essence of oneself and the essence of the world: these two are one. Hence separateness, withdrawal, is no longer necessary. Wherever the hero may wander, whatever he may do, he is ever in the presence of his own essence—for he has the perfected eye to see. There is no separateness. Thus, just as the way of social participation may lead in the end to a realization of the All in the individual, so that of exile brings the hero to the Self in all.

A related Jungian posture is enunciated in the writings of Erich Neumann (1905–1960), particularly in his book *The Origins and History of Consciousness* (1949). Neumann was born in Berlin, and after studying with Jung in Zurich in the mid-1930s he sought to apply Jungian insights to the history of consciousness. The thesis of his major work is that the history of human consciousness as a whole mirrors the same archetypal stages of development that characterize the process of progressive individuation. In other works, Neumann turned his attention to symbolic mythological portrayals of femininity as disclosures of the fuller nature of the human psyche.

The extension of psychoanalytic structures from individual to collective application can also be undertaken in Freudian terms. In fact, Freud himself introduced this line of inquiry in the works *Civilization and Its Discontents* and *The Future of an Illusion*. More recent versions of the same extension include the works of Norman O. Brown, David Bakan, Robert Jay Lifton, Erik Erikson, and run to Gananath Obeyesekere's *The Work of Culture* (1990). There is not sufficient space here to outline Brown's attempt to recast Western intellectual history in terms of a repeated compulsion to abolish repression, nor even to sketch Obeyesekere's provocative use of updated Freudian categories to decipher culture change and stability. Similarly, we can only point to Bakan's interpretation of biblical narrative as giving expression to the fundamental psychic and psychological interplay between father, mother, and children as Freud enunciated this in his interpretation of the Oedipus myth. But these brief pointers should indicate that the use of psychoanalytic categories for purposes of tracing the development of self-consciousness on a collective basis can be effected under Freudian auspices too.

The Debate about Structures: The French School

At a certain point in the development of this point of departure, however the interest in structure tends to surpass the interest in mode and genre. This occurs, for example, when genre comes to be regarded merely as a contextual framework, and when patterns expressed within frames become normative. We return to the example of structuralism. Structuralism is more an effort at pattern discernment than a desire for genre morphology. Structuralism seeks more to penetrate the content within a genre than to let the contours of genre unfold. It is more interested in the structure, pattern, or

even cycle of myths, for example, than it is in the nature of myth. It tends to approach myth more as being instrumental to unlocking the rhythms of archetypal order than for its own intrinsic worth.

But we must quickly add that this distinction becomes more difficult to make when structuralists claim to be able to discern the same fundamental pattern in a variety of contextual settings, and when the same pattern is regarded as being able uniquely to disclose the rudiments of "reality" and of human nature. This turn is taken by structuralists who regard literary structures as being representative analogically of cultural structures, then take both to be characteristic of the way in which human consciousness is ordered. When this occurs, it is clear that we are no longer treating a genre issue, but, instead, a sophisticated refinement of the implications of pattern formation in a comprehensive sense.

The most compelling and significant recent examples have come from the work of a group of influential French thinkers who have carried structuralist insights to the next stages of articulation and amplification. Although such developments have attained sufficient distinctiveness and individuality to qualify as identifiable approaches and movements in their own terms, they retain their commitment to Ferdinand de Saussure's original proposal that language is a system of signs. Furthermore, these new and fresh points of departure within the structuralist camp acknowledge the truth of the insight that specific forms of grammatical order function as indices into the workings of social myths, literary works, and even modes of human consciousness. As has been noted earlier in this study, the structuralists affirmed that such grammatical order is coherent, systematic, and analytically penetrable. As has also been noted, the work of Claude Lévi-Strauss stands as the most prominent example of the employment of this method of gaining access to the explicit organization and workings of selected cultures.

In the 1960s and 1970s in France, however, strong reaction arose against certain features of the structuralist approach, which eventually came to assume the banners of "deconstructionist" and "poststructuralist" schools of thought. The world's leading "deconstructionist," Jacques Derrida (b.1930), who teaches philosophy and the history of philosophy at the École Normale Supérieur in Paris, as well as at the University of California at Irvine, undertook to "deconstruct" the metaphysical theories of Western philosophy. Derrida's principal contention is that all of Western philosophy is characterized by a "logocentrism," which he identifies as a persistent "metaphysics of presence" in which everything of any significance is understood to possess the quality of being present. According to this perennial assumption, whatever is real is real by virtue of the fact that it is present. And the category of being present, or possessing presence, is made applicable to the West's understanding of existence, essence, transcendence, and even God. Reality is ordered this way; therefore, any component of reality can be confirmed as being real— that is, if the case can be made successfully—because that entity enjoys presence.

Derrida's counterproposals became identified as deconstructionist because they functioned to dismantle this fundamental underlying thesis. In Derrida's view nothing is simply present. Hence, the category of presence cannot be the basis for the meaning that something has. Rather, as Derrida views it, meaning is to be found in the relationship of one thing to another thing and to other things. Furthermore, as he put it, "there is nothing outside the text," which means that all understanding is mediated by language. Since language consists of rules of procedures and of words, the definitions of words depend on their differentiation from other words. But the meaning of the same is not penetrable in any straightforward manner since differentiation between words (from which definitions come) implies contrast and, therefore, a reversal of meaning. In the viewpoint of deconstructionism, words never mean what they seem literally to mean, and texts are not to be interpreted so much as "deconstructed," since meaning is an elusive linguistic construction.

Derrida's primary insight pertains to the relationships between word and referent, signifier and signified. In proposing that this relationship is arbitrary and conventional—an attitude he shares with Ferdinand de Saussure, the founder of structuralism—Derrida criticizes the cardinal assumptions of Western thought. Western thought is constructed out of a series of distinctions that are hierarchically ordered—distinctions between origin and derivation, central and marginal, literal and figurative, to cite some of the most prominent ones. Derrida's strategy is to illustrate that these oppositional relationships are reversible since they reflect the duplicity of the medium of language. And, as philosopher, he illustrated his contentions by analyzing texts by Plato, Jean Jacques Rousseau, and Friedrich Nietzsche. Subsequent deconstructionists have applied the same strategic procedures to the works of Percy Bysshe Shelley, John Keats, Herman Melville, George Eliot, and, most significantly, Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud.

The consequences for the study of religion are being explored at present, and the findings are both partial and tentative. At the expository level, however, religious texts are seen to be characterized by the same hierarchical ordering of fundamental distinctions, the patterns of which can be interpreted as being indicative of conflicts or contests of power. In short, the deconstructionist strategy is eminently employable by interpreters who are sensitive to political consequences. Michael Ryan, author of *Marxism and Deconstructionism*, understands Derrida's proposals to be apt grist for the revolutionary mill: "The deconstructive criticism of absolute concepts in the theory of meaning can be said to have a political-institutional corollary," Ryan writes, "which is a continuous revolutionary displacement of power toward radical egalitarianism and the plural defusion of all forms of macro- and microdomination." In other words, the direction of force and emphasis within the hierarchical distinctions can be reversed. And since it can, deconstructionist insights can be made the basis for revolutionary action—say, on behalf of Marxist

causes, perhaps even more particularly to lend a greater credence to the feminist movement. All of this flows from the insight that the primary relationship between word and reference, or signifier and signified, is not simply a matter of functional equivalents, but involves subversion and subordination. Noting that such conflict pertains, deconstructionists can also point to alternative formulations should the outcome between these warring factions be decided in other ways. The application of the same to primary texts within religious studies remains an embryonic venture, but the philosophical possibilities hold sufficient promise to encourage such analyses to take the next necessary steps.

One of the most astute analyses of Derrida's proposals is that provided by Giles Gunn in his book *The Culture of Criticism and the Criticism of Culture*. Gunn is quick to acknowledge that the deconstructionist proposals carry considerable intellectual force:

> According to poststructuralists, the freight of our expressive life, particularly in the West, has been carried since the time of Plato by a metaphysics of substance—Derrida calls it a metaphysics of presence—that has now collapsed under the weight of three centuries of philosophical criticism.

What has collapsed is the confidence that "our assertions, like our actions, are supported, if we could but dig beneath them deep enough, by an ontological bedrock called reality whose structure they must reflect or mirror in order to be true." Gunn paraphrases Derrida's alternative to imply that "our conceptions of the thing called reality, no less than the statements we make in an effort to define it, are cultural constructs whose veracity or validity is wholly restricted to what our linguistic equipment permits us to know and say about it." Gunn recognizes the force of this insight, and in his lucid treatment of it he provides numerous examples of ways in which it carries influence. And yet he raises a large question:

> If all epistemic standpoints, as deconstructionists argue, are equally privileged and biased, if there is no secure epistemological or ontological ground anywhere, then on what, it must be asked, can the deconstructionist stand as he or she mounts an assault on our specious habits of fabrication?

In other words, would not the criticism that Derrida has directed against previous formulations be applicable as well to the revision he offers? Is not his own deconstructionist program subject to deconstructionism?

Gunn recognizes that Derrida is acutely aware of the problem and that, in wanting to offer an effective response, he takes refuge in phrases that sound much like religious language. Derrida gives evidence of wanting to penetrate beyond the logic of the concepts, even into a "transcendence beyond negativity," even to "the point whether neither no nor yes is the first word, but an interrogation." Gunn comments:

At this point Derrida seems, but only seems, to save himself from self-contradiction by insisting that this total question posed by the failure of our concepts, our language, to encompass and include the "transcendence beyond negativity" is experienced "not as a total presence but as a trace."

In a provocative but still unpublished paper, W. Richard Comstock accepts Derrida's conclusion, while pushing it further. For him, the relationship between word and referent, signifier and signified, involves tension and, thus, separation. But he understands the conflict between the two to be but one (albeit an important) element, and harmony to be the other. Both pertain. The imagery of "warring factions" is appropriate, but so too is that conveying harmony, balance, symmetry, and homology. As Comstock summarizes it: "The world is based on relation which both separates and unites the signifier and the signified. Signs are based on difference which is both separation and deferred union."

Jacques Lacan's (1901–1981) point of entry into the discussion comes through psychoanalysis; more specifically, via extended commentaries on and reinterpretations of Sigmund Freud's understanding of the nature and function of the ego. The framework is created by intellectual interest in the relationship between psychoanalytic understanding and the dynamics of culture. Lacan was well aware of the numerous portrayals of contemporary culture that called attention to the narcissistic disposition of its inhabitants, or that pit the cultivation of psychological life against collective cultural vitality.

Lacan takes "desire of the Other" as the focus of his analysis, observing that relationships create the occasion to come to terms with the way in which individual identity is fashioned in the conjunctions between intersubjective psychodynamics and relationships with other persons in a social and cultural context. Why the focus on desire? The answer is to be found in Lacan's insight that desire develops from a psychological event that occurs early in the life of an individual: the recognition that there is a split or rupture between an experienced fragmentary self and the image of being whole or unified. The situation would be easy, in Lacan's judgment, were it sufficient that a whole, unified self needed to make effective rapprochement with a society or culture, or, to turn it the other way, were a society or culture called upon to give proper place to the individuals that are nurtured by means of its collective ministrations. The difficulty is due to the greater complexity: the self that is called upon to live within society is itself neither whole nor unified, and thus is assigned a double task, the achievement of each phase of which must occur simultaneously. There is not space enough in this brief survey to do justice to the details of Lacan's viewpoint. Suffice it to say that he understood psychoanalysis to be a linguistic science that is devoted to a study of the speech that is appropriate within this multivalent environment. To catch the significance of this reinterpretation of the function and placement of psychoanalysis, one need only recall that Freud did not understand himself to be discussing linguistics, but

medicine. Whereas Freud employed a medical model to describe the workings of psychoanalysis, Lacan assigns it to the science of linguistics.

How then does this relate to the study of religion? That is, what is the point of connection between Lacan's revision of Freud's psychoanalytic theory and the scholarly attempt to understand the nature and function of religion?

A chief clue to the appropriate answer to these questions is to be found in Lacan's preoccupation with Saint Augustine, the author of *The Confessions*, which has been hailed as the Western world's first autobiography. Lacan understands Augustine's text as the document wherein discourse between God and psyche became normative; a document, that is to say, that both certifies and illustrates paradigmatic Western understanding of the relationship between psychology and religion. *The Confessions*, not unexpectedly, describes the workings of desire. When Saint Augustine confesses, "our hearts are made for thee, and have no rest until they rest in thee," he has provided illustration of the very life force that Lacan has identified as being constitutive of human behavior. Indeed, for Lacan, Saint Augustine stands as the significant case study that tends to legitimate the necessary criticism of Freud while demonstrating that the challenge most fundamental within human experience is most effectively accessible linguistically. In other words, Saint Augustine has allowed Lacan most dramatically to make his point.

Scholars of religion have undertaken some work on this subject, notably American scholars who placed themselves in conversation in 1986 and then commissioned essays to be shared with one another. We refer specifically to the American Academy of Religion 1986 plenary session in which Charles Winquist, Mark C. Taylor, Carl Raschke, Charles E. Scott, Edith Wyschogrod, David Crownfield, and Robert Scharlemann participated. Subsequently, Wyschogrod published her own essay, *Saints and Postmodernism: Revisioning Moral Philosophy* (1990), which is heavily dependent on Lacan's insights. Indeed, Wyschogrod's starting point for rethinking ethics and moral philosophy is Lacan's revision of the relationships between "the self" and "the cultural matrix" according to the manner that we have sketched.

The most provocative and influential of the French thinkers is Michel Foucault (1926–1984), who employed his multiple skills to penetrate to the core of Western culture. As has been noted, Lacan worked with psychoanalytical theory; Roland Barthes was a literary critic; and Jacques Derrida concentrated on linguistics. Foucault, by contrast, committed himself to Western intellectual history with special attention to the grammars by which the sciences and arts developed as elucidations of the composition of culture. Thoroughly influenced by the iconoclasms of Friedrich Nietzsche, Foucault carried out a detailed polemic against historical objectivity. That is, instead of approaching history as harmonious, congruent, uniform monolithic progression, he trained his attention on discontinuities, breaks,

and ruptures, prompting more than one commentator to suggest that Foucault's intention was "to make the past unfamiliar." His publication program stands as testimony to his intention to identify aberrations, phenomena that do not conform to the norm and are not obedient to some prescripted rule. From the new archaeology of the human sciences that he published in 1970 under the title *The Order of Things*, he moved to studies of specific topics: the history of insanity (*Madness and Civilization*, 1971), the study of medical knowledge (*The Birth of the Clinic*, 1973), a study of mental illness and how it is identified and portrayed (*Mental Illness and Psychology*, 1976), a study of prison life (*Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, 1977), and, finally, a three-volume treatment of the way in which sexuality has been understood in the Western world (*The History of Sexuality*, 1978, 1984). In every such instance Foucault rewrote Western intellectual history by demonstrating that the histories that had attained authoritative status were primarily reflections of the cultural outlooks that such histories made more fully explicit. Consequently he offered his own defamiliarized historical interpretations as a ploy in the necessary act of grasping modern cultural identity.

Religious studies scholars have been teased by Foucault. Yet, once again, it seems premature to try to digest what the eventual fallout might be. Clearly, Foucault's polemic against historical objectivity will stimulate both dehistoricization and eventual rehistoricization as attention is focused on discontinuities, ruptures, and breaks in sequential development, and this is to put the matter mildly. His interest in the methodological reciprocities between the ways in which archaeologies of knowledge are fashioned and cultural identities are known carries profound implications with respect to the manner in which both religious understanding and understanding of religion are shaped. Further, his provocative commentaries on the influence of Christianity within Western culture will prompt historians of dogma (as well as ecclesiastical institutions) to take a fresh look—indeed, even to the point of holding many formerly accepted interpretations and judgments in suspense. But his influence, like Nietzsche's, goes much further. While he did not present himself as an expert in comparative cultural analysis, his portrayal of the culture with which he was most familiar has given comparative cultural inquiry bold incentives. For example, Foucault's concentration on confession as the fundamental epistemic modality of Christianity, which, *ex hypothesi*, distinguishes a special type of religion, invites comparisons with religions for which the truth about oneself is derived in other ways. The ways in which understanding of reality is reciprocated in the modalities by which such truths are acquired also provide promising avenues through which such comparative work might be carried out. The deeper implications of Foucault's insights are even more dramatic. Were one to take his defamiliarization polemic seriously, one would find oneself under a necessity to rethink virtually everything that one assumed one had already satisfactorily understood.

Mark C. Taylor: System, Structure, Difference, Other

The last line in the previous paragraph describes both the challenge and the program of Mark C. Taylor (b.1945), a prolific author whose every topic is addressed through a comprehensive understanding of Hegelian and post-Hegelian philosophical commentary, especially as this pertains to the complex interplay of religion, literature, art, architecture, and theology. Taylor, like the majority of others who belong to his generation, was trained in the intellectual history that informs our study. That is, his essays tend to begin with explicit reference to Descartes's *Meditations*, then give large place to Kant (particularly to *The Critique of Judgment* and other treatments of aesthetics), and then concentrate on the discussions raised by Hegel and extended by the French phenomenologists, and, of course, the structuralists, poststructuralists, modernists, and deconstructionists. Thus, he offers a steady sprinkling of citations from Heidegger, Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, de Saussure, Sartre, Derrida, Foucault, and important lesser-known thinkers such as Emmanuel Levinas, Maurice Blanchot, Georges Bataille, and Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe. Then, after having narrated Western intellectual history in this fashion, Taylor returns to the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries to give fresh interpretation to the "theo-aesthetics" of Johann von Schiller, Friedrich Schelling, Friedrich Schleiermacher, Johann Gottlieb Fichte, and others who were drawn to the small town of Jena in the duchy of Weimar.

This is the framework within which Taylor has set his analyses of the relationships between religion and the visual arts. The temper of his analysis, however, is set by the close attention he pays to Søren Kierkegaard's critique of Hegel's philosophy, the respect he accords the theology of Karl Barth, and the pervasive manner in which he has been influenced by Friedrich Nietzsche. Thus, Taylor's writings tend to concentrate on subjects that cannot be included within comprehensive conceptual systems. He writes repeatedly of the challenge "to think what philosophy leaves unthought." He shares Heidegger's interest in that which "has always remained unasked throughout this history of thinking." He applauds Kierkegaard's critique of Hegelianism, and is cheered with Bataille's preoccupation with what Hegel excludes. He contrasts Hegel's working "from the unknown to the known" to Bataille's "slips and slides from the known to the unknown," slips that culminate in what is "incompletely experienced in absolute nonknowledge." All of this, Taylor contends, requires that one "think both *with* and *against* reason," a program that stands diametrically opposed to the desire to "overcome nonknowledge by dispelling illusion and correcting error."

In applying these principles to the study of religion, Taylor is assisted by parallels/nonparallels and analogs/nonanalogs from the history of the visual arts. In a brilliant study, *Disfiguring: Art, Architecture, Religion* (1992), he traces the challenges that all three of these subject areas must address, and encourages insights and implications from each of the fields to assist understanding/nonunderstanding

in the others. Such is appropriate by virtue of the fact that the major developments in the various art forms (religion included) running throughout the twentieth century are reflective of each other. Of course, the powers of deconstruction are operating with all of these frameworks. Consequently, when Taylor approaches religious studies, he takes the initial task to be to identify what religious studies would not be, and this is to think what reasonable religion leaves unthought.

Origins of Analyses of Discursive Language

Where expressivist approaches to religion are concerned, many of the significant insights and developments have occurred within the framework of discursive language, much of it to the seeming total disregard for nondiscursive symbolic forms. The fact is brought about by the revolution in philosophy implicit within positivism, linguistic analysis, the Vienna Circle, the fresh insights of Bertrand Russell, G. E. Moore, Ludwig Wittgenstein, and their students and successors. In the remaining sections of this chapter on religious language, we shall focus on the fundamental proposals of the "linguistic school," sketch some of the principal contentions of Wittgenstein, and then provide a sampling of the implications of this work with respect to the methodological aspirations and self-conceptions of religious studies.

Taken on its own terms, linguistic analysis originated within the school of philosophical positivism, and positivism derives from the contentions of Auguste Comte. Recall that in the Comtean trilogy (see chapter 3), the scientific mode is given highest priority in the evolution of human thought. It is marked by a critical self-consciousness of which both theological and metaphysical modes are incapable. Scientific knowledge increases clarity of knowledge. It also enables the world to be principled, controlled, and mastered. Because of these several capacities, science can be looked to to supplant and replace both theology and metaphysics as the normative mode through which the world is apprehended. Science has been assigned this role because its cognitive sense is sure, and thus its knowledge is exact.

Recall, too, that Comte understood sure knowledge to be restricted to verifiable *phenomena*. Repressing all tendencies to concern himself with noumena, or even to make the noumenal realm a focus of inquiry, he disciplined himself, limiting his inquiry to that to which knowledge has appropriate access. This implied that he would forego speculation about *why* things happen the way they do since he could only explain *how* things happen.

Logical Positivism: The Vienna Circle

The Comtean positivistic attitude was carried forward by a number of influential thinkers, among them Ernst Mach (1838–1916), a mathematician and physicist in both Prague and Vienna. Because of his scientific expertise, Mach was even more rigorous (though

no more eloquent) than Comte in discarding metaphysics. He conceived of philosophy to be something other than an explanation of eternal verities or the ultimate explanation of the nature of things. Proper philosophy—namely, positivist science—was to be employed as an instrument of organization and control. It was to be *used* instead of simply being conceived. It was to be functional and operational, to enable its practitioners to gain a firmer hold on the dynamics of things. This meant that the scope of philosophy was severely reduced. Instead of engaging in speculative system-building, whether in the classical or in a revised Kantian or Hegelian style, the philosopher was obligated to concentrate on the data of sense experience. Such data are manifestly available. Via rigorous methods of investigation, the data can be rendered trustworthy. Thus, under the program of logical positivism, the philosopher defines and analyzes the concepts and principles employed in scientific investigation, that is, when the latter is conducted with respect to subjects and interests that admit some possibility of clarification.

Mach's views were taken up in the 1920s in the work of the famous Vienna Circle philosophers, notably Rudolf Carnap (1891–1970), Moritz Schlick (1882–1936)—the group's acknowledged leader and successor to Mach in empirical philosophy in the University of Vienna—Otto Neurath (1882–1945), and Friedrich Waismann (1896–1959). These Vienna thinkers were joined by Hans Reichenbach and Walter Dubislay in Berlin as well as by other scholars of an obvious mathematical, scientific, and antimetaphysical philosophical bent. Through the concentrated efforts of the Vienna Circle, philosophy was given a fresh departure and compelling new sets of issues. Philosophy of the Vienna Circle kind was understood to be most akin to the field of mathematics.

G. E. Moore and Bertrand Russell: Revolt against Idealism

Similar currents of thought were and had been in the wind elsewhere. In England, G. E. Moore (1873–1958), together with his contemporary Bertrand Russell (1872–1970), were leading a revolt against idealism. In the British case, the specific version of idealism was less Kant's and Hegel's than F. H. Bradley's. Moore, known best for his *Principia Ethica*, published in 1903, was especially interested in resolving long-standing dilemmas within the fields of logic and epistemology. A prominent way of treating knowledge was to try to bring the knower into a cognitive relationship with the object to be known. The rationalist approach, that is to say, was to focus on the manner according to which mind lends form to whatever is to be known. The empiricist way, on the other hand, was to emphasize the importance of sense impressions, or what might be called the facticity of empirical data. Thus, the rationalists were lined up on one side and the empiricists on the other. Both sides shared the conviction, however, that truth was regarded as being the product of an established correspondence between the knower and what is to be known. In both versions, correspondence was

established on the basis of the relationship between the knower and that which is knowable.

Moore turned the tables on these assumptions. According to his view, *truth is a quality of propositions.* The truth of propositions is decided on the basis of something other than correspondence between the proposition and some external state of affairs. Propositions are not looked to to provide accurate readings or perceptions of things. Rather, propositions establish specific relationships between concepts. Thus, truth pertains to linguistic form. As Moore put it: "the only objects of knowledge are concepts," and propositions consist of "concepts standing in a specific relation to one another." There is no possibility of transcending the relationships that are established within propositions among the appropriate ingredients of propositions to establish the truth. That is, there is no possibility of appealing to some alleged "higher authority," as if truth is a property of some reality that lies beyond propositional accessibility. Although Moore found it necessary constantly to revise and amend his proposals, particularly on the question of the relationship between concepts and things, he never wavered from his defense of the common-sense view of the world. Thus, in breaking ranks with idealist philosophy, he was committed resolutely to the reality of the everyday world. As he saw it, it is impossible to have certainty regarding anything that "lies beyond" what is accessible through propositional truth.

For Bertrand Russell, philosophy was to be constructed and styled according to the models of logic and mathematics. As with Moore, Russell associated himself with propositional truth. Propositional truth derives from the specific relationships that pertain between components of a proposition. Such relationships are reducible, in Russell's words, to "properties of the terms between which they hold." For Russell, too, there is no reality to be made accessible beyond the components of relational propositions. Relational propositions possess the quality of being irreducible.

Russell's most significant contribution to the field of philosophy lies in his attempt to construct a mathematics strictly on the basis of logical form. His analysis of propositions is related to perceptions regarding the coincidences of logic and mathematics. Put even more simply, the meaning of a proposition is inherent within the proposition: meaning is thus implicit within the arrangement of the ingredients of the proposition. Put even simpler, the meaning of a proposition is not constructed by the person who reads it in, for example, or who finds it necessary to do something with the proposition. In sum, each meaningful proposition is an instance of specific logical relationships. Formal concepts (those of kind, class, number, and so on) may be logical constructions, but neither logical relationships nor logical constructions are products of human inference or construction. Truth, Russell (with Moore) insists, is a quality of propositions.

Ludwig Wittgenstein: The Limits and Function of Language

Moore and Russell are significant figures in the development of analytical philosophy, particularly at Cambridge and Oxford universities, the early centers of such intellectual development in Great Britain. But where language analysis is concerned, both stand in the shadows of a thinker many regard as the greatest philosopher of the twentieth century: Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889–1951), an Austrian by birth, who first came to England in 1912 to meet and study with Russell, and who then became a Cambridge University philosopher.

During his lifetime, Wittgenstein published but one book, the *Tractatus logico-philosophicus* (first in German in 1921, then in German and English, in parallel columns, in 1922), a book that influenced Russell, and whose title was contributed by Moore. Wittgenstein's technique was to break reality down into elementary and rudimentary bit parts, referred to as atomic particles, or irreducible simples. Such particles or things receive names, and in names words signify objects. Names, words, and then concepts are interrelated in propositions.

Wittgenstein shared Moore's and Russell's conviction that truth is propositional. He understood truth to derive from arrangements within propositions, but not quite in the way Moore and Russell had said. The propositional arrangement of names, in his view, provided a "picture" of a possible or ostensive state of affairs. In the end, language was conceived to function as a picture of reality.

The ramifications are noteworthy. Wittgenstein's thesis that "what can be said at all can be said clearly, and whereof one cannot speak thereof one must be silent," can be pointed directly at the nature of religious discourse. For, as the *Tractatus* indicates, truth is a quality of propositions, and "a proposition is a description of fact." But most religious discourse pertains to things that fall outside the range of fact. Taken as propositions, such discourse registers as being nonsensical. This is not to say that there is no place for such discourse, or that it is meaningless to engage in it. Wittgenstein can give credence, though no verifiability, to the world of mysticism, and there is an appropriate language of mysticism. Yet, none of the positive hints, suggestions, or comments that he directs toward mystical attitudes can violate his dictum that "whereof one cannot speak thereof one must be silent." Indeed, when it addresses religious issues directly, philosophical interest focuses on the status of religious belief. And here Wittgenstein contended that religious belief must be distinguished from the kind of truth claims that issue from factual evidence. Their sources are distinctive. Religious beliefs are not born of the same conditions through which knowledge is established. Thus, in the technical philosophical sense, they carry no truth quotients.

In his second book, *Philosophical Investigations*, published posthumously, Wittgenstein disagreed with some of the proposals he had presented in his *Tractatus*. The *Tractatus* was devoted to a methodical circumscription of the limits of language;

its subject is the function of language. Thus, in the *Tractatus* language is treated as the product of the coalescence of atomic particles. When language is properly ordered in sentences, the product is propositional truth. In the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein made most frequent reference to the model of the proposition that functions as a picture of fact, because it properly represents the atomic particles. As we have seen, those subjects—particularly religion, but also ethics and aesthetics—that are not formed from factual discourse were placed outside the range of topics to which propositional truth had access.

In *Philosophical Investigations*, however, Wittgenstein relaxed his strict devotion to the logical-mathematical model. With this tempered epistemological relaxation came some modification of the rigorous restriction that truth is a product of propositions that are made normative by conformity to the logical-mathematical standard. That is, Wittgenstein allowed for greater flexibility in his assessment of the function and accomplishments of factual discourse, and in assessing the function and accomplishments of discourse that does not count as being factual. In the earlier *Tractatus*, he had approached all other-than-factual forms of discourse, by definition, as being transgressions against the truth. But in the subsequent *Philosophical Investigations* he showed a strong eagerness to account for the transgressions too. In short, in *Philosophical Investigations* Wittgenstein tried to come to terms with forms of linguistic communication that could not be regularly verified by the criteria by which truth is ascribed.

Another way of putting the same point is to observe that the influence of Bertrand Russell is prominent in the *Tractatus* but is muted in *Philosophical Investigations*. In Russell's likeness, the Wittgenstein of the *Tractatus* sought *a priori* conditions for propositional truth, expecting to be able to invoke logical and mathematical rigor. The Wittgenstein of *Philosophical Investigations* was more flexible on the matter of paradigmatic exactness, much more empirical, and, thus, more interested in *a posteriori* and synthetic modes of validation. While the early Wittgenstein seemed preoccupied with the formal conditions of propositional truth, the later Wittgenstein was impressed with the workings of ordinary language. Thus, his *Philosophical Investigations* inquires into the particular nuances of language that are evident in actual linguistic practices. The irony is that once Wittgenstein made the transition from the formal conditions of propositional truth to linguistic practices that give shape to ordinary language, he came to recognize that the logic of his analysis in the *Tractatus* did not really give expression to actual cases.

This recognition also encouraged him to modify his "picture theory of truth," again because he needed an analog that would allow for multiple and flexible viewpoints. Accordingly, as he worked his way from the position of the *Tractatus* to the position of *Philosophical Investigations*, he moved from the analogy of picture-making to the analogy of game-playing. As he put it, in ordinary language a wide variety of games are played. These games have multiple purposes

and, consequently, multiple rules. Whereas the *Tractatus* gave the impression of setting forth rigid criteria, *Philosophical Investigations* is more flexible. It is pervaded by a willingness to acknowledge the credibility of a number of actual language games. Thus, the latter book gives evidence of its author's interest in observing the ways in which language functions in particular instances of actual usage. This leads to his conclusion that language is designed and constructed for us; thus a word has as many meanings as it has uses. No longer, as in the *Tractatus*, is Wittgenstein obligated to establish truth on formal *a priori* propositional grounds. Rather, sentences are understood to carry a wide variety of functions.

This leads Wittgenstein to propose the purpose of philosophy. Philosophy exists, he attests, to clarify misunderstandings, confusions, and errors in the use of language. In the *Tractatus*, philosophy was understood to function this way when it uncovered logical errors and the misuse of language. In the *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein contends that misunderstandings arise when one language game is confused with another, when several language games are regarded as being identical, or when a single language game is regarded as being the only legitimate kind.

Although the philosophy of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* is recognized for its radical character and for revolutionizing the intention and materials of philosophical reflection, it can still be viewed from within the perspective of enduring intentions of Enlightenment philosophy to which this book has made repeated reference. For, like Kant, Wittgenstein was concerned to probe and fix limits. In Kant's case, the aim is to assess the limits of reason. In Wittgenstein's case, the focus is on the limits of language. In both instances, limits are fixed so that the analyst can circumscribe the context within which it is meaningful to register truth claims. Immanuel Kant achieved this objective by describing how reflection is constituted. Wittgenstein did the same by showing how language functions. For both, once the area of circumscription was fixed, religion was assigned a position outside the perimeters. Kant assigned boundaries to knowledge, as he put it, "in order to make room for faith," but, for him, faith and ratiocinative knowledge were assigned distinctive contexts. Similarly, Wittgenstein placed "those things whereof one cannot speak" outside ordinary linguistic perimeters. The place outside the ordinary perimeters was described as a large, expansive, and even mysterious sphere to which silence is appropriate. Thus, the intentions of the two programs are similar, and the respective treatment of religion follows the paradigmatic pattern that has been established. Because religion lies outside the bounds of regular cognitive sanction, the certification of religion is dependent on extraregular criteria.

Consequently, it is appropriate to use the word *grammar* when describing similarities between Kant's and Wittgenstein's approaches. Both were involved in assessing the workings of particular grammars. Kant sought to write the grammar of the ratiocinative process. Wittgenstein approached thought by trying to identify the way in which thought is captured and expressed within the formal network

of language. Both attempted to describe the rudiments and inner workings of a formal cognitive system. And both contended that the system is something more than a mere instrument within the cognitive process. The network is not simply a means of expression and communication. Rather, the network is ingredient in thought (for Kant) and in language (for Wittgenstein), lending formation to thought and language. Indeed, the network's function is so crucial that, in both instances, truth is regarded as being the product of the network's intrinsic activity.

It follows, too, that the interest in fixing boundaries with precision and without qualification is expressed as a shared mistrust of metaphysical speculation. Metaphysics, as Kant and Wittgenstein view it, traffics in areas of philosophical excess that tend to transport thought beyond the perimeters of the formal network. Metaphysical speculation tries to extend the network to an area over which it can exercise no control. It provokes the formal network to consider matters of inquiry that exceed the capacities of the network. It uses the network in an inappropriate manner, teasing it to reach beyond its proper domain.

In short, for both Kant and Wittgenstein, metaphysical speculation is deceptive and extravagant. Frequently it is criticized as being an overextension, a conceptual exploitation. Kant explains such metaphysical excesses as having been inspired by the transposition of regulative into constitutive ingredients of reflection. By this he means that the formal ingredients of cognition are accorded an extraformal status, as though they made reference to things. Wittgenstein makes the same point on the basis of the use of language, that is, when language loses contact with that which can be verified. And since religious statements often appear much like metaphysical statements, they are judged to be incapable of producing legitimate truth claims. They may be expressive or emotive, but, in epistemologically or linguistically certifiable senses, they are not true propositions.

A. J. Ayer: Religious Statements Belong Outside the Range of Propositional Truth

Wittgenstein's formidable insights and proposals stand as a watershed in Western philosophy. Behind them lie the powerful influences of Moore, Russell, the Vienna Circle, and the other positivists and analysts throughout the world. It was a movement within philosophy with which everyone involved needed to come to terms. As we have seen, it was inevitable that the implications of this philosophical revolution would one day affect the understanding of the nature and function of religion.

One of the earliest, clearest, most forceful, and most compelling efforts at drawing these religious implications came in Alfred J. Ayer's book *Language, Truth and Logic*, first published in 1936. Treating religious affirmations as though they could be classified like metaphysical assertions—for, as we have indicated,

the two seem to have much in common—Ayer (1910–1989) contended that both were nonsensical. He was quick to clarify that they stand as being nonsensical in the technical rather than pejorative sense: they simply lack verifiable factual content. Religious affirmations, in short, must be understood to be communicating something other than facts.

In drawing this conclusion, Ayer was confident that he would have the support of both the advocates as well as the disclaimers of religion. As he wrote:

> [W]e are often told that the nature of God is a mystery that transcends human understanding. But to say that something transcends the human understanding is to say that it is unintelligible. And what is unintelligible cannot significantly be described. Again, we are told that God is not an object of reason but an object of faith. This may be nothing more than an admission that the existence of God must be taken on trust, since it cannot be proved. But it may also be an assertion that God is the object of a purely mystical intuition, and cannot therefore be defined in terms which are intelligible to the reason. And I think there are many theists who would assert this.

Indeed, Ayer believed that his observations were ones with which the most avid supporters of the legitimacy of religion would agree, even with his conclusion, namely, that "if one allows that it is impossible to define God in intelligible terms, then one is allowing that it is impossible for a sentence both to be significant and to be about God."

At this point, Ayer's rendition becomes more religiously specific. "If a mystic admits that the object of his vision is something which cannot be described," he continues, "then he must also admit that he is bound to talk nonsense when he describes it." Throughout his portrayal he pleads that he does not intend his analyses to be antireligious. In treating religious affirmations as he did, he thought he was simply repeating interpretations (and placing them within specific contexts wherein they might be accorded greater rigor and exactness) that advocates of religion—believers and mystics alike—had been suggesting for a long, long time. He believed there was consensus, in his words, that religious statements belong outside the range of propositional truth.

Language Analysis and Religion: Responses from Religionists

Much of the analysis of the implications of linguistic analysis for an understanding of the nature and function of religion has been by the "Falsification Controversy" that was introduced in a book called *New Essays in Philosophical Theology*, edited by Antony Flew and Alasdair MacIntyre in 1955. Since 1955, responses to the issue have become more refined and elaborate, and the implications have been traced into fields and subject areas that were not envisioned in the beginning. Nevertheless, the discussion

continues to revolve around the question: What is the logical status of religious affirmations? As we have seen, the initial interest lay in distinguishing religious assertions from other forms of language in which other sorts of truth are claimed. In the initial group of essays, co-editor Antony Flew formulated the problem like this:

> [T]o assert that such and such is the case is necessarily equivalent to denying that such and such is not the case. Suppose then that we are in doubt as to what someone who gives vent to an utterance is asserting, or suppose that, more radically, we are skeptical as to whether he is really asserting anything at all, one way to try to understand . . . his utterance is to attempt to find what he would regard as counting against, or as being incompatible with, its truth.

Flew believed that these were appropriate and realistic expectations since, "if the utterance is indeed an assertion, it will necessarily be equivalent to a denial of the negation of that assertion."

He explains:

> And anything which would count against the assertion, or which would induce the speaker to withdraw it and to admit that it had been mistaken, must be part of (or the whole of) the meaning of the negation of that assertion. And to know the meaning of the negation of an assertion is, as near as makes no matter, to know the meaning of that assertion.

He follows with the assertion: "And if there is nothing which a putative assertion denies, then there is nothing which it asserts either, and so it is not really an assertion."

In other words, unless one can state the alternative, an assertion is not a genuine claim to truth. Unless a state of affairs exists that could count against the truth of a religious affirmation, such an utterance does not qualify as a genuine assertion: it is not a statement about a given state of affairs.

From this starting point, the responses divide along traceable lines. R. M. Hare, among the first to respond to Flew's "challenge," identified the distinctiveness of religious assertions by identifying them as "bliks." A "blik" is a nonfalsifiable belief that is not based on empirical evidence. The truth or falsity of a "blik" cannot be negotiated by empirical testing, nor are "bliks" the products of observation. "Bliks" need not correspond to anything that happens in the world. Neither is a "blik" to be treated as a hypothesis or as an explanation of events, for it cannot be undermined by counterevidence. In Hare's mind, however, it is through our "bliks" that we are able to say what does indeed count as valid explanation. Two persons holding different "bliks" may not be asserting anything different about the world, but there would be large differences between the two persons as well as different limitations on the range of things that are conceptually accessible. In Hare's view, religious assertions are like "bliks." There is no reason why they should not

be taken seriously; at the same time, they do not qualify as assertions about a given state of affairs.

Basil Mitchell, another participant in the original discussion, maintained that religious affirmations do make significant factual assertions. In Mitchell's view, religious claims allow certain states of affairs to count against their truth, but the grounds of refutation are never conclusive. Mitchell wants faith or belief to be given proper place. Faith—real, vibrant faith—must stand firm, resisting all evidence to the contrary. The counterevidence can be admitted, but, by virtue of the nature of faith, such evidence is never powerful enough to refute the affirmations of the believer.

The nature and disposition of religious affirmations and convictions were studied by another analyst, I. M. Crombie, whose attitude is decidedly Christian. In offering a genetic account of religious beliefs, Crombie argues that religious affirmations are statements of fact which, because of their special characteristics, can never completely meet the requirements of most ordinary factual statements. In Crombie's formulation, the context within which religious affirmations are meaningful is distinguished from other contexts. This enables Crombie to defend the view that what is factual from within a religious context may be inaccessible and incomprehensible from the outside. The critic and the believer, in other words, are not standing on the same ground.

Another writer and scholar, R. B. Braithwaite, concedes that religious statements do not normally fall under the classification of statements for which regular methods exist for testing truth values. But, writing under the title "An Empiricist's View of the Nature of Religious Belief," Braithwaite also recognizes that religious statements are not the only expressions that fall outside the range of ordinary propositional truth. The same place must also be assigned to ethical and moral assertions. In fact, ethics and religion are compatible with each other—indeed, belong together. Braithwaite contends that religious affirmations really belong to an ethical context, within which context they carry a dispositional influence with respect to the conduct of life.

John Hick, like others whose positions have been summarized here, also wishes to have it both ways. On the one hand, Hick argues that religious affirmations are indeed factual assertions and therefore must conform to the ordinary standards of meaningfulness required of all such statements. In some way, religious affirmations must be tested by reference to actual experience. At the same time, the testing ground for religious affirmations is an intrareligious context. That is, their factual basis can be sustained only within the religious context by which they are nurtured. The affirmation of life after death, for instance, is not to be empirically tested except within the context of a religion's teachings on this subject. Referring to this principle as "eschatological verification," and illustrating his point by drawing upon the content of the Christian religion, Hick writes:

This eschatological element is quite inseparable from any conception of God and the universe which is to be recognizably Christian, and it is at this point that the corpus of Christian belief lays itself open in principle to experiential verification—though not, in virtue of the peculiar asymmetry of predictions concerning continued existence after death, to falsification. If one is willing to allow experience itself to show what different kinds of experience there are, one cannot dismiss *a priori* the Christian prediction of a future experience of participation beyond death, in the Kingdom of God.

Although such a statement does not argue for a standard "logical certification" of the truth of a religious affirmation, it does serve, in principle, to "leave no grounds for rational doubt as to the validity of that faith." In Hick's view, theistic faith can be verified "by one who holds it to be proved beyond rational doubt." But he adds that the same faith "cannot be proved to the non-believer." As noted, Hick's view comes close to that of Crombie, though the former's framework of verification is more religiously specific.

D. Z. Phillips, an articulate spokesman for a viewpoint commonly referred to as fideism, finds his starting point in Wittgenstein's remarks about "grammar," "language games," and "forms of life." Phillips's point is that there is no way to get outside of language to see whether the concepts one is using "match up" to "the facts." Instead, language and concepts assist in determining what is and is not "factual." Therefore, for Phillips, fundamental religious affirmations cannot be described as factual statements. Instead, they are to be considered as "grammatical remarks." They do not certify that whatever is being referred to exists, but they indicate what kind of an entity is being referred to, and what it makes sense to say of it. As he explains:

> It makes as little sense to say "God's existence is not a fact" as it does to say "God's existence is a fact." In saying that something either is or is not a fact, I am not describing the "something" in question. To say that X is a fact is to say something about the grammar of X; it is to indicate what it would and would not be sensible to say or do in connection with it. To say that the concept of divine reality does not share this grammar is to reject the possibility of talking about God in the way in which one talks about matters of fact. I suggest that more can be gained if one compares the question, "what kind of reality is divine reality?" not with the question, "is this physical object real or not?" but with the different question, "what kind of reality is the reality of physical objects?"

From these sets of analogies, D. Z. Phillips offers this conclusion: "To ask a question about the reality of God is to ask a question about *a kind of reality*, not about the reality of *this* or *that*, in much the same way as asking a question about the reality of physical objects is not to ask about the reality of this or that physical object."

Thus, in Phillips's view, the reasons believers give for their religious beliefs presuppose the context from within which such beliefs issue. This does not mean that such beliefs are misguided or baseless, though the same beliefs cannot claim external justification. There can be no appeal to an "objective reality" outside the world of discourse or a "form of life" to which religious affirmations belong. This is not to say that only a believer can understand something about religious language. Rather, Phillips's point is that any responsible account of religion must view it from within the context of belief and resist the urge to assess it according to alien criteria. Phillips explains: "So . . . I distinguish between religious and philosophical understanding. What I wish to urge is that one can only give a satisfactory account of religious beliefs if one pays attention to the roles they play in people's lives."

One of the sharpest criticisms of fideism has come from the pens of Kai Nielsen and Alasdair MacIntyre. Nielsen, in a book entitled *Contemporary Critiques of Religion*, offers that "to understand religious discourse, one must have a participant's understanding of it." This, so far, sounds like a statement on behalf of fideism. But Nielsen adds that the participant's understanding of religious discourse does not give that discourse immunity against philosophical criticism. Moreover, to give religious language a use and function no other segment of language can perform is not necessarily to insure the validity of logical coherence of religious language.

In Nielsen's view, the "fideist" position is vulnerable precisely for supposing that distinct "form of life" implies "autonomous criteria of rationality." Nielsen proposes that it is not a contradiction to speak of the possibility of an "ongoing but irrational form of life," and he cites belief in witches and fairies as denoting "forms of life" that have come to be rejected as incoherent. He also argues against treating religious language as being protected from such inquiry because it is somehow understood to be sacred: "Religious discourse is not something isolated, sufficient unto itself; 'sacred discourse' shares categories with, utilizes the concepts of, and contains the syntactical structure of 'profane discourse.'" The same objection against approaching religious affirmations as though they belong to a separate language is expressed sharply in the following statement:

> "Reality" may be systematically ambiguous, but what constitutes evidence or tests for the truth or reliability of specific claims is not completely idiosyncratic to the context or activity we are talking about. Activities are not that insulated.

Nielsen's point is that it is altogether proper and fitting that questions about the meaningfulness of religious language be raised. Moreover, the inquirer has every right to examine the conceptual structure and implicit reasonableness of religious discourse: ". . . the fact that there is a form of life in which God-talk is embedded

does not preclude our asking these questions or our giving, quite intelligibly, though perhaps mistakenly, the same negative answer we gave to witch-talk." Thus, Nielsen's antifideism is based on the contention that standard forms of intelligibility exist by which one can judge diverse forms of activity and discourse. For him it would not be enough to say that religious affirmations are *sui generis*. Or, if one says this, the declaration does not place such affirmations above criticism.

Alasdair MacIntyre offers a similar objection to the attitude that intelligibility is always contextually based, that understanding is directed by the activity or form of discourse in question. MacIntyre's point is that norms of intelligibility and criteria for measuring truth own a history: they can and do change. Even the contexts to which fideists make appeal undergo change through social and cultural influences. With this change come shifts in what is considered to be rational and coherent. McIntyre also believes, with Nielsen, that the practices of a society, or a mode of social life, may not be coherent. In other words, even if one could rely on *sui generis* references, there are no assurances that the intrinsic pattern is self-consistent. It is entirely possible that standards of intelligibility, within a framework or context, are manifestly incoherent.

There is another important side to MacIntyre's observation. He is not thinking simply about social and cultural patterns in the abstract; he has specific examples in mind. His primary reference, in this respect, is to Christian belief, and he is intrigued by changes in attitudes toward the articles of Christian faith. He observes, for example, that even at the time of the church fathers, many theologians had noticed inconsistencies in the pattern of Christian belief. None of these was regarded as being an insurmountable difficulty because all were compatible with a comprehensive way of viewing the world, a viewpoint articulated with the social, cultural, and intellectual life of the era. But this does not describe the contemporary situation. The modern secularized view of the world unmasks incoherent and contradictory religious beliefs because they are removed from the social and cultural contexts from which they originally drew nurture. This separation of the articles of belief from the context within which they were generated leaves them unable seriously to affect contemporary religious life. MacIntyre therefore finds it futile to try to make the same articles of belief invulnerable to philosophical criticism. As he puts it:

> If I am right, understanding Christianity is incompatible with believing in it, not because Christianity is vulnerable to skeptical objections, but because its peculiar invulnerability belongs to it as a form of belief which has lost the social context which once made it comprehensible.

In other words, in MacIntyre's view, the very fact that religion can be viewed as an autonomous form of life may make it incomprehensible to modern, secularized human beings. Moreover, the fact that the skeptic and the believer do not share

whatever bridging concepts have been offered to create common discussion is simply confirmation of the differences between the two contrasting orientations to life.

MacIntyre has expanded on this point of view in a subsequent study, *After Virtue; A Study in Moral Theory* (1981), which traces the progressive disintegration of the language of morality from the Enlightenment period to the present. Here, too, the problem is that secularization has placed the world in a disjunctive situation: religion no longer possesses the capacity to provide the background and framework of moral discourse. The absence of an effective, resilient language of morality, in MacIntyre's view, is a "grave cultural loss." Informed by MacIntyre's historical and philosophical analyses, Charles Taylor has charged that secularization has transposed religion—which, at one time, was central to the whole life of Western societies, public and private—into sub-cultural status. Explaining this situation in his book *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (1989), Taylor also charges that contemporary philosophers are ignoring questions about how human life ought to be lived, have directed less than adequate attention to issues concerning a common good, and have diligently tried to avoid all subjects that are understood to have belonged to the province of religion. Perhaps it is accurate to say that religious affirmations are *sui generis*, in MacIntyre's and Taylor's views, but this is not due solely to the fact that they were intended to be.

It would be impossible, in brief scope, to trace even the most prominent ways in which analyses of religious language translate into social and cultural theory. Accordingly, we cannot even begin to city the theorists, the books, articles, and monographs that deal with this immense subject. But we can trace a pathway that uses linguistic analysis as a instrument of cultural interpretation, the first example of which is the work of the British philosopher and anthropologist Peter Winch, who employs Wittgenstein's insights when conducting comparative anthropological studies.

Agreeing that cultural conceptions of "reality" are reflected in language, Winch proposes that the anthropologist pay close attention to the operating "limiting notions" of a given society or culture. By "limiting notion," Winch refers to the fundamental keys of understanding and interpretation by which a culture or society is formed. These include conceptions of birth and death, human destiny, the difference between right and wrong, the establishing of conditions through which possibilities for good and evil are determined, and so on. All societies exhibit such "limiting notions," which possess a categorial status in their apprehension of reality, though the contents of same differ markedly from culture to culture. Winch writes:

> The specific forms which these concepts take, the particular institutions in which they are expressed, vary very considerably from one society to another; but their central position within a society's institutions is and must be a constant factor. In

trying to understand the life of an alien society, then, it will be of the utmost importance to be clear about the way in which these notions enter into it.

Such "limiting notions" function, for Winch, as modes through which personal and societal life is ordered. Their contents reflect specific ways in which "reality" is experienced and conceived. Winch understands that "reality is not what gives language sense." On the contrary, "what is real and what is unreal shows itself *in* the sense that language has." Even "the distinction between the real and the unreal and the concept of agreement with reality themselves belong to our language." Therefore, it is *"within* the religious use of language" that conceptions are shaped, outside of and apart from which context they cannot be judged. The principle is that reality is determined by its actual use in language. Winch believes that this interpretation of the function of language lies in fullest keeping with Wittgenstein's proposals as outlined in the latter's *Investigations*. Noting that Wittgenstein's understanding of this issue had progressed between his *Tractatus* and the *Philosophical Investigations*, Winch explains:

> In the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein sought "the general form of propositions": what made propositions possible. . . . [He said that] the proposition was true when there existed a corresponding arrangement of elements in reality. The proposition was capable of saying something because of the identity of structure, of logical form, in the proposition and in reality.
>
> By the time Wittgenstein composed the *Investigations* he had come to reject the whole idea that there must be a general form of propositions. He emphasized the indefinite number of different uses that language may have and tried to show that these different uses neither need, nor in fact do, all have something in common, in the sense intended in the *Tractatus*. He also tried to show that what counts as "agreement or disagreement with reality" takes on as many different forms as there are different uses of language, and cannot, therefore, be taken as given *prior* to the detailed investigation of the use that is in question.

The implications for the academic study of religion are extensive. Winch proposes that one can only begin to understand the life of another society by recognizing that the concepts used by that society "can only be interpreted in the context of the way of life" of that society.

> To say of a society that it has a language is also to say that it has a concept of rationality. There need not perhaps be any *word* functioning in its language as "rational" does in ours, but at least there must be features of its members' use of language analogous to those features of *our* use of language which are connected with our use of the word "rational." Where there is language it must make a difference what is said and this is only possible where the saying of one thing rules out, on pain of failure to communicate, the saying of something else.

Such insights regarding understanding the life of another society derive from appreciation for the place of language games.

Language games are played by men who have lives to live—lives involving a wide variety of different interests, which have all kinds of different bearings on each other. . . . Whether a man sees point in what he is doing will . . . depend on whether he is able to see any unity in his multifarious interests, activities, and relations with other men; what sort of sense he sees in his life will depend on the nature of this unity.

The implications for cross-cultural studies in religious studies, as well as anthropology, can be stated as follows:

> What we may learn by studying other cultures are not merely possibilities of different ways of doing things, other techniques. More importantly we may learn different possibilities of making sense of human life, different ideas about the possible importance that the carrying out of certain activities may take on for a man, trying to contemplate the sense of his life as a whole. . . .
> We are confronted not just with different techniques, but with new possibilities of good and evil, in relation to which men may come to terms with life.

But in whatever society one is studying, regardless of circumstances, regardless of time of origin, the scholar will encounter those fundamental concepts—Winch's "limiting notions"—that determine the possibilities for good and evil within the society. In providing explication for what is intended by "limiting notions," Winch quotes a passage from *The New Science* by Giambattista Vico:

> We observe that all nations, barbarous as well as civilized, though separately founded because remote from each other in time and space, keep these three human customs: all have some religion, all contract solemn marriages, all bury their dead. . . . . For by the axiom that "uniform ideas, born among peoples unknown to each other, must have a common ground of truth," it must have been dictated to all nations that from these institutions human began among them all, and therefore they must be most devoutly guarded by them all . . . .

Winch's objective is to translate Vico's insight into an effective investigative principle. He understands that the pathway toward doing so involves employing Wittgenstein's proposals regarding the uses of language.

Hajime Nakamura: Language Analysis as Method of Cross-Cultural Comparisons

Another way in which linguistic analysis can be used effectively in religious studies has been illustrated by the Japanese scholar Hajime Nakamura (b.1912), principally in his book *Ways of Thinking of Eastern Peoples* (1964). Not only has Nakamura cultivated a way of conducting modal analysis within the context of cross-cultural studies, but he also employed this analytical technique to increase understanding of religion. Indeed, he proposes that the distinctive modes of thought of a people can be identified so as to differentiate their

outlook on the world. When one engages in this kind of analysis, one should focus on the matter of linguistic, grammatical, and syntactical construction.

Nakamura is highly trained. Influenced by Bertrand Russell, he also found himself gravitating toward the *Verstehen* approach to ideological identification and analysis as he encountered it in the writings of Max Weber. Thus, his intention in conducting cross-cultural analyses of selected cultural traditions is to understand how persons in various societies come to acquire their characteristic philosophical viewpoints, or, as he calls them, "ways of thinking." His method is to examine the processes of judgment and inference that are implicit in the uses of language and in the inherent operations of linguistic forms. Specific language usage, and the abilities that are resident in language, have a strong influence on the attitudes of a society or people in engaging, addressing, or otherwise conceiving of or relating to reality.

Nakamura puts his central assumption in the form of a question: "Are not the expression-forms of judgment and deduction which we adopt as the cognitive means for studying the characteristic ways of thinking, working at the same time as an *existential basis?*" He then answers his own question:

> Generally speaking, since the grammar and its syntax, which regulate the expression-form of judgment and deduction do not easily change, they are not only expressive of the characteristic ways of thinking of a nation, but in return they also regulate them for some time. In other words, it is probable that the ways of working of a thought-form might in turn be qualified by its language form.

From which the conclusion follows: "Therefore, the expression-forms of thought employed in language are the existential basis for the characteristic ways of thinking of a people."

In the learned analyses that follow in *Ways of Thinking of Eastern Peoples*, Nakamura describes the "modes of thought" of four East Asian peoples, those of India, China, Tibet, and Japan. The result is a comprehensive morphology of linguistic and grammatical preferences. One can expect it to stand as an impressive first in a developing series of methodologically rigorous cross-cultural studies.

In addition, because Nakamura is well versed in the philosophical writings and religious texts of both Western and Eastern cultures, he is able to suggest points of contact that would not always be apparent. Consequently almost every page of his book is an exercise in cross-cultural comparisons, since references are made to Greece, to India, to China, to Japan, to Mediterranean cultures, all within the same paragraph. Yet the direction of his interpretations is provided by a sustained interest in the function of language. Grammar, linguistic patterns, and syntactical order both affect and are embodied in the outlook of a people and in the disposition of its culture. Self-consciousness regarding grammar, linguistic patterns, and syntactical order is also embodied in the outlook and the disposition.

Their presence makes it possible to study all of these elements together, and to have a reliable basis on which to conduct cross-cultural analyses in the process.

D. Z. Phillips: Fideism as a Way of Recovering Evolutionist Intentions

We encountered D. Z. Phillips earlier in this chapter. We noted that he is known for championing the position commonly referred to as fideism, so named because Phillips affirms that there is no way to get outside of language to judge the reliability of the concepts. This corroborates the conviction that there is no way *outside of the attitude of faith* to make certifiable sense of religious affirmations.

It is one thing to declare all of this. Something else is involved in reinterpreting the sense of significant anthropological inquiries into the nature of religious experience in light of it. This is precisely what Phillips does in returning to the nineteenth-century theories of such thinkers as E. B. Tylor, Sir James Frazer, Herbert Spencer, and others considered previously in this study.

Under the title "Are Religious Beliefs Mistaken Hypotheses?" Phillips focuses on the tendency within interpretations of the behavior of primitive peoples to regard their orientation to life as misguided and mistaken. Phillips believes that such appraisals are imprecise. Whereas primitive peoples engaged in rituals that have been taken as evidence of their own superstitions—and thus, by nineteenth- and twentieth-century standards, of the pervasive irrationality of their point of view—Phillips would like to offer an amended interpretation. Such behavior is not irrational, but is supremely rational within the context of the attitude and outlook of those who are engaged in it. Using Wittgenstein, Phillips adds that the same rituals "can be seen as a form of language, a symbolism in their own right; a language and a symbolism which are expressive in character." Again the rituals "express values concerning what is deep and important for the people concerned—birth, death, hunting, cultivation of the crops, personal relations, etc." Supported by sophisticated analyses of the nature and function of language, Phillips is confident that he stands on firm ground when he asserts that the attitudes and behavior of primitive peoples are just as rational as those of anyone else, in spite of the fact that modern interpreters frequently find much of it difficult to take seriously.

The Language of Religion: A Summary Statement

At the beginning of this chapter, we indicated that analysis of religious language has developed along two distinct lines. From the one side, it has focused on nondiscursive forms: symbols, symbolic forms, images, modes of consciousness, and products of the imagination.

From the other it has concerned itself with discursive language, as in propositional truth, assertions, declarative statements, articles of faith, creedal formulations, and the like. In the preceding pages we have examined a number of prominent examples of elucidations of both points of departure. On the nondiscursive or symbological side, we selected a sampling: the work of Cassirer, Ricoeur, Langer, van der Leeuw, Gadamer, Panofsky, and others. From the discursive side, we attempted to trace a trajectory forward, starting with the work of G. E. Moore, Bertrand Russell, and Ludwig Wittgenstein (frequently via the influence of the Vienna Circle) to the work of more recent theorists such as D. Z. Phillips, Peter Winch, and other British- and American-trained analytical philosophers of religion.

At the beginning of the chapter, we argued that the two groups really belong together. We noted that despite large differences in manner as well as in specific focus, the two sides share the conviction that knowledge is dependent on the capacities of distinct modal sets. On the nondiscursive side, modal set has reference to the various symbolic forms. On the discursive side, modal set has reference to propositions. Those who work with discursive language assumed, at least in the beginning, that propositional truth could be formed and assessed according to the canons of logical-mathematical truth. Propositions were understood to make truth claims when they adhere to the standards of logical consistency and strict mathematical order. The second phase of the linguistic analysts' era is characterized by an obvious relaxing of logical-mathematical criteria, and a shift toward recognizing the propositional legitimacy of ordinary language. This transition, as we noted, is most evident in differences between the positions of the early and the later Ludwig Wittgenstein—differences reflected in the contrast between *Tractatus* and *Philosophical Investigations*. In moving from the earlier work to the later, Wittgenstein can be interpreted as paralleling the most striking difference between Bertrand Russell and G. E. Moore, the latter of whom was committed to the validity of ordinary language. But throughout the long cycle, regardless of particular emphases, the focus remains on the workings of discursive language. And the contention is that conditions for registering truth claims are isolatable when one discerns how language is formed in actual practice, that is, in its actual usage.

Strikingly, in both discursive and nondiscursive cases, the formal conclusion is the same: the ability to acquire knowledge, as well as to express and communicate it, depends on the internal workings of the modal set in question. Accordingly, much emphasis is placed on the matter of propriety; that is, detailed attention is given to distinctions between subjects that belong properly to the modal set in question vis-à-vis those which, modally speaking, are out of bounds. The proposal is that subjects which really do not belong to the modal set should not be approached as though they do. To proceed inappropriately in this regard is to commit errors of judgment and categorization. A category error occurs when a topic alien to the symbolic or linguistic framework is inserted there, under the

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pretense or mistaken assumption that it actually belongs. When this occurs, someone needs to discern the proper range of applicability of the modal set, then specify its actual boundaries, perimeters, and radial axes. This involves analysts in setting limits and fixing capacities, so that substance and content are properly conjoined. Such determinations are apparent in Kant's limitation of knowledge "in order to make room for faith," as well as in the early statement in the *Tractatus* that "whereof one cannot speak thereof one ought to remain silent." The same sort of boundary determinations are made in Paul Ricoeur's distinction that "myth provides food for thought," though, of course, without becoming thought or being translatable or reducible to thought. The same kind of discernment is implicit in Aby Warburg's speculations about the sorts of metamorphoses of content that take place when distinct modal sets are interchanged. In all such instances, a conviction is registered that truth is a product of discernment and discrimination. That is, truth—sustainable truth—cannot be indiscriminate. Regardless of whether one is referring to discursive or nondiscursive language, the approaches we have surveyed agree that truth belongs to the interworkings of formal components within specifiable modes of communication and expression. And religion, it seems, has invested heavily in all of them.