

## ABSTRACT

Philosophers have always had an intense interest in language, particularly in problems of reference and meaning. Contemporary philosophers of language have focused attention on many important domains of human language of which the theological entity at the heart of the controversy is God. One of the key issues for philosophers of religious language is: How can we speak meaningfully of God? What does the word 'God' refer?

It is a general perception that philosophy is all about of the clarification of language. However, the nature of language appears as a contentious issue to the whole host of linguistic philosophers. They have expressed serious reservation regarding the functional aspect of language. In fact, the functional aspect of **religious language** appears as a surprise to the linguistic philosophers. Many linguistic philosophers of semantic persuasion rule out the relevance of religious language in philosophy. For them, due to the mysterious nature of religion, religious language appears as a misnomer and as a result of that it has been rejected as meaningless. The logical positivists' outlook of religious language is a case in point. In fact, in 20<sup>th</sup> century thought the rejection of metaphysics has been especially marked in the movement of Logical Positivism associated with the philosophers belonging to the Vienna Circle. For them, the main objective of the philosophers is not to design speculative systems or synthesis, or world-views just like the classical metaphysicians, rather to clarify *what we mean and how we mean* by the locutions we use. For them, most of the traditional philosophical problems in the past had arisen from *logico-linguistic* confusions about meaning. Philosophical problems are solved by being *dissolved* and the function of philosophy is wholly *therapeutic* in nature. In this regard, philosophers

should not take any metaphysical or epistemological assumption in order to determine the criterion of meaningfulness. The criterion of meaningfulness for them can be formulated in purely logical terms. Religious language, of course, falls short of fulfilling the criterion of meaningfulness like ethical or moral language and hence be treated as devoid of cognitive significance. Religious propositions, namely, ‘God is all powerful’, ‘God is just’, ‘God is omnipotent and merciful’ are not verifiable in the way in which the propositions of the natural sciences are verifiable. Hence, religious propositions have been rejected as meaningless or non-sense. In reality, religious propositions are vacuous. As they are vacuous, we need not prove them like all metaphysical propositions. As they do not meet the requirements for meaning, they simply do not make sense. However, some later philosophers, namely, Richard Hare, R. B. Braithwaite and others argued that even though religious language lacks descriptive content but they could nevertheless be meaningful. Thus, it seems that religious language still remains as a knotty issue within the sphere of linguistic philosophy.

There is no question of doubt that the presence of religion subsists from the very first day of human appearance. However, over the course of history we have noticed different interpretations of religion. Religion first transformed into theology, then philosophy of religion. Thus, there persists a constant revision of religion over the course of history. In this regard, we have in order the Platonic version of the philosophy of religion and religious language; Aquinas’ philosophy of religion and religious language; Kantian and neo-Kantian view of philosophy of religion and religious language and Wittgenstein and post-Wittgenstein’s view of religion and religious language. Hegel is said to be a *metaphysical reductionist* because he thinks that religion becomes a species of metaphysics. Aquinas’ philosophy of religion

likewise presupposes the possibility of philosophy having a metaphysical or transcendental role. Kantian and neo-Kantian philosophy of religion depends for its validity upon the philosophical adequacy of Kant's 'critical philosophy'. Wittgenstein's view of religious language actually hinges on the therapeutic view of language.

It seems that the outlook of religion and religious beliefs took a new turn from Kant and subsequently it continued in logical positivism, in Wittgenstein down to the contemporary continental movement loosely called *Postmodernism*. However, the main contention of this research proposal is to exemplify our understanding of religious language as a form of life after later Wittgenstein. Even though Wittgenstein in his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* rules out the possibility of religious language and religious experience by drawing out the limits of language and the limits of the world (reality) but in his *Philosophical Investigations* and *Culture and Value*, Wittgenstein makes so many cryptic remarks in favor of religious language as *a form of life*. In his *Culture and Value*, Wittgenstein says, "An honest religious thinker is like a tightrope walker. He almost looks as though he was walking on nothing but air. His support is the slenderest imaginable. And yet it is possible to work on it."

Wittgenstein distinguishes between religion and superstition by speaking of lower and higher 'forms of expression'. Wittgenstein opines that in religion 'every level of devoutness must have its appropriate form of expression which has no sense at the lower level. In fact, Wittgenstein's view of the meaning of religious utterance is strictly governed by his overall view of the descriptive or therapeutic role of philosophy. For Wittgenstein, to determine the meaning of a religious locution is just like an *ad hoc* task to which the personal history, various practices and behaviors of the speaker are part of the context. Therefore, philosophy may in no way interfere

with the actual use of language; it can in the end describe it. For it cannot give it any foundation either. It leaves everything as it is. His main objective is to describe carefully the language and *leaves everything as it is*, of course, within the *form of life*. According to Wittgenstein, life can educate us to a belief in God and our experience and thought can force the concept of God on us. For him, there is undoubtedly a great deal of value of conflating religious language in its myriad forms with quasi-scientific language. The task of philosophy of religion in general is a descriptive one. In fact, Wittgenstein's view of the philosophy of religion was compromised by his general theoretical view that philosophy was essentially a descriptive and non-explanatory inquiry. Like many other post-Kantian attempts, Wittgenstein claims that it is possible to engage in the philosophy of religion without the aid of metaphysics. We in fact notice the same in Kant's *Practical Reason* and even in the continental philosophy.

This research proposal thus reveals, after Wittgenstein, that one should not enquire the causal ground of God's existence; rather one's form of life without the aid of metaphysics can educate him to a belief in God just by sharing his life with others through religious language-games.

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