



## Wittgensteinian Fideism and Religious Skepticism

John Searle once mentioned in an interview “Wittgenstein’s aversion to theory.”<sup>1</sup> This phrase is suggestive of Wittgenstein’s thinking on how to approach the issues surrounding religious practices and language; the same phrase also illustrates the thought of those philosophers of religion indebted to Wittgenstein. Keeping Searle’s comment in view, I have two aims in this paper: first, to describe Wittgenstein’s thinking on religion as a reaction against the urge toward “theory” on the part of philosophers *vis-à-vis* religious belief; and, second, to debate the skeptical attack upon the Wittgensteinian philosophy of religion that arises when philosophers give in to this urge.

In contemporary philosophy of religion, Wittgenstein’s presence is felt as one of the forces behind theological non-realism.<sup>2</sup> Non-realism, according to John Hick, is the position that “interprets religious language, not as referring to a transcendent reality... but as expressing our emotions, or our basic moral insights and intentions... or as referring to our moral and spiritual ideals.”<sup>3</sup> Non-realists are not “anti-religious” - indeed,

they wish, by and large, to retain religious language and practice as a venerable “form of life” - but they do regard talk of God or salvation “understood realistically,” as “meaningless or utterly implausible.”<sup>4</sup>

On the other hand, realists, as Don Cupitt puts it, “think our religious language tells of beings, events and forces that belong to a higher world.... But I [Cupitt is speaking here as a representative of non-realism] believe that there is only one world... the world of language.”<sup>5</sup> Thus we cannot think of religious language as “replicating the structure of some extra-linguistic reality.”<sup>6</sup> Realists, as might be expected, react with dismay toward this characterization of religion. They find the type of religious belief that could be offered in this context a pale ghost of *genuine* belief.

But the debate on this issue among philosophers of religion is, we might say, trilateral — it is not just between the Wittgensteinians, such as D. Z. Phillips, and realists, like Hick. Other philosophers, Kai Nielsen and Antony Flew for instance, start by doubting the value of religion and religious language altogether, whether that language is seen by its users as an enclosed “form of life” or as a description of ultimate reality. Whereas for the realist the Wittgensteinian program has made too little of religious claims, skeptics like Nielsen accuse the language-game maneuver of Wittgenstein’s later philosophy as privileging religious language to an absurd degree because it exempts religious language from the constraints of rational discourse.

Bernard Williams illustrates the above tension well: for the skeptic, Wittgenstein’s attitude toward religion seems too “permissive,” but from the realist’s point of view, the Wittgensteinians are “giving a radically humanist interpretation to religion” that denies the objective reality of its subject matter.<sup>7</sup> Wittgensteinians find both of these criticisms trade in the same “foundationalist” conception of what should be allowable religious discourse; the criticisms only pull in opposing directions because they stem from opposite philosophical prejudices. The foundationalism shared between the skeptic and the realist is manifest in the notion that religious propositions must, to be meaningful, be grounded on rational foundations that are themselves in need of no further grounding. The difference between the two parties is that the skeptic believes that religious claims do not have this grounding while the realist claims that such grounds exist.

After a discussion of what Wittgenstein has to say about religious belief and language in his own writings, I shall return to the charges leveled by Nielsen at the neo-Wittgensteinians. These challenges are resolved by the Wittgensteinians in much the same way that the opposition of the realists is dealt with. To both the skeptic and the realist, the Wittgensteinians maintain that what it is to “explain” and to “believe in” religious propositions has been misunderstood.

In many respects Wittgenstein had a high regard for the religious way of life. Norman Malcolm, Wittgenstein's friend and student, writes, "I believe that he looked on religion as a 'form of life'. . . in which he did not participate, but with which he was sympathetic and which greatly interested him."<sup>9</sup> Malcolm is even prepared to say that Wittgenstein was, in a certain way, "more deeply religious than are many... religious believers."<sup>10</sup>

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But we must understand that religion was valuable for Wittgenstein only insofar as it was a lived practice. Religious propositions, abstracted from a religious context, held no meaning for Wittgenstein. Catholicism, he said, might, in some ways, be "wonderful beyond words," but "any attempt to make it into a philosophical system is offensive."<sup>11</sup> Here we see precisely the opposition to theory that Searle mentions. This orientation towards religion does not seek to make ontological claims; there is, for instance, no need to dig under the word "God" to see if it attaches to some "object of faith." The Wittgensteinians, at least,

would claim that this rejection of the urge to posit such objects of faith can have, as Peter Winch says, "a liberating effect on some people and enable them to take certain religious attitudes seriously in a way they would not have been able to before."<sup>16</sup>

Even in his earliest thought, Wittgenstein displays a sensitivity toward religious life and language, but we are told in the *Tractatus* that "God does not reveal himself in the world."<sup>17</sup> Since God is not in the world as a fact, he cannot be the object of sensible discourse and, therefore, cannot be known to us. So, according to Wittgenstein, the structure of language is not appropriate to discuss that which lies outside the world; we must, therefore, pass over in silence that which cannot be sensibly formulated in language.

In his "Lecture on Ethics," Wittgenstein again warns us against trying to move past the limits of language. In this essay, Wittgenstein holds that our language can pick out neither transcendent meaning nor absolute value from the conglomeration of facts that make up the world for us. So, again, what we tend to think of as the objects of ethical and religious speech are placed off limits because all the facts in the world "stand on the same level" — there is no vertical dimension of value *in* the world, no room for transcendence *in* our language.<sup>18</sup> As it is phrased in the *Tractatus*, the "sense" of the world "must lie outside the world," (6.41) but since our propositions "can express nothing of what is higher," (6.42) any talk of absolute value must come to nothing and any proposed description of absolute value should be rejected "*ab initio*" just because it is a description.<sup>19</sup>

One of the themes of the *Tractatus* is that the "world is the totality of facts" (1.1) that we "picture... to ourselves." (2.1) It follows from these propositions that we can — at the risk of some over-simplification — judge the truth of a picture by "checking" it against the world, by checking the "agreement... of its sense with reality." (2.223) Thus, "to tell whether a picture is true or false we must compare it with reality." (2.223)

In his post-Tractarian work, however, Wittgenstein abandons the conception of language as mirroring reality in a determinant and objective fashion. In Wittgenstein's later thought a proposition acquires its sense not so much by being founded on an underlying reality, as by being held in place by other propositions. And, after the fashion of the realists, to assert a foundation beneath our use of a proposition in order to certify our language a needless — and impossible — exercise in reification.

So in Wittgenstein's later thought, the sense of a proposition is not established by its correspondence to a reality that exists outside of the context of that proposition. Rather, "it is only in use that... [a] proposition has its sense."<sup>20</sup> We always find a proposition in a "system in which consequences and premises give one another *mutual* support."<sup>21</sup> And those of our convictions which stand fast "do so, not because... [they are] intrinsically obvious or convincing," but because they are held fast by what lies around them.<sup>22</sup>

Given Wittgenstein's later conception of language, it follows that all testing, "all confirmation and dis-confirmation of a hypothesis takes place within a system" and a given system will determine what the concepts internal to it can mean.<sup>23</sup> We cannot extricate ourselves from our linguistic practices so as to verify the validity of these practices. Thus, I can never say that I have gotten "my picture of the world by satisfying myself of its correctness.... it is [instead] the inherited background against which I distinguish between true and false."<sup>24</sup> We can never judge a way of picturing the world in a purely objective fashion, for we must always "use judgments as principles of judgment."<sup>25</sup> We can only see that our use holds together for ourselves and our interlocutors.

The point of all this, at least as it relates to religious concepts, as it has been interpreted by Wittgensteinian

philosophers of religion, is that, since a given language-game must provide its own standards of meaningfulness, it makes no sense to speak of the language-game of religion as being, in its totality, either reasonable or unreasonable.<sup>26</sup> Further, the relation of religious claims to a “reality” outside of religious “forms of life” cannot and need not be determined. For the Wittgensteinian then, the conflict between realist and skeptical philosophers of religion is a chimera because, as D. Z. Phillips writes, the “distinction between the real and unreal is not prior to the use of various language-games.”<sup>27</sup> Further, if the “meaning” of religious terms can be found only within that same mode of discourse and if philosophy wishes to pronounce on religious topics, then it must be “prepared to examine religious concepts in the contexts from which they derive their meaning.”<sup>28</sup> Here we are left with a philosophy that “simply puts everything before us, and neither explains nor deduces anything.”<sup>29</sup>



As John Searle puts it, the fundamental insight of Wittgenstein’s later philosophy is that there cannot be “any non-linguistic Archimedean point from which we can appraise the success or failure of language in representing, coping with, or dealing with the real world.”<sup>30</sup> As Wittgenstein maintains in the *Philosophical Investigations*, “What has to be accepted, the given, is — so one could say — *forms of life*.”<sup>31</sup> Therefore, when philosophy looks at religion all it can say is: “This language-game is played.”<sup>32</sup> As Norman Malcolm puts it, what this amounts to is that the “existence of religious practices can no more be explained than can the existence of sports, or of musical composition.”<sup>34</sup> All the believer can do is point to her religious life, which displays her belief. And philosophy must leave “everything just as it is.”<sup>33</sup>

For many, this Wittgensteinian claim appears too strong. When Wittgenstein speaks of our desire to critique an entire language-game as a type of philosophical arrogance, skeptics like Kai Nielsen feel hemmed in. Nielsen asks: “Why can’t a given language-game be incoherent or absurd?”<sup>35</sup> and he caricatures the view that philosophy “cannot relevantly criticize religion” as “Wittgensteinian Fideism.”<sup>36</sup> This appellation suggests that the Wittgensteinians are willing to privilege certain religious propositions without giving them any rational support — even in the face of all evidence and argument to the contrary.

From a Wittgensteinian perspective, however, the problem is that Nielsen thinks that he can “explain” religious belief by determining whether religious propositions agree with reality or not. But the Wittgensteinians reply that “the idea of ‘agreement with reality’ does not have any clear application” because such agreement can only be read in terms of some specific context or language. Phillips writes that, for Wittgenstein, this hunger for explanation among philosophers

seemed to result “from a deep philosophical prejudice.... the craving for generality, the insistence that what constitutes an intelligible move in one context must constitute an intelligible move in all contexts.”<sup>39</sup> This craving for generality leads to the mistake of looking “for an explanation where we should see the facts as ‘primary phenomena.’ That is, where we should say: *this language-game is played*.”<sup>40</sup>

The skeptics, in this craving, assume that the position from which they would deploy their attacks on the dubious propositions of religion is itself grounded on a rock-solid foundation — a foundation which requires no further support. But it is just the possibility of taking such a position that Wittgenstein denies. There is no way to verify a foundationalism of this nature because we cannot turn around to judge our perspective without employing it as a background. Thus, Wittgenstein says, we will always find that at “the foundation of well-founded belief lies belief that is not founded.”<sup>41</sup>

It may seem that Wittgenstein has introduced an odd sort of relativism here. Nielsen, for instance, is scandalized by Peter Winch’s claim that anthropologists are wrong in assuming that the Western scientific outlook, as opposed to the outlook of more “primitive” peoples, corresponds to objective reality. Nielsen says: “We know that we, with our scientific culture, are right about these matters and the Azande [Indians] are wrong.”<sup>42</sup> It seems, though, that we can only know this from the perspective of our “scientific culture.” We are, on Wittgenstein’s formulation, using “our language-game as a base to *combat theirs*,” in which case we cannot help misreading a form of life because we have tried to understand it in terms foreign to it.<sup>43</sup> To be fair to the Azande, ought we not take up some neutral position, so as to remove ourselves from our received way of looking at things before judging the perspectives of others? Of course we can no more do this than we can step outside of our own skins. We cannot doubt the very perspective from which we doubt Azande magic. As Wittgenstein says: “The game of doubting itself presupposes certainty.”<sup>44</sup>

So this is one Wittgensteinian criticism of Nielsen’s position: There just doesn’t seem to be any way that we can meaningfully judge mutually opposing world views. We cannot extricate ourselves from our own position in order to survey every possible way of looking at the world and confirm that ours corresponds most directly to an exterior reality. And if the above is true, then we can only talk about aspects of a world view as they refer to that view’s axioms and goals. Further, as Wittgenstein has pointed out, “whether a proposition can turn out false... depends on what I make count as determinants for that proposition.”<sup>46</sup> And at some point, we simply assume the propositions that we start with.

Besides charging the skeptic with this methodological confusion, the Wittgensteinians also claim that the skeptic tends to misread what believers are really doing; that is, the skeptic tends to read religious claims in terms of a realism that believers may in fact not adhere to. As a result, the skeptics are tempted to import the methods and goals of, say, contemporary Western science when assessing the value of

religious language. Are we not, for instance, inclined to judge the magic of a primitive tribe as if it aimed at the same thing as our science?

Wittgenstein reveals this tendency in his "Remarks on Frazer's *Golden Bough*." In *The Golden Bough*, Sir James Frazer, no doubt referring to people he considers the "scientists" of earlier ages, writes, we "shall do well to look with leniency upon their errors as inevitable slips made in the search for truth."<sup>47</sup> For Wittgenstein, Frazer's reading of "savage" myth and ritual is unsatisfactory because "it makes these views look like errors.." But, claims Wittgenstein, no proponent of a given religion is in error, "except when he sets forth a theory."<sup>48</sup>

It is the very idea "of wanting to explain a practice" that strikes Wittgenstein as being wrong.<sup>49</sup> What would be right, perhaps, is a *description*, but an *explanation* assumes too much — an objective ground from which this can be given. Frazer doubles his mistake because he cannot but consider the rituals he studies as a groping toward modern science — as if they were a pathetic proto-science. This is a measure by which they clearly fall short. Our science, we claim at least, can affect the visible world in a much more predictable, repeatable, and verifiable fashion than can any shaman's magic. But in what sense are we right, and he wrong, if we have only read his intent in terms of our own?

In "religious practices," Wittgenstein states, "there is no question of an error."<sup>50</sup> Genuine religious practices do not make the effort to do anything but perform their *religious* function and in this they *cannot* err, the attempt to "explain" a religious act by suggesting what it aims at "is already therefore wrong."<sup>51</sup> If the savage says, "My magic works," how can we deny this? In such a case, the Wittgensteinian might ask who should say what it means to "work"? The primitive's magic may not affect the world in the way an anthropologist would suppose the primitive to desire, but his magic still "works," it does just what it should. That is, it holds just the place in the conduct of affairs that it does hold; the word "should" can have no other meaning here. As Wittgenstein notes, "the same savage, who stabs the picture of his enemy apparently in order to kill him, really builds his hut out of wood."<sup>54</sup> If the savage's belief in magic were what Frazer suggests it to be, he would build his hut with magic too.

Take an example that Phillips uses: a boxer who prays before every bout. Does he really believe that this activity insures victory or keeps him from harm?<sup>57</sup> If we ask him and he answers yes, then we have a testable hypothesis, an hypothesis which, it is supposed, can be denied by an appeal to evidence. What if we prove to the boxer that his prayers do not have this effect? The boxer may still claim that this is "why" he prays, even though he is aware that he frequently loses or is injured. His may be the only answer that can be given to a question that should not have been asked. In fact, the prayer of the boxer does *not*, according to the Wittgensteinians, manifest a belief in some testable theory, it is rather an expression of what is appropriate from the point of view of a certain piety. One of the skeptic's mistakes is to assume that each person who prays expects the prayer to act as a sort of magical formula, and it may even be wrong to take the word of a believer if he expresses himself or herself in this way.<sup>58</sup> The person who prays perhaps cannot

express what they are doing except in terms which the skeptic or anthropologist, in search of an explanation, must misread as belief in some type of super-natural causation. In opposition to Frazer, Wittgenstein is certainly right that it is not a prior, mistaken theory that produces primitive rituals and religious practices, but practices exist as an aspect of culture — as a part of life. These practices help to form the context that determines what a "mistake" can be. So we should not expect a given religious proposition to be explained by some prior non-religious commitment. Nor should we see these propositions themselves as explanations of an external reality.

But we should return to Nielsen's complaints concerning the foregoing analysis of religious practice. From what has been said above it may indeed appear that religious language *has* been given too free a reign by the Wittgensteinians. As Nielsen's consternation with Winch suggests, have we not sanctioned a strange relativism that is unable to distinguish between the truths of science and the fancies of superstition? But this suggests, I think, a real misunderstanding of the Wittgensteinian project. Clearly, Wittgenstein has not asserted that the scientist might as well resort to the methods of Shamanism, and it is equally certain that he has made no move in the direction of affirming the objects of religious belief as somehow "real."

Nielsen's objection, though, seems based on the assumption that Wittgenstein has done just this. When Wittgenstein says that philosophy must take a language-game as a given, Nielsen seems to take this as corroborating the contents of the language-game in question. On this reading, if we accept the Wittgensteinians' claims, we might as well substitute Azande magic for the experiments of scientists. It is just here, however, that Nielsen's charge of "fideism" misses its mark. When Wittgenstein offers us other ways of looking at things he is not offering them as descriptions of the way things *really* are, rather he confronts us with positions opposed to our own to expose the erroneous "notions of necessity where our ways of thinking are concerned."<sup>60</sup> Wittgenstein exposes what he calls the final "groundlessness of our believing."<sup>61</sup>

The reaction of skeptics like Nielsen to the Wittgensteinian thesis is understandable only if they think that Wittgenstein is affirming the truth of those propositions about which they are skeptical. But this is precisely *not* what Wittgenstein is attempting. Wittgenstein is not trying to provide foundations for the beliefs to which Nielsen is opposed, rather his

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point is, as Phillips says, "that the whole conception of such underpinning is confused."<sup>62</sup>

Neither Wittgenstein nor the contemporary Wittgensteinians hold that all beliefs are necessarily inviolate and immune from criticism. Beliefs can certainly become senseless, especially if the believer attempts to push propositions outside their proper bounds. If a believer attempts to leave the realm of religious discourse he opens himself to correction, as was shown in Wittgenstein's essay on *The Golden Bough*. The implication of that essay was that if Frazer's savages *did* think in the way that he suggests, then we would have grounds to say that they are wrong. (Though one might counter that now it is the Wittgensteinians who are giving "explanations.")

Take the boxer mentioned earlier, if he *really* believes that his prayers work in some mechanical way then he is guilty of what Wittgenstein calls "superstition", the notion that religious rituals can achieve the same ends as science. For Wittgenstein, where religion springs from trust, superstition springs from fear, and "is a kind of false science" motivated by that fear.<sup>63</sup> If "believing in God" is an aspect of religion, then it is based on trust and cannot be in the same category as believing in the empirical sciences. If someone goes beyond this, i.e. makes an appeal to a reality external to the religious life and adduces this as evidence for the existence of God, then the Wittgensteinian might say that this person's beliefs have become objectionable; we might say that such a person has let his religion bleed over into science.

Wittgenstein would have both the skeptic and the believer on guard against taking "religious utterances as if they were some sort of second-rate scientific utterances, as if they were theories for which we have inadequate evidence."<sup>64</sup> On Wittgenstein's account, perhaps all a skeptical philosopher of religion can do is show when the users of religious language have overstepped their bounds into realms where that language does not belong. But why would a skeptic be concerned to do more than this if he can satisfy himself that believers are non-realists on the Wittgensteinian model? Against the religious realists it would seem that Nielsen and Wittgenstein are allies.



It is of course this very non-realism that gets the Wittgensteinians into trouble with the realists who contend that this analysis of religious language and belief does not live up to what believers say *they* believe in. Searle points out what so many realists find odd about the Wittgensteinian critique of religious belief. He claims, clearly part of the reason people pray is that they believe there is, in some *real* way, "a God up there listening."<sup>65</sup> Thus, in playing the language-game of religion, the participants must assume something independent of that game. Searle writes, "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 who is listening to your prayers."<sup>66</sup>

The realist holds that a religious belief "is distinct from the commitment which may follow from it, and is the justification for it." But this is incoherent for the Wittgensteinians precisely because beliefs are not prior to commitments, or patterns of life. Indeed, once the patterns of life have been accounted for, there is nothing left over to be called belief.<sup>67</sup> The notion is this: when we understand that we can drop the idea of a relation between a belief and an object without affecting the content of the belief — or without affecting religious practice — we see (at least so the Wittgensteinian holds) that realism is not so much a philosophical position as a "battle cry."<sup>68</sup> And if we realize the emptiness of realism we are left with beliefs that are, as Phillips says, "expressions of faith and trust."<sup>69</sup> Now the realist believer will acknowledge this last part but will hold out for something more as well, that in which — or in whom — one has faith and trust.

If the believer does *believe*, in the realist's sense, in prayer or miracles it seems that they are written off. For the Wittgensteinians, it appears that religious belief is fine, so long as religious propositions are kept enclosed in the purely self-referential language-game of a vague faith and trust. As soon as a belief is taken to *really* refer outside of this game into the world — the domain of the empirical sciences — it is bludgeoned into submission. Such beliefs are, in Phillips' words, "blunders, mistakes, regarding causal connections of a kind. We can say that the people involved are reasoning wrongly, meaning by this that they contradict what we already know."<sup>70</sup>

On the Wittgensteinian account both the realist and the skeptic are "invoking an external relation between the language-game and reality... trading in a non-linguistic, transcendental point of view."<sup>73</sup> According to Phillips, both the realist and the skeptic talk "as though it *makes sense* to speak of language referring to reality." They talk as if a belief must pick out some object in the real world to be meaningful. However, this relation between belief and object is just asserted; its nature is never elucidated because there is no standpoint from which such a description can be given. As Phillips puts it, "*language as such does not refer to anything, either successfully or unsuccessfully.*"<sup>74</sup>

It is ironic that Wittgenstein's thought on religion makes so few people happy. For the skeptic, he is apparently too willing to condone naïve belief; for the realist

believer, he has given the game over to the skeptic by refusing to allow the postulates of religion an objective standing. The objections of the realists and the skeptics stem from the same urge, the urge for explanation, and Wittgenstein is determined to leave this urge unsatisfied because there is no “high-ground” from which one can launch sorties against an opposing language-game. Thus, after philosophy has clarified the grammar of religious beliefs, its work is over. But, Phillips writes, “as a result of such clarification, someone may see dimly that religious beliefs are not what he had taken them to be...”<sup>75</sup>

## Conclusion

I have spent most of my time in this paper giving a charitable reading to the neo-Wittgensteinian response to the skeptic’s charge of “fideism.” I think that this charge fails because, for the Wittgensteinians, belief in a proposition of religion does not occur prior to the religious form of life. That is, a religious belief is not an affirmation that refers to a reality exterior to religious language and practice.

This raises two difficult and related epistemological issues which I have not attempted to deal with in this paper but to which I would like to briefly draw the reader’s attention. First, there is the question, “How reliably does our language map or mirror the non-linguistic reality to which it presumably refers?” Second, and more radically, there is the question, “Is there, in fact, any objective, non-linguistic reality for language to map or mirror?”

To illustrate this problem, let me offer a partial definition of the realist’s conception of truth. I take the essential feature of this definition to be the position that the truth of a belief or statement depends on whether or not the world is as the belief or statement says it is. A person who is a realist (concerning religious language) would say further that religious believers really believe that the propositions of their religion are true in this sense.

I am not sure what D. Z. Phillips would say about this definition. In several places, however, he suggests that the question of an extra-linguistic reality is useless and therefore meaningless. He claims, as we have seen, that the “distinction between the real and unreal is not prior to the uses of various language-games,” and that “language does not refer to anything, either successfully or unsuccessfully.” I do not think that Phillips is entirely consistent here — he has, for example, made naturalistic assumptions about the status of prayer and miracles — but it seems to me that the passages above implicitly answer the question about the status of an extra-linguistic reality in the negative. There seems to be no relation between beliefs and the objects of beliefs because there just is not anything “under” or “behind” our linguistically situated beliefs.

If Phillips is simply saying that belief in God does not attach to any object, then I can at least understand what he means (though I still would not understand his reluctance to simply assert that God does not exist). But if Phillips wants to say that no use of language is underwritten by a reality to which it refers, then I confess that I find it hard to make much of his claim. I can’t think of any positive argument in its favor. Indeed, if Phillips did hold this latter position

I would be inclined to accuse him of some sort of self-referential incoherence: if we can never extract ourselves from

the various language-games that we participate in, if there is no reality external to these games, how can we make even this claim itself — without having stepped outside the bounds of language-games, thereby to view reality as it is and deliver the proclamation that no one can extract themselves from language-games because there is no extra-linguistic reality?

## Notes

1. D. Z. Phillips, “Searle on Language-Games and Religion,” in D. Z. Phillips, *Wittgenstein and Religion* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1993), p. 22. In this article Phillips quotes extensively from an interview with John Searle which appeared in “Wittgenstein: Dialogue with John Searle,” in *The Great Philosophers*, edited by Bryan Magee (BBC Books, 1987). This quotation appears on page 344 of that text, in future citations to Phillips’s article I shall give the corresponding pages in *The Great Philosophers*.
2. The words “non-realism” and “realism” should, in the context of this paper, be taken to refer exclusively to the current debate in the philosophy of religion which will be described presently; associations with other “realisms” are not explored in this paper.
3. John Hick, “Religious Realism and Non-Realism,” in John Hick, *Disputed Questions in Theology and the Philosophy of Religion* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1993) p. 7.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 9.
5. Don Cupitt, “Anti-Realist Faith,” in Joseph Runzo (ed.), *Is God Real?* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1993) p.50.
6. *Ibid.* p. 67
7. Bernard Williams, “The Spell of Linguistic Philosophy,” in Bryan Magee, *Men of Ideas* (London: BBC Books, 1978) pp. 137-138. The article cited here is actually a conversation between Williams and Magee.
8. Quoted in Norman Malcolm, *Wittgenstein: A Religious Point of View?* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994) p. 11.
9. Norman Malcolm, *Ludwig Wittgenstein, A Memoir* (London: Oxford University Press, 1958), p. 72.
10. Malcolm, *Wittgenstein: From A Religious Point of View?*, p. 21.
11. Quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 11.
12. See, for instance, *Ibid.*, p. 19 and Malcolm’s Memoir, p. 71.
13. Malcolm, *Wittgenstein: From A Religious Point of View?*, p. 19.
14. Quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 18.
15. Quoted in Winch’s “Discussion of Malcolm’s Essay” in Malcolm, *Wittgenstein: From A Religious Point of View?*, p. 96.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 115.
17. All internal citations refer to B. F. McGuinness’s translation of Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (London: Routledge Publishing, 1995).

18. Ludwig Wittgenstein, "A Lecture on Ethics," in James Klagge and Alfred Nordmann (eds.), *Ludwig Wittgenstein, Philosophical Occasions: 1912-1951* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1993), p. 39.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 44.

20. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, G. E. M. Anscombe and G. H. Wright (eds.), trans. Dennis Paul and G. E. M. Anscombe (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), para. 10.

21. *Ibid.*, para. 142.

22. *Ibid.*, para. 144.

23. *Ibid.*, para. 105.

24. *Ibid.*, para. 94.

25. *Ibid.*, para. 124.

26. Cf. Malcolm, *Wittgenstein: From*, p. 78 and Phillips, *Wittgenstein and Religion*, p. xiii.

27. Phillips, *Wittgenstein and Religion*, p. xi.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 3.

29. Ludwig Wittgenstein, "Philosophy," in Klagge and Nordmann (eds.), *Ludwig Wittgenstein, Philosophical Occasions: 1912-1951* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1993), p. 177.

30. Phillips, "Searle," p. 24. P. 331 in *The Great Philosophers*.

31. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1967), p. 226e.

32. Kai Nielsen, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983), p. 120.

33. *Ibid.*

34. Malcolm, *Wittgenstein: From*, p. 85.

35. Nielsen, p. 57.

36. *Ibid.*, p. 67. References to "Wittgensteinian Fideism" occur throughout the text cited here and in Nielsen's article by that name in *Philosophy* (July, 1967). Nielsen describes Phillips as "the arch-Wittgensteinian Fideist" (Nielsen, p. 56).

37. Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, para. 215.

38. Phillips, *Faith After Foundationalism*, p. 55.

39. D. Z. Phillips, "Religious Beliefs and Language-Games," in *Wittgenstein and Religion* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993), p. 63.

40. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, (para. 654) p. 167.

41. Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, para. 253.

42. Nielsen, p. 79. Nielsen is referring to Winch's famous article "Understanding a Primitive Society" (*American Philosophical Quarterly*, vol. I no. 4, Oct. 1964, pp. 307-324) wherein Winch critiques the work of the anthropologist Evans-Pritchard on the African Azande tribe.

43. Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, para. 609.

44. *Ibid.*, para. 115.

45. Malcolm, *Wittgenstein: From*, p. 77.

46. Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, para. 5.

47. Quoted in Klagge and Nordmann, p. 120.

48. Ludwig Wittgenstein, "Remarks on Frazer's *Golden Bough*," in Klagge and Nordmann (eds.), *Ludwig Wittgenstein, Philosophical Occasions: 1912-1951* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1993), p. 119. The phrase "savages" is, of course, absurd and offensive. I retain it only because it is Wittgenstein's usage.

49. *Ibid.*

50. *Ibid.*, p. 121.

51. *Ibid.*

52. *Ibid.*, p. 123.

53. *Ibid.*, p. 135.

54. *Ibid.*, p. 125.

55. *Ibid.*

56. *Ibid.*, p. 137.

57. Phillips uses several examples similar to this one

on pp. 72-74 of *Wittgenstein and Religion*, ("Religious Beliefs and Language-Games").

58. I think that Wittgenstein points in the direction of this difficulty on p. 60 of *Lectures and Conversations*. The fact that someone claims to put forth evidence for his belief is not enough to determine if this is how his belief is operating.

59. Malcolm, *Wittgenstein: From*, p. 86.

60. Phillips, *Faith After Foundationalism*, p. 116.

61. Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, para. 166.

62. Phillips, *Faith After Foundationalism*, p. 63.

63. Quoted in Malcolm, *Wittgenstein: From*, p. 18.

64. Phillips, "Searle," p. 27. (Page 334 in *The Great Philosophers*).

65. *Ibid.*, p. 23. (Page 335 in *The Great Philosophers*).

66. *Ibid.*

67. D. Z. Phillips, "On Really Believing," in Runzo (ed.), *Is God Real?* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993), p. 85. Here Phillips is quoting Roger Trigg.

68. Quoted in Phillips, "On Really Believing," p. 87.

69. Phillips, "Religious Belief and Language-Games," p. 73.

70. *Ibid.*, p. 72.

71. Cf., for instance, "On Really Believing," p. 107.

72. Phillips, *Faith After Foundationalism*, xiii.

73. Phillips, "Searle," p. 24. But as long as Phillips is brandishing this weapon couldn't we accuse Wittgenstein and Phillips of the same sort of thing? How does one come to know that there is no "non-linguistic, transcendental point of view"; how does one come to see the divisions between language-games and accuse others of taking a transcendental point of view and of breaking through linguistic barriers without warrant if one has not himself done just this?

74. Phillips, "Great Expectations," in Runzo (ed.), *Is God Real?* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993), p. 206.

75. Phillips, "Religious Beliefs and Language-Games," p. 77.