as 'friends' of religion might be tempted to appeal for certain religious locutions (like 'God is love') to be considered innocent (*qua* description) until proven guilty (of disguised nonsense). But that would not be Wittgensteinian; grammar promises to tell what kind of object a thing is (PI 373).

For Phillips the description/rule distinction identified 'God is love' as rule *simpliciter*. To characterise 'God is love' as description would be to lapse into the kind of *Unsinn* nonsense diagnosed by Wittgenstein at PI 251 and elsewhere. For the 'friends' of religion, however, consistently with possible instability in that distinction, 'God is love' might be treated (sequentially) as language-game rule and description (believed true). (That is, and despite McCutcheon's ambiguity on the matter, that would seem to be what the 'friends' do.) At least in principle, and further to the *Investigations*, the 'friends' would propose that rule and (true) description can be considered to characterise 'God is love'.

Essentially, two issues have emerged. First, the nature of the description/rule distinction is relevant. If that distinction is articulate for Wittgensteinians, its elements will be identifiable according to the grammar disclosed by language-

\[474\] Notably, Phillips (*FAF* 33) has identified Plantinga as taking this same approach to the onus of proof concerning the 'basicality' of theistic belief.
games. And while distinctions might be drawn sharply enough in order to establish difference, they can also be drawn in presumption of their own stability. The second issue consequently arises: whether the distinction between descriptions and rules is inherently stable, or whether it might be unstable in certain cases. So what might be the significance of stability and instability in the description/rule distinction?

Notably, as an eminent proponent of Wittgenstein in the philosophy of religion, Phillips did not exegete from Wittgenstein the ways in which that distinction might be articulated. Nor did he consider its sharpness. But he (FAF 64) did speculate on its instability:

... Take, for example, the way in which some experimental findings are so central that they become a norm within which further experiments are discussed, without themselves being questioned.

Notwithstanding that, as a Wittgensteinian Phillips repeatedly (FAF 146, 216, 218; WR 17; RRC 216; RHC 95) over many years employed the distinction to characterise 'God is love' as rule *simpliciter* rather than rule and description (believed true). For that locution at least, he drew the distinction with precision and stability.

While some distinctions are drawn in ways that do not allow for instability, this thesis has acknowledged that the Wittgenstein of *On Certainty* is considered among Wittgensteinian 'friends' to have allowed for the distinction to be 'fluid' between rules and descriptions. The issue of Wittgensteinian orthodoxy is important: whether Wittgenstein would have allowed for such instability for utilising the distinction in religion. For religion, any instability in the distinction would be apparent from the grammar displayed by its language-games. In that event, as a Wittgensteinian, what use could Phillips have made of the concept and function of grammar in regard to 'God is love'?
Prior to the publication of *On Certainty*, some Wittgensteinians might have presumed stability in the description/rule distinction where (by virtue of the rules of grammar) locutions could be descriptions or rules. Where not being description, the alternative is disclosed by grammar. The locution is a language-game rule; it is a rule *simpliciter*. However, Phillips’ characterisations of ‘God is love’ were presented following the 1969 publication of *On Certainty*. Accordingly, for Wittgensteinians, Phillips would have needed to allow for instability in the distinction such that, in principle, appropriate (‘fluid’) locutions may be (sequentially) both rule and (true) description. To characterise (by virtue of grammar) ‘God is love’ as a rule *simpliciter* then would require disqualification of locutions about God as description. If God is not the subject of description then the alternative would be a language-game rule pursuant to the description/rule distinction; ‘God is love’ is accordingly a rule *simpliciter*. The question is whether ‘God is love’ can be characterised as description. That is, while the description/rule distinction might be comprehended as ‘fluid’ by Wittgensteinians (in particular the ‘friends’ of religion), Phillips’ dominant interest would be to establish that locutions about God cannot be descriptions. His subsidiary interest would be to maintain stability in the distinction such that the rule alternative would be articulate and available.

Accordingly, and granted that (in principle) it is Wittgensteinian to allow for the description/rule distinction, the question arises as to the characterisation of ‘God is love’. After all, for the *Investigations* (*PI* 81, 82) not all features of all games are characterised by rules. ‘God is love’ could be an involuntary exclamation of praise rather than a ‘grammatical rule in dogmatics’ (*RHC* 95). Indeed, if there is a difference between a ‘grammatical rule in dogmatics’ and a ‘wonder about prayer and praise’ (*RHC* 97) then Phillips needed to ‘comment on the character’ of the difference. Is ‘God is love’ a rule or a religious wondering or a devotional expression? Perhaps, for Phillips like other religious adherents, it could be dogma and wondering and prayer. But we need grammar to elucidate such a ‘comment’ (*RHC* 99).
Can it be argued, then, by virtue of the description/rule distinction, that as a ‘grammatical rule in dogmatics’ (RHC 95) that locution operates without description of God? This was clearly argued by Phillips. Some of his opponents were to accuse him of philosophy by prescription rather than persuasion. Such accusation, however, was precipitate. Eventually Phillips carefully argued against God as the subject of description. So, it must be emphasised that, in regard to ‘God is love’, Phillips’ characterisation of the locution as rule simpliciter exploited stability in the distinction. For Phillips, because ‘God is love’ is a ‘grammatical rule in dogmatics’, it amounts to Unsinn nonsense to characterise that locution as description. Although Phillips did not express it so, instability cannot apply between the alternatives of a distinction once one of those alternatives has been disqualified.

That said, the burden of argument falls on Phillips’ position concerning descriptions. If he could not show that God was beyond description then, mutatis mutandis, the kind of instability in the description/rule distinction recognised by Wittgenstein’s On Certainty may permit appropriate religious locutions to be both rules and descriptions pursuant to that distinction. So, to what did Phillips appeal in order to establish that ‘God is love’ is not a description? For Phillips, following Feuerbach, the ‘objects’ of religious locutions are not candidates for description. Even if existents can be described by grammatical rule-following locutions, God is not that kind of ‘thing’ for Phillips (WR 62). By virtue of that position, he could have maintained that instability in the description/rule distinction, even if Wittgensteinian, is not relevant to ‘God is love’. That particular locution is not unstable between rule and description because it cannot be a description; it is a rule simpliciter.

Everything, then, depends upon the grammar of locutions about God. Ever since the Blue Book, Wittgensteinian grammar has consistently been inseparable from rule-following. Indeed, the rules of grammar have been taken to be the Wittgensteinian measure of all things.475 There, and because of Wittgenstein’s account of grammar, Phillips confronted a most challenging project. He has depended (FAF xvi) on the idea that grammar is the measure of all things and that

the philosopher is its guardian. But he had difficulty in demonstrating that grammar precludes recognition of God as an existent where he considered the apostle Peter's confession (RFF 91-99). Most significantly, his culminating reliance on Feuerbach was problematic. To the extent that he relied on Feuerbach, Phillips was vulnerable on the critical point enabling his religious Wittgensteinianism to exploit stability in the description/rule distinction.

In the alternative, what might have been the outcome if Phillips had been able to establish a convincing argument to the conclusion that 'God is love' could not be a description? In that event the choice of the second (rule) alternative for characterising 'God is love' would only be acceptable if that alternative itself had been articulate from grammar. To return to the question already asked: why is 'God is love' a language-game rule rather than a religious wondering? Unless a rule simpliciter grammar is articulate, choice of the second alternative is itself problematic. And purported choice of an unclear alternative hazards rationality. Indeed, in Phillips' own terms, and if grammar is the measure of all things for philosophy (FAF xvi; BR 18), how is the measure to be measured (PCP 3; RHC 89, 90)? Without such a measure, it may not be feasible for Wittgensteinians to choose the rule simpliciter alternative.

Despite these difficulties that challenge Phillips, Wittgensteinian religious 'friends' are nevertheless confronted by their own difficulties. The onus of proof, like the worm, has turned. And the 'friends' are not entitled to the benefit of the doubt. That is, how can it be established whether an otherwise orthodox religious locution, such as 'God is love' is a description rather than the presentation of a rule (however conceived) in regard to religious talk about God? It is one thing for Phillips to identify 'God is love' as rule simpliciter because he has attempted to rule out the only other alternative under a (stable) description/rule distinction. It is altogether another for the Wittgensteinian 'friends' to claim (as McCutcheon does) that because description has not been ruled out, their cause is vindicated. Their Wittgensteinian cause is viable only if the grammar of 'God is love' can be established; that is, the grammar of the locution is of critical significance if the nature of the locution qua description is to be identified. Grammar still needs to be
comprehended in religion. Phillips' difficulty in this regard haunts the 'friends' as well.

Critically for the Wittgensteinian 'friends', then, the grammar of locutions must be articulated where, in their advocacy, rules and descriptions 'come to the same' (as Aidun\textsuperscript{476} and McCutcheon\textsuperscript{477} have expressed it) in language-games or in a 'form of life'. And any failure of grammar to discriminate rules \textit{simpliciter} from descriptions would leave nonsense 'disguised'. Indeed, unless the grammar of their locutions is explicable, the notion of language-games is of little benefit to Wittgensteinian religion. Among other things, in those circumstances the nature of the language-game itself would remain disguised. In regard to 'God is love', discriminating that locution as description would be problematic, and the victory of the Wittgensteinian 'friends' consequent upon their advocacy of instability in the distinction would be Pyrrhic.

Accordingly, the Wittgensteinian 'friends' also are in severe difficulty. The description/rule distinction was articulated in order to identify a kind of confusion in language that gave rise to \textit{Unsinn} nonsense. Of course, \textit{Unsinn} nonsense must be identifiable in them if, among others, religious language-games are to maintain credibility \textit{qua} Wittgensteinian language-games. Nevertheless, where the distinction can be unstable, such nonsense may be liberated among the language-games that characterise the religious form of life. The significant challenge for Wittgensteinian 'friends', then, is to discern \textit{Unsinn} nonsense among those language-games while the description/rule distinction is potentially unstable. On that my spade is turned. For any continuing Wittgensteinian religious 'friends', however, it must cry out for attention.

In that regard, it must be emphasised that whatever may occupy Wittgensteinian philosophers of religion into the future, the limit of attention here has been the offering concerning 'God is love' from the hand of the late Professor Phillips whose


\textsuperscript{477} McCutcheon (106).
Wittgensteinian agenda over more than forty years was diligent and ambitious. That agenda was vulnerable in its reliance upon grammar for its opposition to 'God is love' as description. There, by my submission, Phillips' Wittgensteinianism has been inadequate to its task. But what might be said further about the agenda confronting the Wittgensteinian 'friends' of religion?

The first response to that question might be that they are confronted by some issues that also challenged Phillips. It would be most important if the 'friends' could identify, in Wittgensteinian terms, what religion is. That could then inform discussion about the identification of religious language-games and their relationship with other language-games. It could also establish a conversation characterising religious forms of life in the interests of common intelligibility.

Second, however, the 'friends' of religion are challenged in ways that are unique for Wittgensteinians who consider that locutions about God can be descriptions. To rely upon seriatim responses to arguments rejecting description status for locutions that they take to be both rule and description could be less than Wittgensteinian; the 'friends' require a grammar for identifying descriptions. If it should matter to Wittgensteinians like Phillips that grammar promises to tell what kind of object a thing is, it must also matter to Phillips' Wittgensteinian opponents. For the sake of Wittgensteinian clarity at least, the Wittgensteinian 'friends' of religion should be just as concerned to articulate that grammar.

Indeed, the Wittgensteinian 'friends' of religion are in dire need of a philosopher to champion their cause. It would be surprising if such a champion were soon to emerge who remotely approached the stature of their most significant opponent, Dewi Zephaniah Phillips.
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