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Pascal's 'Orders' Viewed Through the Lens of the Philosophy of Rush Rhees

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Abstract

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Pascal's 'Orders' Viewed Through the Lens of the Philosophy of Rush Rhees
July 2022

This thesis argues that a close reading of the writings of Rush Rhees on religious belief can offer a deeper insight into Blaise Pascal's apologetics, in particular his understanding of the three 'orders' by which the searcher can come to true faith. It proceeds by close readings of Pascal and Rhees's presentations of the nature of belief, religious and secular, and its relationship with philosophy and man's/woman's place in the contemporaneous world. The views of the two writers on the intelligibility and reality of life and the limits of human understanding of God's reality are compared. The following synthesis is essentially a study of the epistemology of Pascal and Rhees and brings into comparison Pascal's presentation of the role of principles with Rhees's analysis of Moore's propositions and world-picture/form of life. The role of custom and habit in coming to 'human faith' is then compared with language, conversation, community, and ritual. The 'dawning' of belief is investigated through Rhees's, and Wittgenstein's, views on aspect-seeing and 'wonder'.

It is concluded that Rush Rhees's philosophy of religion offers a modern re-appraisal of Blaise Pascal's apologetics. This applies particularly to the role of habit and custom in coming to God-given faith but is by no means confined to it. The thesis reveals how Rhees's concepts of the nature of God, world-picture, hinge propositions and the unchallenged foundations of belief can be applied to provide an effective challenge to the pervasive scientific 'spirit' of modern secularism by offering an alternative epistemology and clearer understanding of the difference between knowledge and belief.

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9. Conclusion

Word count: 97,220

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Finally, I must thank my wife, Dorothy, for her continuous understanding when study displaced other aspects of life.

Appendix 1.

Ethical approval

It has been confirmed by the relevant University authority that ethical approval is not necessary for this thesis.

Appendix 2.

Abbreviations

Where a numeral in the text follows the upper case 'F' (e.g., F391) this refers to the relevant section of Pascal's *Pensées* in 'Blaise Pascal, *Pensées,* translated by Alban Krailsheimer (revised edition. London: Penguin, 1995). This translation is based upon the Lafuma edition of the *Pensées* based on the 'First Copy'. No cross reference is given to the other, commonly used, Sellier edition, based on the 'Second Copy', as a concordance is provided on p.xxxi of Krailsheimer's text.

1. General Introduction

1.1 Background

Christianity in Western Europe stands at a critical point. Since the 1950's there has been an inexorable decline in church attendance and in adherence to the tenets of Christianity.[1] This has occurred against the background of a rise in the influence of scientific understandings and scientism[2] that, in the hands of some apologists, has taken on a triumphalist tone.[3] The critical point, however, from the viewpoint of this thesis, is the more recent loss of common understanding of the very language of Christianity. This is witnessed in the rise, for example, in 'biblical illiteracy' and the theological heterodoxy of even those who claim a belief in the Christian God.[4]

It has been said that in the writings of Blaise Pascal (1623-62), particularly the *Pensées,*[5] we have a Christian apologetic well adapted to the present time.[6] Whilst Pascal wrote for a particular 17th Century audience, those honestly seeking God who also had sufficient means, free time, and education to comprehend his apology, it has been argued that these characteristics would apply today to a large proportion of Western European society.[7] Pascal also wrote from a position of strength, from today's perspective, in that he had a deep understanding of demonstrative scientific method and its assumptions, being one of its earliest proponents. He was also writing in response to an enlightenment climate which had produced new and effective challenges to

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[1] Stephen Bullivant, 'Contemporary Catholicism in England and Wales: A statistical report based on recent British Social Attitudes Survey data', *Catholic Research Forum Reports,* 1 (2016),11-12.

[2] Used in the sense of adherence to the understanding that science, modelled on the natural sciences, is the only mode of access to real knowledge or truth.

[3] Adam Rutherford, 'As Long As We Study Life It Will Be Read. The Selfish Gene Turns Forty', *Guardian,* 29th May, science section (2016). https://www.theguardian.com/science/2016/may/29/selfish-gene-40-years-richard-dawkins-do-ideas-stand-up-adam-rutherford [accessed 20 April 2017]

[4] See for example: Grace Davie, *Religion in Britain: A Persistent Paradox.* 2nd. edn. (Chichester: Wiley, 2015), pp. 71-90.

[5] Blaise Pascal, *Pensées,* tr. by Alban Krailsheimer, revised edn. (London: Penguin, 1995).

[6] See: Peter Kreeft, *Christianity for Modern Pagans: Pascal's Pensées* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993), pp.12-19. William Wood, *Blaise Pascal on Duplicity, Sin and the Fall. The Secret Instinct* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 1.

[7] Alban Krailsheimer, *Pascal* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), p.79.

fundamental and traditional religious beliefs. Whilst undoubtedly these are important insights, today Pascal is read for the wisdom of his aphorisms more than for his Christian apologetic and, to some, his arguments seem somewhat mercenary (particularly the 'wager'[8]). This study re-presents Pascal's arguments regarding his theory of the acquisition of religious belief when interpreted through the insights of a Wittgensteinian conceptual analysis using, specifically, the religious insights of Rush Rhees (1905-89). The major question to be answered by the thesis is whether this approach can lead to an enriched understanding of the potential Christian apologetic value of Pascal's writings for the present generation of seekers. There has to my knowledge been no previous research utilizing this approach.

1.2 Pascal's 'Orders' and 'coming to faith'

Central to Pascal's understanding of how the unbeliever searching for faith may come to a 'point of repose' in the fullness of faith is his theory of the three 'orders' of knowledge - custom, reason and 'the heart'. There is a sense of order in the 'orders'.[9] The searcher is seen to start with an investigation of what reason (the intellect) has to offer and proceed through 'custom' to full faith. Pascal assesses the value of philosophy, science, the splendour of God's creation etc. but finds that reason's last step is the recognition that there are an infinite number of things which are beyond it: 'If natural things are beyond it what are we to say of religion?'.[10] According to Pascal intellectual investigation provides firm evidence that the Christian religion is not contrary to reason and leads the genuine seeker on the path to faith, but it can go no further. It is hampered by imagination, pride, inconsistency, and the effects of original sin on our power to comprehend. The position reached by the seeker using reason alone is unstable and reversible.

Having come to the understanding that religion is not against reason one must strengthen and, as it were, fix one's attachment to religion using custom (habit, the

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[8] Laid out in F418 and comparing relative gain in believing, acting as if believing and denying God. For criticism see for example: Alan Hájek, 'Waging War on Pascal's Wager', *The Philosophical Review,* 112 (2003), 27-56.

[9] For a fuller account see: Hugh Davidson, *The Origins of Certainty. Means and Meanings in Pascal's Pensées* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), pp. 37-70.

[10] F118

'automaton', the 'machine'). For Pascal, following Michel de Montaigne (1533-92), 'custom is our nature…'.[11] It is a fundamental mode of acquisition of belief through practice. By attending Mass, praying, doing works of charity etc. one inclines the will and becomes more receptive to the final completing stage of faith by the act of God's grace on the heart. Pascal sees this final stage as a pure gift of God which we can only make ourselves ready for. The 'heart' for Pascal is the organ of acquisition of faith. It is the intuitive faculty by which 'first principles' are apprehended and thereby provides the bedrock for rational thought and instinctive behaviour. This concept of 'first principles' together with 'habit' as second, possibly first, nature will be important in relation to Rhees's understanding of what is 'taken on trust' in our lives with language, what underpins belief and reality.

1.3 Rush Rhees's interpretation of the method of Ludwig Wittgenstein

Rhees would argue that Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951) can be said to have a philosophical method (or methods) but no formal theories of philosophical enquiry.[12] Attempts to assign a theory of religion to Wittgenstein have generally fallen on stony ground.[13] His comments on religion, ethics and the 'mystical' have been extensively studied and commented on but no consensus emerges. Maturation of Wittgenstein's own religious understanding also complicates the picture, and his diaries and philosophical writings can seem at odds with one another concerning religious faith and practice. Even the presentation of his views on religion put forward by his closest friends are criticized by other highly regarded interpreters.[14]

Rush Rhees was one of Wittgenstein's closest friends, one of his literary executors and also one of his main interlocutors in discussions and tutorials. Whilst undoubtedly a firm disciple of Wittgenstein, and one who utilizes his fundamental methods consistently, he was a considerable philosopher in his own right. Wittgenstein

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[11] F419

[12] Rush Rhees, *Discussions of Wittgenstein* (Oxford: Routledge& Kegan Paul, 1970), pp. 42-43.

[13] See for example: Brian R. Clack, 'Wittgenstein and expressivist theories of religion', *International Journal for the Philosophy of Religion,* 40 (1996), pp. 46-61.

[14] See for example: Kai Nielsen, *Wittgenstein_and_Wittgensteinians on Religion.* *<https://www.kainielsen.org/uploads/1/1/9/0/119098149/Wittgenstein_and_wittgensteinians_on _religion.pdf>* [accessed 6/2/2020]

evidently thought highly of him, both as a man and a philosopher.[15] There is no sense of slavish adherence to Wittgenstein's methodology in Rhees's writings and he is critical, in particular, of aspects of Wittgenstein's extended usage of the concept of language-games. He also develops his own ideas of the mode of inter-relationship between language-games and the development of understanding through his concept of 'conversation'. This concept seems to protect Rhees from the widely quoted charges of 'fideism' made against Wittgenstein.[16] His personal interest in applying his method to religion is clear in his published writings. These reveal a man of deep religious understanding and intellectual honesty but one who, like Wittgenstein, seems tormented by an inability to feel that he lived a life in kilter with his high ethical principles, to feel that he was 'religious'.[17]

Rhees sees Wittgenstein's philosophy, throughout his professional life, as centrally and consistently concerned with logical form and symbolism. In Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*,[18] a major aim[19] is to show the delusion in 'if anyone utters a sentence and means it, or understands it, he is working with a calculus according to strict rules'.[20] There is no abstract link between reality and language and words do not have a 'mental' or abstract, fixed, or defined meaning. What is required is an analysis of the concept of language itself and this is essentially the use, the practical application in everyday language, of a word,[21] a 'grammatical' analysis.

All the discussions in the *Investigations* are, for Rhees, exercises in the conceptual analysis of certain expressions, e.g., language, proposition, sense, thinking, belief, knowledge, reality. These exercises must take place by the examination of actual examples of practical usage, the concept as applied within a particular 'language-game'

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[15] Gabriel Citron, ed., Wittgenstein's Philosophical Conversations with Rush Rhees (1939-50): From the notes of Rush Rhees, *Mind*, 124 (2015), pp1-71, p.1.

[16] Kai Nielsen, 'Wittgensteinian Fideism', *Philosophy,* 42 (1967), 191-209.

[17] See section 7.3.

[18] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, ed. by Peter Hacker and Joachim Schulte, 4th edition, tr. by G.E.M. Anscombe, P.M.S. Hacker and Joachim Schulte (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009).

[19] For example, Wittgenstein, *Investigations,* §181.

[20] Rhees, *Discussions*, p.43.

[21] Wittgenstein, *Investigations,* §383.

in its 'native' context, in a life lived in society. Such a usage has an immediacy, it occurs in a particular verbal context but also in a particular place at a particular time, in a particular life-context. There are no immutable laws fixing the use of words. The 'rules' of grammar and the existence of propositions are fundamental to the existence of language, but they have no 'privileged status' or intrinsic powers[22] (this is not a statement about the power of words[23]). They are, however, the rules of the lives in which there is language.[24] If one has learned to speak one knows the grammar of language, knows what it makes sense to say, what language is. It is pointless to 'dig down' to what a rule is or what constitutes the 'statement of a rule'. We should simply look at practice. Whether a phrase is logically possible depends on its application in a life.[25] This dependence on application does not mean that logic or language lose their possibility or intelligibility. Such a misunderstanding lies partly in our 'craving for generality' or contempt for the incomplete, or less than general, case, the desire for a system or theory, the diamond hardness of logical necessity. A spoken or written language is either a 'language', i.e., is not arbitrary but intelligible, or it is not a 'language'. To look for an underlying foundational basis for intelligibility is really our trying to escape our own confusions in language and thought.

In different language-games we are not only contrasting different ways of speaking to each other, but, in a sense, different languages, which may or may not have common understandings. Do conceptual words such as belief, evidence, temporality have the same meaning in the language of physics and the language of religion? Is there a key to translation? What 'conversation' might allow clarification? These questions all run into the crucially important concept of 'form of life' or 'world-picture' central to understanding Rhees's position on religious language and belief. Its elucidation and relationship to habit/custom will be a central purpose of this dissertation. Reality for Rhees is co-constituted with language and only understandable within a life shared with others holding similar unchallenged beliefs or understandings, employing similar language-games in similar life contexts. These unchallenged 'hinge commitments' in our shared 'forms of life' are intrinsic to the reality of our lives, including our lives with

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[22] Ibid., §93.

[23] Rush Rhees, 'Wittgenstein on Language and Ritual', in *Wittgenstein and His Times,* ed. by Anthony Kenny and Brian McGuiness (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), p.72.

[24] Rhees, *Discussions*, p.45.

[25] Ibid., p.51.

religious belief, and are inseparable from our linguistic understandings and usages. We must examine how they relate to Pascal's understanding of principles, habit and custom and how we address the problem of understanding 'meaning' itself in different 'world-pictures'. How can we 'inhabit' the world-picture of others of differing beliefs? Indeed, can we say that religion constitutes a world-picture in itself and how does this relate to the individual reality (if such exists) of the believer or non-believer?

1.4 The Application to Pascal's Orders.

We have already said that central to Pascal's theory of the orders is the order of 'custom' or 'habit'. Pascal's argument is that when a person has demonstrated to themselves through their own reasoning that the Christian faith is not contrary to reason and offers a sound explanation of the state of humankind then it is necessary that they prepare the ground or incline the mind for faith and fix their nascent belief by partaking in the customs and practices of the Catholic faith. The understanding that custom is a key element in belief generally is a central one for Pascal. Custom is integral to our nature; in a sense it confirms the results of rational thought. It is passed from parent to child. It will be one object of this dissertation to demonstrate that it is also central to Wittgenstein and Rhees's understanding of the basis of the logical form of language – that usage, language as practice, rule-following and language-games are all custom or habit based. When we use the *words* custom or habit in the setting of religious worship and belief they clearly are not confined in scope or reference to written or verbal practices but, in such settings, the language, which is the medium of the theology, is born out of custom and practical usage. The rules of the grammar of that language-game, the factors which set the limits of sense and nonsense, intelligibility and contentless drivel, are formed from their inception by the custom of that religion.

Religion is what it is because religious language is what it is.[26] Much more could be said regarding word and gesture as performance, the power of words and rituals, the development of belief through 'conversation', the inter-relationship of religious and other language-games/ ways of life, etc. and such topics make up part of the presented research. The mode of acquisition of belief in childhood in the light of

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[26] Rush Rhees, *Rush Rhees on Religion and Philosophy,* ed. by D.Z. Phillips
 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p.60.

such understandings is also a fascinating topic to be covered but what Rhees's writings suggest is that the reason why Pascal's custom/habit is so centrally important in religious belief is that without accepting the reflexive use of the language/act of religious practice one cannot have a truly religious understanding, a basic theology to attend God's free offer of the grace of faith.

There is a rich vein to be mined in specific regard to the meaning of 'custom' and 'habit' in Roman Catholic usage, where 'Tradition' is so important to theology. Custom may be used in religious terms in a similar way to general conversation, e.g., 'it is the custom to genuflect'. It may be used to mean accustomed belief acquired in a community setting, a foundation or fixative for nascent belief or a power for the direct acquisition of belief (closer to Pascal's understanding[27]). Importantly, however, it carries a particular grammatical place in the idea of the accumulated wisdom of the religious community. Here the word has legal, devotional, and mystical aspects which go beyond its non-religious meaning. The content of 'belief' and the historical 'custom' of the Church are indivisible and application of value judgements such as 'mistaken', 'non-evidential', 'right' and 'wrong' do not seem to be clearly applicable.

1.5 Why Choose Pascal and Rhees?

In Blaise Pascal we have a master apologist for belief in Christ. As has been pointed out by others,[28] despite writing in the 17th century he speaks to the modern seeker in a thoroughly secularized, desacramentalized society. There has, however, been a massive increase in scientific understanding and alteration in cultural norms since Pascal's time, which has had the effect of eroding previous, fundamentally accepted arguments for the validity of religion and the acceptance of the rationality of belief in God. Certain major aspects of Pascal's apologetics are vulnerable to these changes, some of which are given below:

1. There has been a major re-orientation in thought, including among Christians, on the nature of God, especially His judgmental aspect. Pascal's 'wager', for example, presumes a final judgement for all and he makes clear that salvation

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[27] F821.

[28] See for example: Peter Kreeft, *Christianity for Modern Pagans. Pascal's Pensées* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1993), pp.12-17.

requires belief in Christ. Conversion is a process with an end reward that can seem mercenary to modern sensibilities. Pascal has one 'viewpoint' encompassing science and religion that offers an integrated world view but does not directly address the challenges of scientism.

2. Pascal's critically important presentation of the fundamental principles underpinning belief is anchored in an omnipotent God, thus requiring belief in God as an antecedent to the acceptance of the basis of all reality.

3. Pascal offers arguments for the existence of *evidences* of the existence of God and the nature of Christ but does not take full account of the difference between belief and knowledge.

4. The central role of habit/custom in Pascal's system is fully laid out but to the modern reader seems unanchored in any fundamental explanation of its mechanism of action or its limits. This leaves a sense that its action is, in a sense, automatic. Habit is employed in religious faith essentially through faith in the testimony of believers in its efficacy.

5. Pascal emphasizes the key role of intuition in the final achievement of true faith – waiting on God after preparing oneself. He does not expand on what happens to the seeker utilizing habitual religious practices, etc. The depth and richness of the process is not examined.

A 'trenchant parallelism' between the writings Pascal and Wittgenstein was first pointed out by Von Wright.[29] The connections have been more recently stressed by John Cottingham[30] and extended to Rhees and other Wittgensteinians by Robbins[31] but they have not been the specific subject of any previously published work. Wittgenstein wrote little specifically on religious belief but Rush Rhees, a faithful and highly erudite interpreter of Wittgenstein, went much further into the philosophy and practice of religion from a Wittgensteinian viewpoint. This dissertation argues that deep study of

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[29] Maurice O'Connor Drury, *The Selected Writings of Maurice O'Connor Drury: On Wittgenstein, Philosophy, Religion and Psychiatry*, ed. by John Hayes (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), p.159.

[30] John Cottingham, On *the Meaning of Life* (London: Routledge, 2003), p.96.

[31] Christopher William Robbins, 'Pascal and the Therapy of Faith' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of York, 2015). < https://etheses.whiterose.ac.uk/10182/> [accessed 1 May 2020], pp. 197-202.

Rhees allows a unique series of insights into the previously given, weaker areas of Pascal's apologetics for the following reasons:

1. Rhees avoids, indeed abhors, any suggestion of religious belief based on fear of damnation or personal gain. His concentration is only gratitude for and wonder at the gift of life.

2. Rhees essentially replaces 'principles' as the underpinning of reality with Moore's certainties, hinge propositions and world-picture. Language in all its richness and interconnections is the whole basis of reality and no need for an *a priori* acceptance of the existence of God is necessary. His presentation of the nature of one's world-picture offers a cogent argument against the claims of scientism.

3. Belief and knowledge are examined by Rhees in great detail as is the nature of certainty. This offers insight into the need for and origin of religious belief and its relationship to non-religious belief and the limits of objective scientific developments when applied outside their valid arena.

4. Habit and custom are of considerable importance in Rhees's understanding of the development of a world-picture, but he stresses shared language, personal interaction, aesthetic appreciation and non-verbal communication in ritual, the development of faith and the acquisition of religious belief and thus a religious reality. There is no suggestion of the mechanical here.

5. Rhees cannot offer insight into what ultimately occurs in the acquisition of God-given faith, or whether he would distinguish this from a religious world-picture, but his sense of the wondrous in life offers clues.

1.6 Purpose and Plan

The fundamental question to be answered by this thesis is whether the religious philosophy of Rush Rhees can enhance the value of Pascal's apologetics. Its primary purpose will be the study of the concept and apologetic value of the notion of the three orders and the related concept of the 'geometric' (mathematical) and *esprit de finesse* modes of thinking or reasoning[32] when interpreted through the method and inspiration

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[32] The mind which apprehends narrow concepts deeply in comparison to that which takes in the broad picture and inter-connection of concepts.

of Rush Rhees's interpretation and development of Ludwig Wittgenstein's philosophy. It will concentrate, in particular, on two aspects of Pascal's apologetics. 'Habit' and its role in belief is the most criticized and misunderstood of the three orders and the one most amenable to deeper interpretation. 'Principles' are developed by Pascal as the fundament of the intelligibility and reality of our lives and their parallels with Rhees's presentation of the certainties underpinning intelligibility and reality are striking.

The plan of this dissertation is to firstly investigate the three potential dominant sources of influence on Pascal's writings on habit, custom and the passions (St. Augustine of Hippo [354-430], René Descartes [1596-1650] and Michel de Montaigne [1533-1592]) and this will be followed by a detailed analysis of Pascal's writings, concentrating on his understanding of the three orders and his use of the concept of 'principles'. We will then fully review the writings of Rhees, and his interpretations of Wittgenstein's writings, which are apposite to religious belief and practice. The thesis will finally and uniquely argue that a greatly enriched understanding of the apologetic value of Pascal's writings can be based upon Rhees's epistemology and philosophy of the nature of belief, custom, habit, and the foundations of religious reality. Wherever possible Rhees's own words will be quoted or directly referenced, or paraphrases of his own wording will be used to both retain the particular spirit of his work and be true to his very painstakingly chosen vocabulary.

2. Literature Review

There is a voluminous literature on both Pascal's writings and Wittgenstein's (rather brief) comments on religious belief. Where the literature directly impinges on the core topics of this thesis it is fully referenced in the relevant chapter. When restricted, however, to the literature on the relationship between Pascal's apologetics and the philosophy of Rush Rhees, then we have available to us only three sources of direct concern. The first of these is John Cottingham and is best laid out in *On the Meaning of Life*.[33] This directly refers to Blaise Pascal's and Wittgenstein's similarities of viewpoint and takes up von Wright's suggestion that there are significant similarities to be explored between the two writers. The second source is Christopher Robbins and is

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[33] Cottingham, 2003.

limited to the appendix of a philosophy doctoral dissertation on Pascal's apologetics.[34] This only references Rhees indirectly as a member of the 'Swansea School' and is concerned largely with a critical comparison of D Z Phillips and Pascal's positions on religious belief. The final source is an M.A. dissertation by Patrick Moran.[35] This is the most pertinent to one particular aspect of the present dissertation, the relationship between Pascal's 'principles' and hinge propositions.

Dealing with these sources in order, Professor Cottingham's book confines its comments to only a few pages[36] but these clearly lay down his view that 'Wittgenstein's concept of religion in many respects (is) the heir to Pascal's approach: religious faith is neither rational nor *irrational* but *pre-rational*, involving not so much intellectual assent to doctrines as a "passionate commitment" or attitude towards life'.

Central to Cottingham's argument of the value of the Pascalian/Wittgensteinian approach to religious faith is that it is reasonable to argue that, if there are clear benefits to a spiritual life, and its metaphysical underpinnings are not amenable to reason, then it is not against reason to bypass the need for prior rational conviction and adopt the practices of religion that will lead to a 'passionate commitment'.[37] This, for him, does not entail accepting that the religious practices give content to the doctrines of the faith, rather they benefit the seeker in that they allow expression of 'an existential and moral response to the human predicament'. This can only occur within the context of the religious form of life. The practices 'generate a resonance' unavailable by other rational means. We need modes of response to the finitude of life which can be explored through ritual and practice and these responses cannot be fully rationally analysed. Religious practice acts in 'the domain that "cannot be spoken of"'.

Robbins's thesis comments that 'some Wittgensteinian philosophers have, with scant reference to Pascal, developed a similar approach over the last few decades'. He

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[34] Robbins, 2015.

[35] Patrick Moran, 'Pascal and Wittgenstein: Common Epistemological Elements in the *Pensées* and *On Certainty*' (unpublished masters thesis, University of Ottawa, 1997) <https://ruor.uottawa.ca/handle/10393/4204> [accessed October 2020].

[36] Cottingham, pp.93-99.

[37]Cottingham, p.96.

seems here to refer largely to the 'Swansea School' and D. Z. Phillips in particular. Robbins takes a clearly antipathetic stance regarding the views on religious belief of both Pascal and these Wittgensteinians. Direct reference to Rhees is absent but some of his comments relating to Phillips and Winch do also impact on Rhees's views. Most of these are dealt with in later chapters of the present dissertation and only the most relevant unaddressed criticisms are dealt with here. Importantly Robbins does comment on Pascal's 'many beliefs for which we can give no evidence' (i.e., principles) but simply states that belief in God does not seem to function as a 'framework' belief (Moore's proposition), as many people live adequate lives without belief in God.[38]

Robbins argues that the crux of the difference between Pascal and Swansea School is whether the precedence of praxis over the intellectual and theoretical, alluded to by Cottingham, is pragmatic (as he interprets Pascal's 'wager') or a matter of conceptual priority. This plays out in Pascal's presentation of 'simple believers' and those who aspire to belief but have intellectual reservations. He argues that Pascal's 'proofs' of religion are necessarily understood by aspirant seekers prior to entering into religious habitual and customary practices as the next stage in coming to faith. In contrast he sees the Swansea School arguing that doctrines arise only within praxis, and this leaves only an 'anthropological' reason for belief. As he puts it:

> In sum, the Wittgensteinians part company from Pascal over two key points: first, for Pascal God reveals doctrine and doctrine determines praxis whereas for the Wittgensteinians it is out of praxis that any doctrine, for example the meaning of God or the key moral principles, emerges; secondly, Pascal's religion includes factual statements (even though many of these are, as we shall see, shaped by doctrine) but the Wittgensteinians confine religious utterances solely to the expression of attitudes. Behind these points lie profoundly different concepts of God.[39]

There is, I feel, major oversimplification in this interpretation. Firstly, Pascal offers 'proofs' to the aspirant believer to show that belief is not against reason. They do not act at this stage as effective 'proofs' of the truth of religious belief. They may be understood but they are not accepted. It is when the aspirant has accepted Christ that 'proofs' of scripture, etc. act to further validate faith.[40] Secondly the evidence for

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[38] Robbins, p.181.

[39] Robbins, p.206.

[40] For example, see F189 and section 4.5.

acceptance of belief as not against reason lies in part in the acceptance of 'principles' as the unreasoned underpinnings of much fundamental belief, hence religious faith is not an exception in starting from unproven foundations. This is, as this dissertation will demonstrate, the same argument as applicable by Wittgensteinians to Moore's propositions.

Robbins's position shows a lack of comprehension of Rhees's views (as a member of the Swansea School). Concepts, language, and practice are for him entirely inseparable in their genesis. They arise together as development in understanding occurs. They are deepened by conversation both within and outside the religious setting. Thus, any conceptual content to religion depends on praxis in the sense of the use and development of language and the reality of the whole of life is one subject to the influence of human interaction, conversation in the right spirit and seriousness, etc. Religious beliefs are similar in this way to aesthetics and morality; are they also essentially vacuous or purely 'attitudinal'? It would take an extended discussion of what constitutes 'doctrine' to further analyse Robbins's summary, but religious statements arise out of the deepest commitments of the individual, they are integral to one's certainties, one's reality, one's whole understanding of life's meaning and purpose. Pre-existing doctrine is passed on in the religious form of life as it develops, whether in the child or adult and it is not the case that Rhees does not accept the place of pre-existing doctrine, he sees it as the community's present and historical attempts to gain insight into the nature of belief and God.

Robbins underplays Rhees and Wittgenstein's understanding of the nature of certainty, knowledge, and belief. 'Factual statements' must be divided by type, some relate to the acceptance of historical occurrences and biblical evidence, (here Pascal and Rhees would certainly differ on several points, e.g., miracles), doctrinal matters related to hagiography, church dogma, etc. Rhees, during the period he was writing on philosophy, deals only with his own problems in interpreting and accepting these; he does not offer a philosophical account of the 'truth', or otherwise, of such matters.

Finally, it is worth quoting the crux of Robbins understanding of the differing concepts of God referred to. He says: 'Thus Swansea and Pascal disagree: Christian practice does not, for Swansea, presuppose a God who exists in and alongside the world; but for Pascal it does'. Whatever 'Swansea' believes I am sure that Rhees would say that without deeper analysis of the religious use of such conceptually complex

words as 'God',''exists','alongside','world' one cannot begin to make sense of this statement. Rhees would avoid pre-supposition of any kind and in this sense at least the statement is true, but Pascal actually suggests the use of Christian practice, in the absence of faith, as a method of achievement of 'human faith'. Pascal believes that God exists, though he would certainly hold to our incapability of understanding His nature and would likely never suggest that He, or His heaven, were 'alongside' us.

Overall Robbins offers a highly critical philosophical account of Pascal and the Swansea School as interpreters or apologists of religious faith, but the pertinence of his dissertation is limited regarding the present one. Our interest is in where Rhees can enlighten, even modernize, Pascal's account. Robbins wishes to disassemble Pascal's and Phillips's account of belief and the specifics of Pascal's apologetics when analysed from the viewpoint of the 21st century.

Patrick Moran's Masters dissertation was written more than 20 years ago and contrasts Pascal's philosophy with Descartes's and Wittgenstein's with G E Moore's, finally thereby arguing for close similarities between Pascal and Wittgenstein. Essentially, he confines himself to demonstrating similar epistemologies. Rush Rhees's own work is not referenced. The relevance of this dissertation to the present thesis is that it concludes that the epistemologies of Pascal and Wittgenstein are similar in six areas and, most importantly, it discusses Pascal's understanding of 'knowledge' by principles and the heart and considers this essentially the same epistemologically as Wittgenstein's hinge propositions. The six points made in the conclusion are:

1. Knowledge rests on foundations that are not knowledge. It is not possible to use reason to argue for, justify, or demonstrate the foundations of knowledge.
2. It is not always possible for someone to justify all the propositions he knows.
3. The type of justification a proposition requires is determined relative to the type of proposition for which justification is sought.
4. The foundations of knowledge are identified with certainty. What is certain is constituted, at least in part, by banal physical facts.
5. It is nonsensical to argue for certainties. It is also nonsensical to doubt certainties.
6. Certainty does not imply truth.[41]

There are several areas of disagreement in Moran's thesis with the presentation of the epistemology of Pascal and Rush Rhees in this dissertation and, as Rhees is not

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[41] Moran, pp.110-111.

commented on at all by Moran, this is not surprising. There is no doubt, however, that Moran has gleaned the essence of the conclusions of the present work on the deep similarities between Pascal and Wittgenstein (and thus Rhees's interpretation of Wittgenstein) on the specific issue of the basis of certainty. On all else he is silent.

3. Pascal's Influencers

3.1 Introduction

The question must be addressed as to why this chapter concentrates its review of the potential sources of Pascal's ideas on the topic of habit/custom? The reasons are simple and were previously alluded to; this is the area that has produced much criticism of Pascal's apologetics and it is the most fertile element of the orders when interrogated through the lens of Rush Rhees's philosophy. The heart (intuition), reason and principles will more usefully dealt with in the body of the thesis.

Habit is acknowledged universally as an important and fundamental element in human motivation, thought, and action (see Sparrow and Hutchinson for a fuller introduction to the topic and a historical overview[42]). It is far from confined to humanity and is the basis of animal behaviour, both individually and in population terms. It is, however, poorly understood despite centuries of philosophical debate.

Habit calls into question any philosophy fully dividing the automatic element of human life from the psychological and rational and lessens the divide between rational human and 'pre-rational' animal. Pascal's understanding of the importance of habit/custom might be seen as a synthesis that brings together influences and strands that will be amplified by Hume and later authors,[43] but Pascal's motivations were very different to these writers, however much he influenced them. If we are to understand his use of the terms we must comprehend his own influences, avoiding anachronism and the insidious influence of our modern ideas of habit. We must also examine the inter-related topics of the passions, the will, and the virtues.

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[42] Tom Sparrow and Adam Hutchinson, eds. *A History of Habit: From Aristotle to Bourdieu,* (Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2013).

[43] Terence Penelhum, 'Human Nature and Truth: Hume and Pascal', *Lumen*, 12 (1993), pp.45–64. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1012578ar> [accessed 20.2.2019].

As for much of Pascal's writings, the major influences that clearly must be investigated are St. Augustine and Jansenism (in the form promoted by the Port Royal community), Descartes and Montaigne. These are by no means clearly separable categories but rather interflowing streams. Pascal's deeply Augustinian understandings are brought into sharper relief by his commitment to the defence of Arnaud and Jansenism in general but his apparent resistance to Descartes' philosophy must be set against the background of Descartes' undoubted indebtedness to Augustine in his philosophical methods[44] as well as religious beliefs. Both Descartes and Pascal cannot help but to have been deeply influenced by the Suarezian scholasticism prevalent in France at the time of their education and upbringing and, despite the desire of both men to throw off the science and methodology of the 'ancients', their background religious understandings would have carried much Aristotelianism (for Pascal understandings from the *Ethics* on virtue as *habitus* would be a case in point as would *apatheia* in 'the good life').

Much has rightly been made by other writers about what writings by Augustine, Descartes, etc. were available to Pascal but it must be borne in mind that in Pascal's time extensive contacts, both socially and by written communication, were established between philosophers and scientists in this new age of scientific investigation. Pascal frequently met with like-minded individuals in groups to discuss scientific and philosophical interests and advances. By this route he is likely to have been aware of much that was unavailable to him in formally published sources. Word of mouth between educated amateurs was perhaps even a preferred method of achieving enlightenment. Arnauld was also in direct academic communication from Port Royal with Descartes regarding his scientific theories and their relevance for education. As Pascal was directly involved in education at Port Royal the existence of cross-fertilization of ideas between the three would seem unavoidable.

It is essential to understand that the underlying aims of Augustine, Descartes, Montaigne, and Pascal's writings on habit and the 'passions' are very different. Augustine's purpose throughout his writings is to bring people to God and to protect the orthodoxy of Church teaching against errors which will damage the seeker and the

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[44] Stephen Menn, *Descartes and Augustine*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

faithful. Descartes' interest in *The Passions of the Soul* is scientific and philosophical. He wishes to explore and elucidate the relationship between the rational mind and 'animal', sense-based passions. Montaigne's undertaking is aimed at exploring humanity's (particularly his own) place in the world, the fundamentals upon which his rational understandings rest. He wishes to investigate the 'human condition'. When we come to Pascal, we clearly move back to a position close to Augustine's. Pascal offers an apology for, and a methodology to place oneself in, a position to accept, faith. In Rhees's terms the 'grammar' of habit, custom, passion, etc. will then be expected to differ between the authors.

There has been a tendency in the literature on Pascal and Augustine to consider habit and custom as one process. This has been justified in Pascal's case by the understanding that custom and habit were both included at the time of Pascal by one word - *coutume*.[45,46] This cannot be taken, however, to indicate that at that time or previously no mental or linguistic distinction was made between custom and habit. Hamlin argues that in Montaigne's writings *coutume* was used to indicate three overlapping concepts: habituation, established social practice and individual habit.[47] By habituation here is meant socialisation, sustained familiarity, rather than specific individual or social manifestations or behaviour. Arguably some of Pascal's usage can be separated into these categories but the category separations are hardly clear cut, and it is debatable what interpretative utility these subdivisions have.

The role of habit cannot be taken in isolation in Pascal's apologetic, for example close association between imagination and habit in Pascal's writings has been previously alluded to by others with the two acting to strengthen each other, one operating in the sphere of action and the other in perception.[48] This will be dealt with later but the nature and role of the 'passions' and the influence of the will are the central to his argument and these, with habit/custom are the key areas to examine in terms of previous influences.

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[45] Davidson, pp.77-8.

[46] Frederick Rider, *The dialectic of selfhood in Montaigne* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1973), p.56.

[47] William M. Hamlin, *Montaigne's English Journey: Reading the Essays in Shakespeare's day* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p.70.

[48] Wood, p.63.

3.2 St Augustine

3.2.1 Introduction

Whilst the influence of Augustine on Pascal's religious beliefs, through his association with Port Royal and Jansenism, was clearly fundamental and far reaching, there are specific areas that directly relate to this thesis. These consist in the main of Augustine's views on habit itself, on the passions and the divided will, the effect of the Fall and the nature of true virtue. All of these are reflected in Pascal's apologetics and will be covered here. There are other important areas of direct similarity between Augustine and Pascal, for example their limitation of the role of reason and distrust of the senses, which will be commented on in passing in the later main chapter on Pascal's views. It should also be pointed out that there has been considerable recent interest on the influence of Augustine on Wittgenstein. This cannot be entered into here but has been well detailed elsewhere.[49]

3.2.2 Augustine on habit

In Augustine's writings there are two terms usually translated as habit, *habitus* and *consuetudo*. One must avoid accepting them as indicating one process. As Hume[50] comments:

> For Augustine, *consuetudo* was a negative form of habit associated with man's fall from grace. The Church Father uses this term to describe "excessive attention to the good things of creation," a process governed by repetition that cements an initial experience of pleasure into a fixed habit or character trait…..*Habitus*, in contrast, is not an essential aspect of man afflicted by original sin, but "that thing which is added to someone in such a way that he could just as well not have it." Such additions could be tangible, like clothing or ornamentation, or abstract, like wisdom or understanding…. Augustine conceives of *habitus* as positive potential for transformation and *consuetudo* as a negative propensity to perpetuate sin.

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[49] See for example: John Doody, Alexander R. Eodice and Kim Paffenroth, eds. *Augustine and Wittgenstein* (Washington: Lexington, 2018).

[50] Kathryn Elizabeth Hume, 'The Performance of Analysis: Habit and Conversion in Seventeenth-Century French Thought' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Stanford University, 2012), p.29. <https://searchworks.stanford.edu/view/9689413 >[accessed 14/3/2018].

When we discuss habit in Pascal's sense, we are dealing usually with what Augustine would call *consuetudo.* There is a general acceptance that Augustine's writings present habit (*consuetudo*) in a negative light. Habits are usually bad; indeed, habit is instrumental in preventing people from raising their minds to contemplate God. According to Fitzgerald[51]:

> Augustine explained the conflict [between good and evil] in terms of acquired habits. It was not an evil outside of the person that led to the tension between good and evil, but personal choices that became habitual, leading to a manifestation of the division between the spirit and the flesh... pleasure in the corporeal can become habitual, thus diminishing human freedom or obscuring one's knowledge of the truth...

Augustine seems to have held this view even from the time of his early writings. In *De Vera Religione* Augustine points to the success of Christianity in raising our minds to God. Its persuasive power is, however, needed because humanity has formed a habit against the spiritual and has fallen into loving things and people only on a temporal level[52]. Even when we attempt to turn to God, we are so caught in the corporeal world that our thought processes and mental imagery cannot escape it:

> ….the Truth himself calls us back to our original and perfect state, bids us resist carnal custom (habit)…[53]

> Every corporeal creature, when possessed by a soul that loves God, is a good thing of the lowest order...if it is loved by a soul that neglects God, not even so is it evil in itself. But the sin of so loving it brings a penalty to him who so loves it. It involves him in miseries, and feeds him with fallacious pleasures which neither abide nor satisfy, but beget torturing sorrows. ...It is very easy to execrate the flesh, but very difficult not to be carnally minded.[54]

The soul's habit of turning to the corporeal, of sinning, binds it and makes persistence in sin a compulsion and almost a necessity.[55] By the time of the *Confessions* sinful acts

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[51] Allan D. Fitzgerald, *Augustine through the Ages: An Encyclopaedia* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), pp.409-10.

[52] John G. Prendiville, 'The development of the idea of habit in the thought of St. Augustine' *Traditio,* 28, (1972), pp. 31-32.

[53] *Augustine. Earlier Writings, De Vera Religione*, ed. and tr. by J.H.S Burleigh (London: SCM Press, Library of Christian Classics, 1953), §88.

[54] Augustine, *De Vera,* §40.

[55] Carol Harrison, *Rethinking Augustine's Early Theology. An Argument for Continuity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p.189.

forge a 'chain of habit'[56] in the iron links of one's own will. Habit is a treadmill, which cripples the freedom of will to act well in future. It weighs down the spirit, maims the already divided will. Indwelling sin causes the self-conflict and God's grace is needed to resist. Augustine's 'besetting sins' are sins of habit. What is made by us, however, can with God's help be broken by us[57] but it is notable that for the Augustine of the 'Confessions' his achievement of the beginning of the enlightenment of faith does not remove the destructive effect of habit[58]:

> By servitude to passion, habit is formed, and habit to which there is no resistance becomes necessity…The new will, which was beginning to be within me a will to serve you freely and enjoy you, God, the only sure source of pleasure, was not yet strong enough to conquer my older will, which had the strength of old habit.[59]

> In vain I delighted in your law in respect of the inward man; but another law in my members fought against the law of my mind and led me captive in the law of sin which was in my members' (Rom. 7:22). The law of sin is the violence of habit by which even the unwilling mind is dragged down and held, as it deserves to be, since by its own choice it slipped into the habit.[60]

Original Sin has led to the soul being brought down by the resulting corruption of the body and habitual sin fatally weakens the capacity to know and do good. The Fall has led to even our greatest earthly possession, the body, being loved only by force of habit, a habit based in fear of pain and death.[61] Augustine presents the subordination to the passions as due to the will's damage in the Fall and sin and habit as secondary to uncontrolled passion. It is also the division in the will[62] that damages reason and decision making.

Consuetudo corporum is a habit of the soul which leads to the soul only orientating itself to the senses and worldly pleasures, which never satisfy and are

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[56] Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo. A Biography* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000), p.166.

[57] Augustine, *Confessions,* tr. by Henry Chadwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), §8.10, §8.18, §8.19, §8.21, §8.22, §8.25-29.

[58] Brown, p.167.

[59] Augustine, *Confessions*, §8.10.

[60] Ibid., §8.12.

[61] Donald A. Gallagher and Idella J. Gallagher, *The Catholic and Manichaean Ways of Life,* The Fathers of the Church, Volume 56, (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1966), §1.22.40. Accessed online 24.6.2018 <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt32b1g2>.

[62] Not the presence of two wills – see Prendiville, p.59.

fleeting. In binding the will habit itself builds our 'second nature'.[63] Augustine approaches faith first through acceptance of Church authority, then via reason,[64] but habit's chains persist through both. Original Sin lies at the root of the limitation of our will to do good, but habit fortifies its effect. Brown puts the pervasive effect of habit on the already fatally weakened will as follows:

> For Augustine regarded a man's past as very much alive in his present: men were different from each other precisely because their wills were made different by the sum total of unique, past experiences… When Augustine struggles with himself in the garden…it is a tension in the very memory itself, a battle with the precise quality of past experiences: 'Habit was only too strong for me when it asked "Do you think you can do without these things?"'
>
> Augustine emphasised this experience of the force of habit because he now thought that such an experience proved conclusively that change could only happen through processes entirely outside his control. [65]

There is a sense in which, even temporally, Original Sin and habit are closely associated. In the prelapsarian state Adam rules over the animals by reason but this is interpreted 'spiritually' by Augustine as our ruling the affections and emotions of our souls, which are like those of animals, lest they turn into the 'foulest habits', carrying us off with all sorts of destructive pleasures and 'making us like every kind of beast'.[66] When reason controls the emotions, affections and passions man is at peace. It is clear though that we ourselves are the cause of habit's power,[67] we fall into it. Reason, through the control of the passions, is the mode of control of habit but for fallen humankind its control is incomplete and tenuous at best.

For Augustine a habit 'disposes our intention' towards a deed. To alter a bad habit to a good causes the soul pain but such pain, when it leads to a good habit, then disposes the soul to obey reason in the future:

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[63] Prendiville, importantly, points to the commonplace understanding of habit as second nature, created through our own activities, in rhetorical instruction in Augustine's time. See Prendiville, p.29.

[64] See, for example, Augustine, *De Vera*, §45.

[65] Brown, pp.167-8.

[66] Roland J. Teske, *On Genesis: Two Books on Genesis against the Manichees and On the Literal Interpretation of Genesis: An Unfinished Book,* Fathers of the Church, vol. 84 (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1991), §1.20.31. Accessed 24.7.18 <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt32b1d3>.

[67] Augustine, *Confessions,* §8.12.

> …. there is no restraint from carnal desire which does not have pain in the beginning, until habit has been bent toward the better part. When this has come about…the good habit disposes our intentions toward the good deed…And, taught by its pains, it (the soul) turns to reason and willingly obeys its commands lest it again decline to some harmful habit….[68]

Thus, an interplay between will, passion, reason, and habit is emphasized and it is made clear that in successfully overcoming habitual sin one also achieves a settled reason, an undivided will. Nonetheless habit has been converted into a constituent of our nature by the Fall and resisting habits is painful and extremely difficult. For Augustine habit has also altered our viewpoint, our disposition. Even when we think we are acting well we are likely to be mistaken. Repeated sin has distorted our moral vision.

3.2.3 Free will, grace and habit

The question of the relationship between free will and habit is a complex one but, as indicated above, there is no doubt that Augustine believes that the attachment and impetus to repeated sin, by repetition ('long habit'), removes the soul's ability to resist sin in the future[69]. Our free will is undermined and after the Fall we cannot unaided break free from the 'necessity' of the habit of sin:

> I say that there was free exercise of will in that man who was first formed. He was so made that absolutely nothing could resist his will…But after he voluntarily sinned, we who have descended from his stock were plunged into necessity.… For today in our actions before we are implicated by any habit, we have free choice of doing anything or not doing it. But when by that liberty we have done something and the pernicious sweetness and pleasure of that deed has taken hold upon the mind, by its own habit the mind is so implicated that afterwards it cannot conquer what by sinning it has fashioned for itself…. but habit formed with the flesh…when God has subjected for Himself the whole man to the choice of the divine law, instead of the evil habit of the soul, makes a good habit….Let us take two men, a good and a bad. As long as he is good he cannot yield evil fruit; as long as he is bad he cannot yield good fruit. But that you may know that those two trees are so placed by the Lord, that free choice may be there signified, that these two trees are not natures but our wills…Who is it that can make nature? If therefore we are commanded to make a tree either good or evil, it is ours to choose what we will...[70]

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[68] Teske, §2.19.29

[69] Harrison, pp.191-2.

[70] Augustine, *Acts or Disputation against Fortunatus*. Accessed 22/7/18. <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/1404.htm_22.25>.

The persistence of sinning in our fallen state constitutes 'involuntary sin'. We are now caste into a state where habit has become the cause of the failure of the will to obey reason. Only grace can break habit's hold and allow our free will to act in accordance with God's plan. Custom and habit become natural to us. As Augustine puts it:

> For a certain part thereof resists the Spirit, not in virtue of nature, but in virtue of the custom of sins; whence it is said, "With the mind I serve the law of *God, but with the flesh the law of sin."* And this custom has been turned into a nature, according to mortal generation, by the sin of the first man.[71]

Throughout Augustine's writings on the will there is the theme of two wills or a divided will at war with itself.

Augustine does not make clear his understanding of the mechanism by which habit affects will, but he clearly sees memory as important in the process of habit formation. It is the enjoyment of concupiscence that fixes habit in the memory and the memory brings forth the remembrance of the enjoyment in future instances of temptation. This further weakens resolve and leads to amplification of the habit of concupiscence,[72] a habit of concentrating on the senses not on God.[73]

It would be wrong to suggest that Augustine has a fixed opinion of the role of habit throughout his writings; development is clear. Augustine's early argument (at the time of *De Vera Religione)* is that authority, understood as the revelation of the incarnation, God's direct communication with us, antecedes reason. Reason is preceded by true wisdom.[74] Augustine's argument is therefore very different at this stage from Pascal's where, concentrating on the contemporary seeker, he puts reason as the limited, but necessary, first port of call. For Augustine belief passes to reasoning and sinful habit is what is to be given up on the journey to a new life of faith, re-orientated to God. Prendiville points out that at this time Augustine concentrates on habit not as productive of sin but as hindrance to the vision of God and 'an absorption into the neutral things of

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[71] Augustine, *Of Faith and the Creed,* §10.23. Accessed 24/7/18. <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/1304.htm>

[72] Prendiville, p.35.

[73] Martin Jacobsson and Lukas J Dorfbauer, *Augustinus – De Musica*, Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum (CSEL), Band 102 (Salzburg: University of Salzburg Press, 2017), 6.11.33.

[74] Prendiville, p.35.

life…as well as a habit of sin'.[75] Habit binds us to the senses. The will is not here to the fore. Sin is a weakness and true wisdom, found in the authority of the scriptures and Church teaching, its opposing strength.

In *De Duabus Animabus* Augustine's argument centres on the Manichean understanding of two souls, for Augustine flesh and spirit are united in one person[76] but affect the 'lower and upper soul':

> …we are now so constituted that through the flesh we can be affected by sensual pleasure, and through the spirit by honourable considerations. Am I not therefore compelled to acknowledge two souls? Nay, we can better and with far less difficulty recognize two classes of good things, of which neither is alien from God as its author, one soul acted upon from diverse directions, the lower and the higher… carnal and spiritual. But it has been made difficult for us to abstain from carnal things, …For neither without punishment for the sin of transgression have we been changed from immortal into mortal. So it happens, that when we strive after better things, habit formed by connection with the flesh and our sins in some way begin to militate against us and to put obstacles in our way, …[77]

The divided self is at odds with itself and habit is the cause of the conflict, not an intrinsic or extrinsic evil substance. It is from this position that Augustine moves within months to that of *Contra Fortunatus*.[78] We are plunged into the 'necessity' of sin by the Fall but prior to giving into sin we have free will to refuse. After sinning the pleasure of the action is so great that the mind cannot overcome the state it has put itself in.[79] When the senses are seen to be in rebellion against the 'higher soul' it is habit which has come to exist in the senses which is the cause of the conflict but, whilst habit may be seated in the senses, it is not entirely hidden from the sinner, it appears in consciousness.[80] Carnal, senses, passions, flesh, and habits - all are discussed in association with each other and the sense that habit arises out of senses/passions persists throughout. The

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[75] Prendiville, p.55.

[76] Ibid., p.66.

[77] Augustine, *De Duabus Animabus,* §13.19. Accessed 24/7/18, <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/1403.htm>

[78] Augustine, *Acts*, §22.

[79] Prendiville, p.69.

[80] Ibid., p.71.

inclination to sin precedes the habit but the tendency to habitual sin persists until death even when man is strengthened by God's grace.[81]

Augustine's understanding of the nature and role of the will in faith has been exhaustively discussed by many authors and cannot be fully covered here.[82] The central problem, however, of how we can have free will if God's grace is necessary to faith, must have been at the forefront of Pascal's mind when writing apologetically. If God's will causes the grace of conversion how can reward and punishment be understood as fair? Augustine never comes to a satisfactory conclusion:

> "But if," it is said, "it was necessary that, although all were not condemned, He should still show what was due to all, and so He should commend His grace more freely to the vessels of mercy; why in the same case will He punish me more than another, or deliver him more than me?" I say not this. If you ask wherefore; because I confess that I can find no answer to make. And if you further ask why is this, it is because in this matter, even as His anger is righteous and as His mercy is great, so His judgments are unsearchable.[83]

He does, nonetheless, remain fully committed throughout his later writings to the necessity and undeservedness of grace.

3.2.4 Augustine on the passions

Augustine essentially seems to accept a state of tranquillity of the soul where passions, although not excluded from entry into the intellect, do not overcome its power to resist:

> …wise men, who with undisturbed mind resist these perturbations to which they are exposed in this life, and from which human infirmity is never exempt, and who do not yield themselves to approve of or perpetrate anything which might deflect them from the path of wisdom and law of rectitude.[84]

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[81] M. Inez Bogan, *Retractationes,* Fathers of the Church 1999, vol. 60 (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1999), §1.23.2.

[82] For an excellent overview see: Eleonore Stump, 'Augustine on Free Will'*, in Cambridge Companion to Augustine,* 2nd edn., ed. by David Vincent Meconi and Eleonore Stump (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp.166-186.

[83] Philip Schaff, *A Treatise on the Gift of Perseverance,* §VIII,18. Accessed on 14/4/18: <http://www.documentacatholicaomnia.eu/03d/0354-0430,_Augustinus,_De_Dono_Perseverantiae_[Schaff],_EN.pdf>

[84] Augustine, *City of God,* tr. by Henry Bettenson (London: Penguin, 2003), §9.3.

He considers the soul capable of positive 'movement' in this tranquil state. Augustine does not accept, however, that *apatheia* is possible in this life.[85] It was lost when Adam and Eve sinned:

> At this point we may examine the condition which in Greek is called apatheia… if we are to understand it as meaning a life without the emotions which occur in defiance of reason and which disturb the thoughts, it is clearly a good and desirable state; but it does not belong to this present life.[86]

> How fortunate then, were the first human beings! They were not distressed by any agitations of the mind, nor pained by any disorders of the body. And equally fortunate would be the whole united fellowship of mankind if our first parents had not committed an evil deed whose effect was passed on to their posterity...[87]

Complete happiness then depends on living as God lives,[88] an embodied heavenly state and a gift of God to the righteous. The happiness we can achieve in this life lies in the hope for an afterlife:

> We see, then, that the Supreme Good of the City of God is everlasting and perfect peace, which is not the peace through which men pass in their mortality…but that peace in which they remain in their immortal state, experiencing no adversity at all…For all that, if anyone accepts the present life in such a spirit that he uses it with the end in view of that other life on which he has set his heart…such a man may be without absurdity be called happy even now, though rather by future hope than in present reality.[89]

Augustine considers the passions to be natural states, necessary and sometimes valuable, some, such as compassion, are virtuous. Essentially it is the direction or disposition of the will in relation to the passion, towards good or evil, that determines whether the passion is in those circumstances good or evil. Nonetheless Augustine stresses the passions in terms of punishment for Original Sin. Passions are not in themselves sinful but reason's acquiescing in them is. The wise person cannot prevent passions affecting them, but they can grant or deny consent by reason. Without such

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[86] Augustine, *City*, §14, 9.

[87] Ibid., §14.10.

[88] Bonnie Kent, 'Augustine's Ethics', in *Cambridge Companion to Augustine,* 1st edn., ed. by Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp.205-233 (p.209).

[89] Augustine, *City,* §19.20.

consent, which allows the soul to be misguided and led into sin, they would not be culpable.

3.2.5 Augustine on habit and virtue

For Augustine true virtue is in God's gift and is not a consequence of our actions; it has its foundation in love and not in wisdom. For Aristotle, Plato and other ancient philosophers moral virtue has intrinsic value and essential to *eudaemonia* but, for Augustine, the question must arise that, if our happiness lies in God and afterlife, what intrinsic value do the virtues have? He argues that we subjugate reason to our own cravings and desires, to worldly 'goods' as means to our own selfish ends. True virtue requires us to value goods and persons for their intrinsic worth,[90] their worth in the eyes of God.[91]

Our intrinsic value and that of others is due to humanity's relationship to God, the relationship of creature to creator. Any value we accrue through virtue is owed entirely to God for He gifts the virtue to us. Virtue is defined by Augustine as 'rightly ordered love'[92] and all true virtues are forms of love based in the love of God, true charity.[93] Such a unity of understanding of virtue does not agree entirely with the understandings of ancient philosophy. Many ancients agreed that true prudence, temperance, justice, etc. were interdependent, though whether by identity or end is debated but for Augustine that view implied one could be entirely free from sin, a position he could not accept.[94]

No human being is perfectly virtuous, and virtues are not wisdom-based or united by wisdom or knowledge.[95] They are united in their basis in charity. The more charitable, the more virtuous. We hope to move through life improving in virtue by

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[90] Kent, p.214.

[91] Augustine, *De Vera,* §86-88

[92] Augustine, *City*, §15.22.

[93] Kent, p.215.

[94] Augustine, *Letter 167,* §3.10. Accessed 30/8/18: <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/1102167.htm>

[95] Kent, p.228.

fighting against vice but cannot achieve victory in this life.[96] Pagan (false) virtue aims for excellence and perfection, true Christian virtue aims for goodness. We can be virtuously trying to achieve a true Christian life and thus be virtuous[97] and in that case all our virtues will be orientated to charity. Such charity is seated in the heart, not the intellect.

Augustine's reaction against the accepted understanding of habit as the route to virtue lies in the association of habit with upbringing, training, advantageous custom, etc. Virtuous character depends on the will and habit is the usual cause of a turning to worldly things.

3.3 Descartes

3.3.1 Introduction

As Henry Phillips points out 'Descartes is inevitably present in Pascal's works by virtue of his status as an important reference point in the elaboration of the 'new science' in seventeenth-century Europe'.[98] This statement should not be taken to indicate a shared view of science; Pascal was a truly experimental scientist, but it is important to understanding how Pascal might interpret habit, the 'automaton' and the inter-relationship of passion, habit and will in the *Pensées*.

The question of how far Descartes influenced Pascal's thinking specifically on habit and custom must be investigated predominantly through Descartes last treatise, *On the Passions of the Soul,* where he directly refers to the role of habituation in modifying the passions.[99] *On the Passions of the Soul* follows on from attempts by Descartes to explain to Elizabeth of Bohemia how the disparate body and soul interact together and whether the mind can control the passions of the body.[100] This treatise also presents

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[96] Augustine, *City*, §19.4.

[97] Kent, p.229.

[98] Henry Phillips, 'Pascal's Reading and the Inheritance of Montaigne and Descartes', in *Cambridge Companion to Pascal*, ed. by Nicholas Hammond (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p.32.

[99] René Descartes, *The Passions of the Soul and Other Late Philosophical Writings,* tr. by Michael Moriarty (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

[100] For example, letter from Elizabeth to Descartes of 6th May 1643 and 24th May 1645 AT 3: 208 Descartes to Elisabeth 1st Sept 1645 AT 4 :281-2. Lisa Shapiro, *The Correspondence*

Descartes speculative, 'physiological' presentation on the mechanism of interaction of soul (mind) and body and the nature of the passions. This will later be seen to have significance in understanding the concept of 'automaton'.

3.3.2 The passions, virtue, and habit

Descartes gives the passions a very prominent part in his understanding of the mind for '…it is the passions alone that make all that is good or bad in this life … they dispose the soul to will those things that nature determines are useful to us'.[101] Taken overall the passions are for Descartes not evil or destructive but by nature good:

> And now we are familiar with all the passions, we have much less reason to fear them than we had before. For we see that they are all good of their nature, and that we are to avoid only their misuse or their excess, for which the remedies I have explained above would be sufficient if everyone took the trouble to apply them.[102]

Passions are not considered just as emotions, but something 'passively' received and undergone, an act and an emotional response. They are frequently actions in the bodily sense and received by the mind as passions:

> I note further that we can observe no subject that acts more immediately on our soul than the body to which it is joined; and that therefore what is a passion in the soul is commonly an action on the part of the body.[103]

In essence anything that occurs, any event or happening, is a passion on the part of the one to whom it happens. Each passion is simultaneously perception, sensation, and emotion.[104] Descartes considers passions to be 'sensations' but he also uses the word 'sentiments' which can equally be translated as 'feelings'.

Descartes sees the passions as inciting the mind to will things (i.e., they direct the intellect) and as usually caused by changes in the senses and body which influence the mind. They represent things as good or evil, beneficial, or harmful, in

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between Princess Elizabeth of Bohemia and René Descartes (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007). Accessed online November 14th 2018. <https://www.academia.edu/34836908/_Princess_Elisabeth_of_Bohemia_Rene_Descartes_The_Correspondence_Lisa_Shapiro_>

[101] Descartes, *Passions,* Art 212, Art 52.

[102] Ibid., Art 211.

[103] Ibid., Art 4.

[104] Ibid., Art 27.

the present or future. They have important and irreplaceable utility but are fallible as they are generated by purely mechanical laws and the machine may malfunction. They have an ontological status which is unclear, lying neither fully in mind nor body. Descartes accepts that general usage applies the term passion only to those arising in the mind but for him these are not the predominant type (see below).

He considers the passions to be caused by 'movements of the spirits' and seems to differentiate them from *voluntary* imagination, daydreams, fantasies, etc. under control directly of the will, [105] which 'drive' the movement of the spirits themselves. He regards the 'passive' imaginations and dreams (involuntary ones, e.g., those arising in sleep) as also passions arising on the basis of 'random flow of the spirits[106]'.

It is important to understand that by 'spirits' Descartes means the 'animal spirits', a component part of the blood (influenced by Galenic understandings), which, when separated from the other blood components, flow through the nerve pathways (the tubes of the nerves) and brain cavities (presumably both the ventricles, cerebrospinal space and the 'pores' in the brain).[107] This fluid also causes the response of the body to the cause of the passion. The animal spirits act to produce a motion of the pineal gland both in reaction to the original stimulus of the passion and to the brain's response; a highly mechanistic understanding of body-brain interaction.

> *The ultimate causes of the passions.* …the immediate cause of the passions of the soul is nothing other than the vibration imparted by the animal spirits to the little gland in the middle of the brain. But that is not sufficient to enable us to distinguish the different passions from one another: we need to investigate their sources, and examine their ultimate causes. Now, although they can sometimes be aroused by the action of the soul, when it decides to think about this or that object, and also purely by bodily temperament or random impressions in the brain, as occurs when we feel sad or joyful for no apparent reason, it appears, nonetheless…that all the passions can also be aroused by objects moving the senses, and that such objects are their most common and important cause…[108]

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[105] Ibid., Art 20, Art 43.

[106] Ibid., Art 26, Art 21.

[107] Gary Hatfield, 'Did Descartes have a Jamesian Theory of the Emotions', *Philosophical Psychology*, 20 (2007), pp.413-440 (p.423).

[108] Descartes, *Passions,* Art 51.

So, all the passions can be aroused by objects moving the senses and there is a close connection between the passions and the will; the will is the only 'mental' route by which the passions can affect the wellbeing of the individual. The essential mode of action or role of the passions is to induce or move the will to the usefulness of the whole person:

> ...the function of all the passions consists in this alone: that they dispose the soul to will those things that nature determines are useful to us, and to persist in so willing; just as the same excitation of the spirits that is their usual cause disposes the body to the movements that enable us to act accordingly.[109]

They induce a particular state of mind, a particular 'disposition' or inclination to will. Descartes, however, does recognize, separate to the passions above discussed, a form of 'purer' emotion, mentally based with a genesis entirely in the mind. Where the passion seems to arise from a mental belief or attitude then the mental attitude itself is considered in Descartes scheme to be the cause of the 'flow of spirits' and thus an associated passion.[110] 'Intellectual' and 'internal' emotions originating in the soul, e.g., sadness, joy, and pious attitudes, influence the passions therefore though they are truly volitions, in view of their site of origin, but share in the nature of passions as they are affective states and may influence bodily originating passions.

Our fulfilment and happiness depend on these 'passion-emotions' in that they can guide us to a virtuous life devoid of the negative influence of misguided or excessive passions:

> Joy is an agreeable emotion of the soul: it is the soul's enjoyment of a good represented to it as its own by the impressions of the brain. I say that the enjoyment of the good consists in this emotion, because in fact the soul receives no other benefit from whatever goods it possesses; and as long as it feels no joy, one could say that it has no more benefit from its goods than if it did not possess them at all. Furthermore, when I spoke of 'a good represented to it as its own by the impressions of the brain', this was to distinguish this kind of joy, which is a passion, from the purely intellectual joy brought about in the soul by its own action, and which can be defined as an agreeable emotion aroused in itself by itself, which is the form taken by its enjoyment of a good represented to it as its own by the understanding....[111]

> …provided our soul has the wherewithal to be contented in itself, all the troubles that come from elsewhere have no power to harm it, but rather serve to

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[109] Ibid., Art 52.

[110] Hatfield, *Did Descartes,* p.427.

[111] Descartes, *Passions,* Art 91.

increase its joy, inasmuch as, becoming aware that it cannot be hurt by them, it becomes aware of its own perfection. And in order to have this wherewithal to be content, our soul needs only to pursue virtue wholeheartedly.[112]

Descartes sees the human will as capable of achieving true happiness, and reason as revealing the way:

…when I spoke of a happiness that depends entirely on our free will, and that all human beings can acquire without any external aid, you rightly observed that there are diseases that deprive us of the power to reason, and likewise of the power to enjoy a rational satisfaction of mind; and this teaches me that what I had said of all human beings in general applies only to those who have the free use of their reason, and who also know the path we need to follow to attain this happiness.… Finally, we may say in general that there is nothing that can entirely deprive us of the means to gain happiness, as long as it does not affect our reason…[113]

Moriarty summaries Descartes' position elegantly:

But we are capable, with the help of the pure intellect or understanding, of conceiving higher goods and evils, and of making judgements accordingly. And these perceptions and judgements give rise to emotions that are not strictly passions, since they do not result from movements of the animal spirits: there is an intellectual as well as a passional form of love, and the same holds for joy…Our good and evil (subjectively speaking, our happiness and unhappiness), Descartes says, depend more on these intellectual emotions than on the passions: this must be because…the intellectual judgements determine how we think about the passions we experience, and in that sense transcend them. …inasmuch as the intellectual emotions are generated by our souls, our inner selves rather than our embodied selves, they are potentially more powerful than the passions: so much so that if we have the makings of self-contentment inside ourselves, no disturbance from outside can affect us. This self-contentment is to be achieved by virtue, and Descartes defines this in a strikingly original way. To live virtuously is to do everything one has judged to be best; and this is a source of satisfaction and tranquillity that no passion can disturb (art148). This conception is developed in connection with the passion Descartes calls générosité. What the term refers to is legitimate self-esteem; but it is difficult to find an English equivalent for it.[114]

Générosité incorporates nobility of mind and Descartes sees it based on our recognizing that nothing really belongs to us other than the free disposition of our will.[115] This passion 'acts as a remedy for all the disorders of the passions'.[116] It is an essential

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[112] Ibid., Art 148.

[113] Ibid., Descartes to Elisabeth 1st Sept 1645 AT IV.

[114] Ibid., pp. 47-48

[115] Ibid., Art 153

[116] Ibid., Art 156.

component in the pursuit of virtue. Descartes seems also to believe that the influence of the passion, arising from a mental act, may influence the will in such a way that a habit ensues:

> *Esteem and contempt, nobility of soul or pride, and humility or baseness of spirit.* Esteem or contempt are connected with wonderment, depending on whether it is the greatness or the littleness of the object that we marvel at. And in the same way we can esteem or despise ourselves; which is the origin of the passions, and in consequence the habits, of magnanimity or pride, on the one hand, and humility or baseness of spirit.[117]

Générosité is central to understanding Descartes view on control of the passions by virtue. We see here that the passion produces the habit. It produces a disposition of mind which directs the will to act, and action repeated produces habit. A thought triggering a passion must, however, be acting via the body in the sense that the mental 'action' acts via the pineal gland through the animal spirits.

Rorty points to the particular character of *generosité* in that it encompasses passion because it involves movement of the spirits and physical alteration, it is a habit because it includes a change of disposition about those around us and ourselves and it is a virtue as a generator of further well-founded ideas and requires the correct and repeated disposition of a well-directed will.[118] People with *générosité* control their passions and as a virtue *générosité* is the key to achieving a virtuous life.

The centrality of habituation in emotions/passions has been stressed by several recent authors (Voss[119] and Shapiro[120] being examples). Voss puts the case very well:

> …in the realm of the emotions reason by itself can do very little. If any principle is axiomatic in this treatise (The Passions of the Soul), it is the Principle of Habituation …and yet this Principle is defended …by experience and not by reason.

As Descartes indicates habit can connect reason and action:

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[117] Ibid., Art 54.

[118] Amélie Oksenberg Rorty, 'Descartes on Thinking with the Body' in *Cambridge Companion to Descartes*, ed. by John Cottingham (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp.371-392 (p.387).

[119] Stephen Voss, *Descartes - the passions of the soul,* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1989), p.viii.

[120] Lisa Shapiro, 'Descartes' *Passions of the Soul* and the Union of Mind and Body' *Archiv f. Gesch. d. Philosophie,* 85 (2003), pp.211-248 (pp. 226, 227, 229). Accessed online 12/10/2019, <https://lisacshapiro.files.wordpress.com/2012/04/shapiro-passionsandunionmindbody.pdf>

> *That each volition is naturally joined to some particular movement of the gland; but that by contrivance or habit one can attach it to others.* Yet when we produce some movement or other effect in ourselves, it is not always through an act of the will. It depends on the various links established by nature or habit between the gland and particular thoughts…And when in speaking we think only of the meaning we want to convey, that enables us to move the tongue and the lips far more swiftly and effectively than would the mental effort to move them in all the ways necessary to utter the same words. This is because the habit we have acquired in learning to speak has established a link between the action of the soul, which, through the agency of the gland, can move the tongue and the lips, and the meaning of the words that result from these movements, rather than between the soul and the movements themselves. [121]

It can also be used by reason to alter the passion experienced:

> *What power the soul has over its passions.* Again, our passions cannot be directly aroused or banished by the action of our will; but they can be indirectly, by the representation of things that are habitually associated with the passions we want to have, and that are contrary to those we wish to reject.[122]

Habits may lie within the 'machine' element of humans (the automaton) but they are key to mind-body interaction. Descartes also considers habit to be essential to the stability of our reasoning:

> …besides the knowledge of the truth, habit is also essential if we are to be always disposed to judge correctly. For, given that we cannot be continually attentive to the same thing, then, however clear and evident the reasons that have previously convinced us of some truth, our belief in it may be subsequently dislodged by false appearances, unless, by long and frequent meditation, we have so imprinted it in our minds that it has been transformed into a habit. And in this sense the schoolmen are right to say that the virtues are habits; for, indeed, when we go wrong it is seldom because we lack the theoretical knowledge of what we ought to do, but only because we lack the practical knowledge, that is, the firm habit of belief as to what we ought to do.[123]

For Descartes reason must be fixed by a habit of belief, practical knowledge, knowledge re-enforced through repetition.

Whilst Descartes regards the passions as essentially good in nature, God created and valuable, he clearly still retains a belief that they require control or direction. As we have seen the underlying reasons relate to the control of the passions and virtue/happiness. It is the soul's understanding of good and evil which is at the root of

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[121] Descartes, *Passions*, Art 44.

[122] Ibid., Art 46.

[123] Ibid., Letter from Descartes to Elisabeth 15th September 1645 AT4.

things here.[124] Conduct must be modified to fit with Christian understanding of moral behaviour, and we must be able to modify our internal reaction or disposition so that we can train ourselves to respond appropriately, and this appears to be a method of habit formation.[125]

3.3.3 Descartes' automaton, habit, and the freedom of the will

Passions other than the emotion-passions are physiologically generated and this physiological response drives both bodily behaviour or response as well as underlying the passion which affects the will. The purely mechanical underpins the mentally based passion. The corporeal,[126] the animal, the automaton here directly affects mind but the 'feeling in the mind', the sensory consciousness, is not derived from this mechanistic process despite its mind-body interactive basis.

It is generally accepted that Descartes applies his understanding of animal behaviour as entirely automatic, machine-like, to human behaviour beneath that of the human eternal soul. The level of 'psychological' sophistication he attributes to the machine is, however, striking. Even a 'corporeal memory' of events lies in the body's complex machinery[127] based upon anatomical changes in the brain's substance ('folds'). Accessing this memory and employing it does not require the soul (mind) to intervene, but allows repeated actions to similar stimuli which do, however, produce emotional responses.[128] Descartes posits a reflective intellectual memory also but essentially seems to eventually come to accept that reflection must be present for all true memory. The importance of this is that Descartes places habitual memories, including those implanted by repetitive learning, within the unreflective corporeal memory.[129] Habit for Descartes is also associated with the accepted, unchallenged foundations of knowledge, which are held within this corporeal memory. Of particular interest is that Arnauld and Descartes

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[124] Ibid., Art 48

[125] Ibid., Art 50.

[126] There is an intriguing association here with Descartes comparison of the body with an automaton – see *Ibid.,* Art 6, Art 37.

[127] Gary Hatfield, 'The *Passions of the Soul* and Descartes's Machine Psychology, *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science*, 38 (2007), 1-35 (p.14).

[128] Lior Levy, 'Memory and the Passions in Descartes' Philosophy', *History of Philosophy Quarterly,* 28 (2011), 339-354 (p.343).

[129] See Foti for a full discussion of this complex topic: Véronique M. Foti, 'Descartes Intellectual and Corporeal memories', in *Descartes' Natural Philosophy,* ed. by Stephen Gaukrodger, John Schuster, and John Sutton (London: Routledge, 2000) pp.591-604.

carried on correspondence on the nature of memory in learning while Arnauld was at Port Royal (1648)[130] and Pascal was, of course, well known to also be involved in developing educational aids there.

From the above account we see that Descartes regards the great majority of human thought as having some dependence on the body, beyond any understanding of the body keeping the organic brain alive (the mind for him is unequivocally eternal). All our imagination, memory, feelings, passions, sensations have a bodily, mechanical connection physiologically similar to that of animals and many forms of human behaviour, as well as all animal behaviour, comes about through corporeal capacities with no involvement of the mind.

Hatfield[131] argues that Descartes essentially develops a 'psychology' of the mindless machine to provide an explanation for the complex behavioural responses of animals and humans (at a pre-mental level). He accepts that in humans body and mind constantly interact until bodily death, but bodily processes and reflexes produce behaviours independent of mind. For Descartes psychological and mental do not have common boundaries.[132]

The passions act on the soul on the 'input' side and influence the will indirectly in this way. We cannot simply will them away but we can through imagination, firm thoughts, or beliefs, nullify their effects by our own effect on the animal spirits i.e., override the less powerful movement of spirits produced by the passion. Passions may produce a reason or rationale for a judgement and previous passions may lead to mistaken opinions and bad, as well as good, habits. Passions are 'obscure ideas' however and therefore action can be resisted/judgement withheld. Such acts of will may produce motivations and understandings which pass well beyond simple regulation of the body, beyond any homeostatic mechanism and thus the will by generating new ideas may generate altered 'bodily' responses and thereby altered passions. The will cannot simply produce a passion, but it can act by 'artifice' and redirection of the mind to other things and thus bring about change indirectly. The will itself is, for Descartes, still, in essence undetermined by either nature or the passions.

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[130] Ibid., p.599.

[131] Hatfield, *Passions,* p.5.

[132] Ibid*.,* p.6.

We can in some passages of 'On the Passions of the Soul' see Descartes taking up a position close to Pascal on our indeterminacy and weakness in the face of the passions:

> ...the weakest souls of all are those whose will does not thus determine itself to follow certain judgements, but allows itself to be continually swept away by the passions of the moment, which, being often mutually contrary, enlist it by turns on their own side, and, setting it to fight against itself, reduce the soul to the most deplorable possible state...[133]

Nevertheless, Descartes main argument is that our mental techniques etc. can overcome passions and the will is free. He stresses the value of habit, of training, in supporting the will, in altering our will's disposition:

> *That there is no soul so weak that it cannot, being properly guided, acquire absolute power over its passions.* And it is useful here to realize that, although, as has already been pointed out above [Art 44], every movement of the gland seems to have been attached by nature at birth to a particular thought, it can still be attached to other thoughts by force of habit. …It is also useful to realize that, although the movements in the gland, and also in the spirits and the brain, that represent certain objects to the soul are naturally attached to those that arouse certain passions within it, they can nonetheless, by force of habit, be detached from these and attached to other quite different ones; and, indeed, that this habit can be acquired by a single action and does not require a long apprenticeship…[134]

Habit, therefore, for Descartes, is a fundamental element in the control and alteration of the passions and also, importantly, in our actual process of thought. We can essentially will to use habit to reinforce and improve our reasoning and learning, even use habit to intuit the truth.[135] True freedom of the will, the ability to control the passions, the dominance of reason and man's ability to achieve virtue and evidential knowledge of the existence of God, all are clearly present in Descartes' philosophy alongside a clear division of body and soul. Despite these themes he does offer a prominent place to habit in directing the passions, training the memory, and imbibing the unreflective, passively absorbed certainties underpinning reasoning.

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[133] Descartes, *Passions*, Art 48.

[134] Ibid., Art 50

[135] Rule 9 of Descartes' 'Rules for the Direction of the Mind' shows striking parallels with Pascal's discussions of intuitive and geometric minds (see section 4.8): John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff and Dugald Murdoch, *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, vol.1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp.33-34.

3.4 Montaigne

3.4.1 Introduction

In the previous sections on Descartes and Augustine their views have been presented without direct comparison with Pascal's. Comparison will be offered in the later chapter on Pascal's apology. It is not possible to follow this pattern with a discussion of Montaigne's influence as it is so wide ranging but also it has been covered extensively in the existing literature and further comment would be repetitive. Only a brief overview will be provided here.

3.4.2 Pascal's Montaigne

It is generally accepted that there are striking similarities and 'borrowings' in multiple fragments of the *Pensées* to sections of Montaigne's *Essais* and *Apologie de Raymond Sebond*. Even the process of thought of the two authors on some topics seems to be similar due to the common word usage, similarities of some ideas (habit/custom being a particularly shining case), attitude to philosophy and its value, similarities in reading and sources etc.[136] There have been said to be more than 200 direct or indirect references to Montaigne in Pascal's writings[137] but despite this clear influence, even direct dependence on some topics, Pascal's attitude to Montaigne is conflicted and appears to change over time, for example the *Entretien[138]* appears far more favourable to Montaigne than the *Pensées.* Much of the difference in these two writings may relate simply to Pascal's intent; in the *Entretien* Pascal deals particularly with Montaigne's pyrrhonism as a corrective to the dangers of stoicism whereas the Pensées have an overriding apologetic intent. Be that as it may, within the *Pensées* Pascal's direct comments regarding Montaigne's views are certainly often disapproving.

Pascal takes up many of Montaigne's comments on the human condition - inconstancy, changeability, philosophical incoherence, moral weakness. He also reflects

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[136] Raymond C. La Charité, 'Pascal's Ambivalence Toward Montaigne', *Studies in Philology,* 70 (1973), 187-198 (p.187).

[137] Frank M. Chambers, 'Pascal's Montaigne', *PMLA*, 65 (1950), 790-804 (p.796).

[138] *Entretien avec M.de Saci sur Epictete et Montaigne*, personal translation kindly made by Dr. J McDade SJ Also available in: Fontaine, Nicholas, *Entretien avec M.de Saci sur Epictete et Montaigne* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

Montaigne's comments on justice, diverting activities and the limits of reason.[139] Montaigne's concentration in many sections on anthropology, particularly its more colourful and speculative aspects, and his attitude to imagination are utilized by Pascal as one side of his apologetic argument on the nature of humanity. In a sense Montaigne provides the wretchedness that Pascal needs to contrast with our potential greatness.[140] On the present state of humanity Montaigne's position is that 'the responsibility lies within ourselves…'.[141] Humanity in its present state is all that needs consideration in judging it. In the *Entretien* Pascal makes clear that Montaigne sees people now as wretched but does not see that their present state differs from their created state, their dignity prior to the Fall. He sees human nature as irrecoverably weak which leads to apathy in the face of this fact rather than realizing that this weakness can be reversed by God's grace and human faith. Montaigne wants to show his readers humanity's natural form and state, but this is one of simple ignorance not of paradise before the Fall.[142] In the end habit, that second nature[143] simply becomes our natural condition.[144]

Pascal's comment on Montaigne's error in presenting a self-portrait[145] gets to the heart of Montaigne's enterprise but self-deprecation and self-analysis are a key structural element fully recognized by Montaigne. It is, in the final analysis, Montaigne's resignation to his condition, both in life and death which is the major point of real contention with Pascal. Only fools do not struggle for an active belief and pious life which may then lead to God's reward.[146]

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[139] Henry Phillips, "Pascal's Reading and the Inheritance of Montaigne and Descartes', *The Cambridge Companion to Pascal*, ed. by Nicholas Hammond (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 20-39 (p.26).

[140] Ibid., pp.27-28.

[141] Michael A. Screech, *Michel de Montaigne. The Complete Essays,* tr. by M.A. Screech (London: Penguin, 2003), e-book p.842.

[142] Ibid., pp. 1310-1311.

[143] Ibid., p.2574.

[144] Ann Hartle, *Michel de Montaigne: Accidental Philosopher*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p.54.

[145] F780

[146] F427

For Pascal Montaigne is unmethodical and jumps from topic to topic.[147] He is self-centred and self-absorbed,[148] credulous, lewd, and unchristian in his light-hearted attitude to death[149] and his wisdom is difficult to distil from his writings.[150] Pascal praises his derivation of ideas from ordinary life[151] but essentially Pascal seems to value Montaigne as a source of pagan wisdom and teaching, for his understanding of human foibles, for his humane and effective style of writing and as a source of inspiration for his own contemplations. That Montaigne should not overall meet with Pascal's approval is unsurprising; their aims are entirely different – Montaigne's scepticism leads to a desire for peace and avoidance of extremes. Pascal is engaged in a struggle against disbelief and fluctuating religious adherence. In essence Pascal offers many of Montaigne's views on human nature in a favourable light but decries his theology.

3.4.3 Montaigne on habit, custom and virtue

For Montaigne habit and custom are central to comprehending humanity and his comments on them in the *Essais* are extensive; given below are just a few striking examples. Habit is a powerful force, seen as a schoolteacher:

> For, in truth, Habit is a violent and treacherous schoolteacher. Gradually and stealthily she slides her authoritative foot into us; then, having by this gentle and humble beginning planted it firmly within us, helped by time she later discloses an angry tyrannous countenance, against which we are no longer allowed even to lift up our eyes.[152]
>
> [A] To sum up then, the impression I have is that there is nothing that custom may not do and cannot do; and Pindar rightly calls her (so I have been told) the Queen and Empress of the World.[153]

It distorts our judgement and prevents us utilizing our reason:

> [A] But the principal activity of custom is so to seize us and to grip us in her claws that it is hardly in our power to struggle free and to come back into ourselves, where we can reason and argue about her ordinances. Since we suck them in with our mothers' milk and since the face of the world is presented

[147] F780

[148] F649

[149] F680

[150] F649

[151] F745

[152] Screech, p.387.

[153] Ibid., p.403.

thus to our infant gaze, it seems to us that we were really born with the property of continuing to act that way. And as for those ideas which we find to be held in common and in high esteem about us, the seeds of which were planted in our souls by our forefathers, they appear to belong to our genus, to be natural. [C] That is why we think that it is reason which is unhinged whenever custom is… If…each man, on hearing a wise maxim, immediately looked to see how it properly applied to him, he would find that it was not so much a pithy saying as a whiplash applied to the habitual stupidity of his faculty of judgement…[154]

For Montaigne, as for Pascal, much of what is perceived as natural is in fact no more than custom[155]; this applies even to conscience; thus, natural law becomes an acquired practice:

> The laws of conscience which we say are born of Nature are born of custom; since man inwardly venerates the opinions and the manners approved and received about him, he cannot without remorse free himself from them nor apply himself to them without self-approbation.[156]

Habit also reinforces vice, aggression, and cheating, in particular when allowed in the young.[157] Overall, the effects of custom and habit are pervasive and negative but on the positive side custom underpins our acceptance of authority and governance,[158] it allows us to adapt and change and makes some naturally difficult changes easier.[159] Custom may also work with nature and on occasion help in achieving moral good.[160] Montaigne can see help coming from the interaction of self-knowledge, experience, imagination[161] and beneficial customs/habits[162] in developing resilience, lessening suffering, and altering character. Whilst useful in association with reason and custom, imagination is also, however, the cause of our presumption, which is the natural and original malady[163] - 'the natural distemper of man'.

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[154] Ibid., p.404-5.

[155] Ibid., p.622.

[156] Ibid., p404.

[157] Ibid., p.390.

[158] Ibid., p.162, p.409, p.417, p.1157.

[159] Ibid., p.2758, p.2784, p.392.

[160] Ibid., p.403, p.408.

[161] Ibid., p.2731, p.2152, p.2514.

[162] Ibid., p.2751.

[163] Ibid., pp.1187-1190.

Montaigne, as Pascal comments, tends to deal with humanity's weak and compromised state without stressing another side of our nature. This has led, taken with his scepticism, to a reading of Montaigne generally arguing that good and evil reside in the nature of things and acceptance of our position is the best response. The *Essais*, however, as Watkins points out,[164] accept that the achievement of virtue is valuable to dealing successfully with life's challenges[165] but the picture is complicated as often Montaigne seems to be talking of valour or courage when he talks of virtue. He condemns vice as evil in many sections. Such virtue is, for Montaigne, however, uncommon, though education may lead to the achievement of some degree of virtue.[166] He seems to associate virtue with pleasure and joy and in one section argues for it not being in the reach of humankind by human means, whereas elsewhere even children can easily achieve it.[167] On virtue through habit, he offers no clear guidance, though constancy may allow an individual to escape the tyranny of custom.[168] By the mode of his presentation of custom Montaigne emphasizes the communality and variability of practice and belief, rather than the individual virtuous life, the acceptance of non-Christian practices, religious and secular, as authentic and the sheer inconsistency and inconstancy of human beings across cultures and classes.[169]

Montaigne is, like Pascal, heir to the understandings inherent in the acceptance of our fall from grace but offers no clear teaching on reversing its effects and it is not at all clear in view of his 'anthropological' opinions what he would see as an authentically virtuous life. We cannot even, because of our dependence on custom, determine what is good and what is evil in their essential basics, or what is the true nature of things.[170] We are beyond the natural freedom of savages and are restrained by custom and habit in our free actions.[171]

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[164] Margaret Watkins, 'Negotiating with a New Sovereign: Montaigne's Transformation of Habit into Custom', in *A History of Habit: From Aristotle to Bourdieu,* ed. by Tom Sparrow and Adam Hutchinson (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2013), pp.89-118, (p.103).

[165] Screech, p.260.

[166] Ibid., pp.500-501.

[167] Ibid., p.321, p.517.

[168] Watkins, p.110.

[169] Screech, p.2751.

[170] Ibid., p.408-9.

[171] Watkins, p.107.

Montaigne's understanding of religious belief and practice has few similarities to Pascal's. Montaigne identifies two extremes – the reverent, simple Christian who 'obeys the laws' and the 'great minds' who have gone deeply into faith and come to a position of informed belief. In the middle, however, lie the majority, like himself, who simply 'stick to the old ways'. Pascal also admires those of simple faith but decries those who do not commit all to seek saving faith, a faith possible by following his guidance.

In the final analysis reflection is for Montaigne central to achieving some tranquillity of mind and amelioration of the agitations of personal habits and customs. It does this in part by identifying custom/habit masquerading as reason.

3.5 Chapter summary

We can see that Augustine, Montaigne and Descartes offer very different views of habit. Augustine views habit generally in a negative light and links it with the Fall. Montaigne presents custom and habit as all persuasive and constitutive of our nature. Descartes has a nuanced and complex view of the inter-relationship of habit, passions, and mind but very importantly he connects habit with disposition of the will, intuition, the foundations of knowledge and the 'mechanical' mind. He also introduces the concept of the automaton in the mind. All of these are directly relevant to Pascal. In the following chapter we shall survey Pascal's apologetics; this will reveal the clear links with these three writers.

4. Pascal's 'Orders'

4.1 Introduction

Whilst the nature of Pascal's *Pensées* to some extent covers up the fact, there is a sense of progression in the three 'orders'. Reason, heart, and custom/habit interact with each other in the process of coming to belief but, as we shall see, reason seems to act first. Rational proof, mental, intellectual processes, are examined firstly and conclude that belief is not irrational, but they are inadequate in producing persisting belief. Prior to the action of grace on the heart we must move from the powers of the mind to those of custom/habit, the automaton, the machine, that is from mind to what has been inadequately described as the body. In fact, the *modus operandi* of habit is considerably

more complex; body through senses and passions influences mind as several fragments of the *Pensées* make clear. What reason may find and be convinced of, if only on one occasion, must be fixed by the power of habit,[172] which prevents the inconsistency and variability caused by reason's internal debate. Here Pascal's position is clearly similar to, possibly drawn from, Descartes[173] who also argues for the essential stabilizing role of habit in reasoning. Pascal sees custom and habit as absolutely central to the personal and social life of humanity. They are, in a sense, our very nature and no understanding of Pascal's apologetics is possible without assimilating his views on them.

4.2 Pascal and the disposition of the will

Central to comprehending where Pascal is leading us in his discussions of custom/habit is his presentation of the compromised human will after the Fall. He accepts that reason and desire *should* dispose the will; the will chooses what reason seeks, happiness, but after the Fall reason is weakened and there is a disjunction of reason and will.[174] The will cannot, as it were, progress towards our true end because of concupiscence. Following Augustine very closely,[175] Pascal sees the will turned towards the world, not to achieving our true end in God:

> *Cause and effect.* Concupiscence and force are the source of all our actions. Concupiscence causes voluntary, force involuntary actions.[176]

Pascal goes further into what underlies the effect of concupiscence:

> There is a universal and essential difference between acts of will and all others. The will is one of the chief organs of belief, not because it creates belief, but because things are true or false according to the aspect by which we judge them. When the will likes one aspect more than another, it deflects the mind from considering the qualities of the one it does not care to see. Thus the mind, keeping in step with the will, remains looking at the aspect preferred by the will and so judges by what it sees there.[177]

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[172] F821

[173] See section 3.3.2.

[174] Thomas Parker, *Volition, Rhetoric, and Emotion in the Work of Pascal* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), p.29.

[175] See section 3.2.2.

[176] F97

[177] F539

Reason, habit, and intuition/heart/grace are the elements in the creation of belief, but the will affects reason's ability to determine or choose the aspect to view (based upon our disposition) and two fundamental dispositions exist - world and God. Usually we see the mind as 'willing' and the will as 'moving' to meet what is desired. Habit alters the 'state of character', disposes the will, to view the world or God.

'Disposition' and 'inclination' are two very important concepts in the *Pensées*. Although the term disposition is not frequently used one can see the concept of disposition in play in the senses of 'state of character' (for example virtuous), bending of the will and reason's viewpoint. Inclination, at its deepest level,[178] acts upon those whom God loves and those with a simple faith have their *hearts* inclined by God. Here inclination of the heart is equated with saving grace and faith. Such simple faith is associated with 'hating the body', i.e., the absence of concupiscence, and religion itself matches the inward disposition of the holy; their will and that of true religion (religion's purpose) are one.

There is a longstanding understanding of the role of habit in disposition ('state of character')[179] and the virtues. As Aristotle puts it:

> It is the same, then, with the virtues. For what we do in our dealings with other people makes some of us just, others unjust; what we do in terrifying situations, and the habits of fear and confidence that we acquire make some of us brave and others cowardly…To sum it up in a single account: a state (of character, disposition) results from (the repetition of) similar activities.[180]

Thus, how we persistently act in relation to our passions forms our moral disposition i.e., our virtue or otherwise. Habit and virtue are not linked in a passive state but one which persists due to morally correct action. This section from the *Ethics* states the case that the virtues are habitual ways of both behaving and thinking. A virtuous disposition is the result of habit. How we habitually react to our passions defines us as virtuous or otherwise and our reaction can be bodily or mental. Pascal, however, as we shall see, argues that habitual behaviour *controls* the passions not just that habitual good behaviour regarding the passions produces virtue. This seems to arise from his

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[178] F380-382.

[179] Parker, p.62

[180] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics,* tr. by Terence Irwin. 2nd ed. (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1999), p.19.

understanding of disposition's relationship to the will. Our fallen will itself is the motive force on which our actions depend but the machine/automaton/habit alters our disposition and thus inclines the will. Hence, the physical and non-rational influences the will and thereby the reason. One can again see clear similarities here to Descartes, who sees the passions as both affecting the reason via the animal spirits and 'disposing' the will[181] to produce habit but Pascal sees them changing the aspect the will views. He also does not stress the controlling power of the mind (the mental act) that can lead to passions and thereby the disposition of the will to habitual action. Both authors provide a description of the close inter-relationship of mind, body, passions, and habit but Pascal stresses the power of habit, Descartes the power of mind.

There has been much written regarding the differences between the positions of Aristotle, Augustine and Aquinas on disposition, action, and virtue, though Augustine nowhere defines virtue as a disposition.[182] Pascal would seem rather closer to some modern interpreters of Aristotle who argue that for Aristotle disposition (or, perhaps better, state of character) includes desires, feelings, and *decision* (will). *Hexis* is not a passive state but a potential for action.[183]

To examine further the relationship between will and reason we need to go outside the *Pensées* to Pascal's '*De l'art de persuader*' where he addresses how to get people to consent to believe in a concept.[184] Pascal appears to accept that rationally believing on the evidence presented does not occur immediately, i.e., reason recognizes the 'good' in an argument or position and simultaneously belief occurs. For him 'assent to believe' is necessary as a further step. This is tied to his understanding of 'two doors' to the soul where belief resides - will and reason. The will does not just act when reason has deliberated and decided; in our fallen state will and reason are at loggerheads. Assent occurs at the level of both will and reason, both must assent, as it were, separately. The will is turned to the sinful world and may act with or against reason.

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[181] See section 3.3.2.

[182] Bonnie Kent, 'Reinventing Augustine's Ethics: The Afterlife of City of God', in *Augustine's City of God: A Critical Guide,* ed. by James Wetzel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp.236-242.

[183] Aristotle, *Ethics,* p.349.

[184] Blaise Pascal, *The Art of Persuasion,* tr. by O.W. Wright (New York: Bartleby, 2001). https://www.bartleby.com/48/3/7.html, [accessed 10/2/17].

Reason wishes to be in line with the will, but they are to some extent independent, and beliefs can be either strictly rational or strictly volitional.[185]

The will, after the Fall, chooses what is pleasing rather than what is virtuous, and it directs senses and thoughts to what they want to behold; it is inclined or disposed to the worldly. Essentially, we can reject what we don't want to believe, despite the evidence. It is thus the will's habitual disposition that prevents reason from accepting belief in God, it prevents conversion, prevents assent, is a component of the decision itself. What Pascal advocates in the wager is changing the will from the exterior. The word *abetir* used regarding habit's action[186] suggests strongly Descartes understanding of automaton/machine and animal automatism[187] but it also carries the plainer sense of animal or beast - hence the idea of taming the beast, the errant will which is involved with the passions. It would be wrong to argue that Pascal puts forward two separated forms of knowledge, rational and volitional. He argues for two paths to assent. The second *moyen de croire,* the use of habit, is therefore centrally directed at the will, which influences, and is influenced by, the unruly passions and actively produces passions by its assent to imagination's excesses.

We see also that the understanding that man's reason directs his will is undermined further by the passions and fancies which produce a false opinion or understanding of where the good lies:

> By knowing each man's ruling passion, we can be sure of pleasing him, and yet each has fancies contrary to his own good, in the very idea he has of good, and this oddity is disconcerting.[188]

4.3 Pascal and human nature

Pascal, with Augustine, emphasizes that the Fall has separated us from our true nature and we, with our damaged reason, allow custom/habit to provide a false nature and, with that, false principles to live by:

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[185] Parker, pp. 96-99.

[186] F418

[187] See section 3.3.3.

[188] F805

What are our natural principles but habitual principles? In children it is the principles received from the habits of their fathers, like hunting in the case of animals. A change of habit will produce different natural principles, as can be seen from experience, and if there are some principles which habit cannot eradicate, there are others both habitual and unnatural which neither nature nor a new habit can eradicate. It all depends on one's disposition.[189]

Fathers are afraid that their children's natural love may be eradicated. What then is this nature which is liable to be eradicated? Habit is a second nature that destroys the first. But what is nature? Why is habit not natural? I am very much afraid that nature itself is only a first habit, just as habit is a second nature.[190]

Pascal is following here very closely Montaigne's opinions on custom. All that remains to us are the second-hand, human-derived principles the child finds around it. Whether one habit or another dominates is dependent only on 'disposition'. Pascal makes clear that without faith we cannot know our true, original, Adamic nature:

Man's true nature, his true good and true virtue, and true religion are things which cannot be known separately.[191]

With the concupiscence following the Fall 'human nature' is inconsistent, individual and varies with disposition, pride, and the influence of others:

Trade. Thoughts. All is one, all is diversity. How many natures lie in human nature! How many occupations! How fortuitously in the ordinary way each of us takes up the one that he has heard others praise. A well-turned heel…[192]

Since [man's] true nature has been lost, anything can become his nature: similarly, true good being lost, anything can become his true good.[193]

Nature can, for Pascal in the *Pensées*, mean the whole universe or the nature of humankind – fallen and corrupt. As Davidson points out, in the *Pensées* there is also a sense of 'nature' as all that is in the world in contrast to scripture which is all that is known by us of God.[194] As the nature of humankind, it is unfixed and illusory, no more

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[189] F125

[190] F126

[191] F393

[192] F129

[193] F397

[194]Davidson, pp. 60-63.

than acquired hand me downs from others. Original Sin has destroyed our original nature leaving only the sense of where we have fallen from:

> All of these examples prove his greatness. It is the wretchedness of a great lord, the wretchedness of a dispossessed king.[195]
>
> Man's greatness. Man's greatness is so obvious that it can even be deduced from his wretchedness, for what is nature in animals we call wretchedness in man, thus recognizing that, if his nature is today like that of the animals, he must have fallen from some better state which was once his own.[196]
>
> The philosophers did not prescribe feelings proportionate to the two states. They inspired impulses of pure greatness, and this is not the state of man. They inspired impulses of pure abasement, and this is not the state of man. There must be impulses of abasement prompted not by nature but by penitence, not as a lasting state but as a stage towards greatness. There must be impulses of greatness, prompted not by merit but by grace, and after the stage of abasement has been passed.[197]

Nature and the actual habits formed are subject to fancy and pride.[198] Custom fortifies the impression of the senses and reinforces them irrespective of whether they are true or false but initial disposition provides the direction and underlies the passion to be followed or reinforced. Our most deeply held beliefs may be no more than early assimilations of customs and habits and these determine the course of our lives:

> The most important thing in our lives is the choice of a trade, and chance decides it. Custom makes masons, soldiers, roofers…From hearing people praise these trades in our childhood and running down all the others we make our choice…So great is the force of custom that where nature has merely created men, we create every kind and condition of men. For some regions are full of masons, some of soldiers etc. There is no doubt that nature is not so uniform: it is custom then which does all this, for it coerces nature, but sometimes nature overcomes it and keeps man to his instincts despite all customs, good or bad.[199]

We have now moved from custom and habit as creators of human nature to their creation essentially of the social basis of society. Nature does not produce people who are naturally roofers, etc. Inborn or instilled skill is not the basis of our choices, but habit coerces nature, and we follow what is seen, wrongly, as a virtuous trade. The

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[195] F116

[196] F117

[197] F398

[198] F129, F397

[199] F634

fragment suggests that nature allows 'natural variation' but that custom/habit acts to produce uniformity.

4.4 Reason, custom and the Fall

The damage to our reason is, for Pascal, all pervasive in all areas of life. He makes it clear that not only is the 'new nature' we form habit-based but our understanding of the world that we inhabit is also similarly derived. Here he again closely follows Montaigne. We fear kings because of habitual association with the armed and powerful and consider this due to their 'natural' power rather than custom:

> The fact that kings are habitually seen in the company of guards, drums, officers and all the things which prompt automatic responses of respect and fear has the result that, when they are sometimes alone and unaccompanied, their features are enough to strike respect and fear into their subjects, because we make no mental distinction between their person and the retinue with which they are normally seen to be associated. And the world, which does not know that this is the effect of habit, believes it to derive from some natural force, hence such sayings as: 'The character of divinity is stamped on his features.[200]

Habit produces such false associations, but we also here see the passions (fear and respect) aroused by erroneous interpretation. Our passions are divorced from our reason. Human society, authority, etc. is based largely on false impressions, strengthened by custom:

> The power of kings is founded on the reason and the folly of the people, but especially on their folly. The greatest and most important thing in the world is founded on weakness. This is a remarkably sure foundation, for nothing is surer than that the people will be weak. Anything founded on sound reason is very ill-founded, like respect for wisdom.[201]

This fragment can be read in a very negative fashion regarding faith. Fear and respect attached to the military for example becomes by habitual association attached to one under protection (and possibly their image as Pascal appears to refer directly to attachment to visual stimuli – 'their features'). No distinction remains for us between the associated element and the real cause of the passions of fear and respect. Can this be applied to the final sections of the wager[202] and habitual religious action? Is the end

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[200] F25

[201] F26

[202] F418

result of the association with Church custom and practice belief in the power and justice of God or the construction of a false belief based on association with Church authority?

The question as to how far Pascal regards *utility* to be the driver in the method applied in religious conversion is a vexed one with no clear conclusion. Pascal seems to think that such habitual fear and respect are due predominantly to folly but that such weakness offers a sure foundation for belief in contrast to reason. Davidson[203] argues that F25 points to habit or 'the machine' involving the whole man but based on this fragment alone this seems unconvincing. Does Pascal offer habit as a mode of (false) learning by association? Custom here (and more particularly in F60) also seems to maintain the status quo, i.e., the power of kings, rather than act to produce new belief.

Because our principles, the beliefs upon which we act and live,[204] are implanted through custom, which varies from place to place, person to person,[205] they are constantly open to challenge and counterargument:

> Any principle, however natural it may be, even implanted in childhood, may be treated as a false impression either of education or of the senses. 'Because,' they say, 'you have believed since you were a child that a box was empty when you could not see anything in it, you believed that a vacuum could exist. This is just an illusion of your senses, strengthened by habit, and it must be corrected by science.' Others say: 'When you were taught at school that there is no such thing as a vacuum, your common sense was corrupted; it was quite clear about it before being given the wrong impression, and now it must be corrected by reverting to your original state.' Who then is the deceiver, the senses or education? ...Justice and truths are two points so fine that our instruments are too blunt to touch them exactly...Man, then, is so happily constituted that he has no exact principle of truth, and several excellent ones of falsehood. Let us now see how many. But the most absurd cause of his errors is the war between the senses and the reason.[206]

This complex section has some resonances with Descartes' previously given mechanistic views on sense, passions, and habit but here they are presented in open conflict with education (reason). The two sides represent the battle between the unreliable senses, altered in perception by emotion/passion and disposition, and reason, compromised by the Fall and in its consistency by the divided fallen will. The argument is similar to that of F45, the battle between the senses/passions and reason leads to error.

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[203] Davidson, p. 76.

[204] See section 8.2.

[205] F60

[206] F44

Habit reinforces a belief, here at least it is not seen as creating it. The alterative effect on judgement is the action of the senses/passions; bodily input to the mind to be counteracted by reason. The whole thrust of the fragment is, however, man's inability to reach a settled state of judgement, whether due to the conflict between reason and habitual belief or because of the effects of personal bias (pride, concupiscence) or a false sense of justice in our fallen state. Habit here supports no settled position of falsity or truth; it simply reinforces and fixes what the senses offer.

There is another major theme of Pascal's alluded to in the above fragment in his comparison of man's 'original state'/common sense, which must be reverted to, and the 'correction by science'. We see here habit being associated with the 'illusion of the senses' and our original state/common sense, all suggesting unreflective, unreasoned and unquestioned acceptance in contrast to 'science' or 'education', i.e., reason. Pascal's conclusion seems to be that both modes of acquisition of knowledge fail to provide truth when combined with self-interest and fallacious judgement. Whatever its powers and effects, habit is clearly for Pascal closely associated with the senses/passions, the body, community, and social custom. As such custom/habit is dependent on a 'substrate' to reinforce which is itself as fickle as fallen humanity. In F60 and F525, again following closely, but critiquing, Montaigne, Pascal points out that our whole society is underpinned by local and national custom:

> In fact laws are so vain that he would break free of them, so it is useful to deceive him. What basis will he take for the economy of the world he wants to rule? Will it be the whim of each individual? What confusion! Will it be justice? He does not know what it is. If he did know he would certainly never have laid down this most commonly received of all human maxims: that each man should follow the customs of his own country. ...what we do see is that there is nothing just or unjust but changes colour as it changes climate. ...The art of subversion, of revolution, is to dislodge established customs by probing down to their origins in order to show how they lack authority and justice. There must, they say, be a return to the basic and primitive laws of the state which unjust custom has abolished. There is no surer way to lose everything; nothing will be just if weighed in these scales....The truth about the usurpation must not be made apparent; it came about originally without reason and has become reasonable. We must see that it is regarded as authentic and eternal, and its origins must be hidden if we do not want it soon to end.[207]

> Montaigne is wrong. The only reason for following custom is that it is custom, not that it is reasonable or just, but the people follow it solely because they think it just…But for that, custom would be regarded as tyranny, but the rule of reason

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[207] F60

and justice is no more tyrannical than that of pleasure. These are principles natural to men. It would therefore be a good thing for us to obey laws and customs because they are laws (then we should never revolt, but we might be unwilling to submit, for we should always be searching for the right one): to know that there is no right and just law to be brought in, that we know nothing about it and should consequently only follow those already accepted…But the people are not amenable to this doctrine, and thus, believing that truth can be found and resides in laws and customs, they believe them and take their antiquity as a proof of their truth (and not just of their authority, without truth)…[208]

There is no consistency or referral to higher authority in the provision of worldly justice. All comes down to local justice and it is custom which provides its validity.

Importantly for Pascal's argument on habit and faith he argues that, despite the pitfalls and lack of an anchor in Truth, habitual justice is necessary to man in his fallen state, it essentially takes the place of authentic and eternal justice.   These fragments have provided difficulties for readers of Pascal because they seem to advocate deception for a greater good (the end justifies the means). It is difficult to escape this conclusion in F60. Several points need to be made. Firstly, the truth and law discussed is not God's Truth but human truth - the basic and primitive laws of the state. Pascal therefore advocates specifically practical justice in humanity's fallen state. Secondly, he makes an important point about the effect of custom - what originally comes about without reason becomes reasonable, reason comes to accept through habit/custom what it could not originally. Thirdly custom, reason, justice and pleasure are all natural to us, all are valid and applicable. Fourthly there are times when we must admit to knowing nothing about a matter and follow what custom presents. Custom fixes belief in the validity of human justice and produces habitual obedience.[209] Custom, as a means to an end, is justified, it is a stabilizing force.

One difficulty, however, with the above conclusion is that habit itself is not a consistent force. It requires continual reinforcement by repeated action, physical or mental. If the will is directed to alternative actions, then the force of habit also changes:

How tiresome it is to give up pursuits to which we have become attached. A man enjoying a happy home-life has only to see a woman who attracts him, or spend

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[208] F525

[209] Davidson, p.79

five or six pleasant days gambling, and he will be very sorry to go back to what he was doing before. It happens every day.[210]

A habitual way of life is thus not a stable one, again disposition comes to the fore. Such changeability is also referred to elsewhere:

> …..Man is so made that if he is told often enough that he is a fool he believes it. By telling himself so often enough he convinces himself, because when he is alone he carries on an inner dialogue with himself which it is important to keep under proper control…We must keep silence as far as we can and only talk to ourselves about God, whom we know to be true, and thus convince ourselves that he is.[211]

The complexity of habit is made clear here. We must 'will for God' and control habitual acts and thoughts. Good habits lead to virtue but there must be 'good will' to fix habit's direction. Habits also, despite their association with the senses, the body, can also be generated mentally (as Descartes also makes clear[212]) and are subject to our damaged and inconsistent reason. There is clearly an interesting interface with memory here, but, despite his Augustinianism and use of the 'Confessions', Pascal does not take this further.

So far, we see that humanity's fall leads to reasons fall. Humankind has fallen from wisdom, fallen from Truth and has lost control and understanding of its passions. We are conflicted and after the loss of our true nature with God custom/habit produces our new nature, our new disposition, and the outcome is dependent on what is offered to habit to be reinforced. There is thus a vicious circle, disposition (e.g., towards virtue or depravity) determines what is offered habitually to be reinforced and thus determines future disposition. When such a person is disposed to search for God, when the grace to begin the search is granted, what process follows this God-given initial inclination of the will?

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[210] F79

[211] F99

[212] See section 3.3.3.

4.5 Pascal's seeker, the addressee, and the nature of his problem of belief

Pascal's apology is aimed at the informed seeker, and essentially the *honnête homme* of the time. Such an individual would be considered intelligent and informed. The manner of presentation is clearly laid out:

> There are three ways to believe: reason, habit, inspiration. Christianity, which alone has reason, does not admit as its true children those who believe without inspiration. It is not that it excludes reason and habit, quite the contrary, but we must open our mind to the proofs, confirm ourselves in it through habit, while offering ourselves through humiliations to inspiration, which alone can produce the real and salutary effect. Lest the Cross of Christ be made of none effect.[213]

Throughout the *Pensées* Pascal comments on the limited role of reason in finding faith and in understanding our place in creation. Reason reaches a limit and Pascal does not believe that God's existence can be proven rationally. Here therefore he differs from Augustine, Descartes, and classical Roman Catholic teaching. Reason may produce an understanding that faith is not against reason, an openness to conversion, it may even produce a fleeting demonstration of the existence of God, but this is valueless unless persistent. Pascal's use of 'proof' requires some explanation as his uses of the term are varied and complex.[214] We see under the section headings provided by Pascal 'proofs of Moses' and 'proofs of Jesus Christ' which largely relate to the evidence provided by scripture, prophecy, the acts and life of Christ, etc. Other sections deal with proofs relating to paradox, metaphysical proofs, proofs from nature, etc. In F7, however, Pascal states that proof is *human,* faith *divine* but proof is one of God's instruments for putting faith into our hearts. True faith is believing, not knowing. It is not evidentially based, not based on ratiocination. Proofs come from reason and the machine.

In F110 intuition (the heart, first principles) is contrasted with proof (demanded by reason). The separation between reason/proof and intuition/heart is made clear. Certainty is not confuted by lack of 'proof', lack of reason, because we can learn by instinct and feeling. Interestingly 'faith' in this fragment can come from reason but it is a useless 'human' faith without God's moving of the heart. In F131 Pascal makes clear that proof of religion cannot be complete, we have lost that capacity in the Fall, unless

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[213] F808

[214] See Davidson, Chapter 1 for full discussion.

we are now to doubt everything, we must put his faith in God and submit, humble ourselves.

In F149 Pascal re-iterates the paradox of humanity and argues that after the Fall we are blinded to Truth. The senses, the source of the passions, have broken from reason and control it. The telling phrase here regarding proof is:

> ' …To reconcile these contradictions I mean to show you clearly, by convincing proofs, marks of divinity within me which will convince you of what I am, and establish my authority by miracles and proofs that you cannot reject, so that you will then believe the things I teach, finding no reason to reject them but your own inability to tell whether they are true or not'.[215]

Thus, unless God grants a simple faith, proofs of God, in the end, cannot be determined by us as true or not, only accepted on the 'marks of divinity' of Christ given by scriptural evidence. God is proven by Christ and Christ proven by miracles and prophecy,[216] which is validated by coming true. Whilst many sections of the *Pensées* use a dialectical argument as the basis for 'proof', proofs 'by the machine' and by biblical evidence are essentially pragmatic in their non-dependence on reason. 'Proofs' of religion come from 'morality/doctrine/miracles/prophecies'[217]; a conclusion coming a long way towards Augustine's coming to belief based on authority.[218] It is interesting to ask whether such a pragmatic approach is justified in someone who still holds to the value of reason in coming to belief in God, albeit in a limited sense; this is perhaps dependent on the acceptance of an 'efficient' or 'practical' reason - essentially what is beneficial/efficacious within the limits of intellectual probity.

In F5 and at the end of the wager we see Pascal's target for conversion unable to 'opt for God'. F5 is addressed to a friend who has reached a dead end in the search for faith as he is aware that nothing comes of the search:

> Order. A letter of exhortation to a friend, to induce him to seek. He will reply: 'But what good will seeking do me? Nothing comes of it.' Answer: 'Do not despair.' Then he in turn would say that he would be happy to find some light, but

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[215] F149

[216] F108

[217] F402

[218] See section 3.2.2.

according to religion itself it would do him no good even if he did thus believe, and so he would just as soon not look. The answer to that is 'the Machine'.[219]

He would 'be happy', i.e., would not resist faith, but cannot achieve faith by searching because he believes, as 'according to religion itself' indicates, that faith is a gift from God. The answer given is 'the machine' which prepares us for the reception of faith, disposes our will to accept the gift. Pascal's friend may arguably have utilized the first *moyen de croire,* reason, at least to the extent of deciding searching for faith is useless but appears to have only come to a point of darkness. We might here see a man who has chosen (willed) non-commitment to a view (he would just as soon not look). He makes no act of will to believe or not believe and seems to acquiesce in his agnosticism. There is here no suggestion of the firmer attachment to proofs by habit but, as in F821, habit/the machine seems here to be put forward as the primary source of conviction or 'proof', despite its non-rational nature. Pascal here offers a way of changing a disposed attitude (non-commitment) by introducing a new 'mode' of belief, one administered to the penitent by the Church.

It is difficult in F418 to interpret Pascal's position in the wager on the final position of the gambler who still cannot commit despite reasons promptings. The overall impression, clearly supported by the text, is that they have been brought by reason to a position of acceptance that God's existence is a rational probability/possibility but cannot commit. They are held back by the passions opposing reason (and perhaps by reason's fluctuating conclusions, his own inner dialogue). The position is therefore subtly different to that in F5. In F418 Pascal's argument is entirely related to forcing a decision and allowing habits action on the automaton in us to do the rest:

> ….'I am being forced to wager and I am not free; I am being held fast and I am so made that I cannot believe – 'That is true, but… if you are unable to believe, it is because of your passions, since reason impels you to believe and yet you cannot do so. Concentrate then not on convincing yourself by multiplying proofs of God's existence but by diminishing your passions…learn from those who were once bound like you and who now wager all they have…follow the way by which they began. They behaved just as if they did believe, taking holy water, having masses said, and so on…What have you to lose? But to show you that this is the way, the fact is that this diminishes the passions which are your great obstacles …Now what harm will come to you from choosing this course? You will be faithful, honest, humble, grateful, full of good works, a sincere, true friend …I tell you that you will gain even in this life, and that at every step you take along this

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[219] F5

road you will see that your gain is so certain and your risk so negligible that in the end you will realize that you have wagered on something certain and infinite for which you have paid nothing….[220]

On first examination acquiescence does not seem to be the problem for the gambler because they still seek faith but cannot commit to belief. They remain unconvinced of the evidence for, or arguments put by Pascal though accepting their logicality. They cannot make themselves believe. The position is, however, more nuanced than at first sight as the gambler fears being made 'like an animal'. Presumably this refers to a fear of believing without fully convincing, rational proof.

In commenting on Augustine's understanding of coming to belief Stump makes the following point, highly germane also to Pascal's position[221]:

> Augustine's difficulties would be solved if he could find a way to hold that human beings are able, on their own, to accept or reject grace, without God's being ultimately responsible for their doing so.

Augustine's problem, she suggests, is that he has only two positions for the will, consent, or no consent. This was not Aquinas's position. He accepted a third possibility, inaction of the will or no act of the will to accept or reject grace. Is this the position of the gambler in 'the wager'? Stump continues:

> So suppose the following theology story to be the case. (1) God is constantly offering grace to every human being in such a way that if a person doesn't refuse that grace, she receives it and it produces in her the will of faith. (2) Normal adult human beings in a post-Fall condition who are not converted or in the process of being converted refuse grace continually, even if they are not aware of doing so. (3) Ceasing to refuse grace is accompanied by an understanding that grace will follow and that grace would not follow if the refusal of grace were continued. (4) It is solely up to a human person whether or not she refuses grace. A person who ceases to refuse grace in these circumstances is thus in some respects analogous to a person suffering an allergic reaction who actively refuses an injection of an antidote to the allergen, perhaps out of a hysterical fear of needles. Such a person might not be able to bring himself to will that the doctor give him the injection. If the doctor were asking him whether he would accept the injection, he might not be able to bring himself to say "yes," for example. But he might nonetheless be able to stop actively refusing the injection, knowing that if he ceases to refuse it, the doctor will press it on him. In this case, whether or not he receives the injection is in his control, even if it is also true that he cannot bring himself to answer "yes" to the doctor's request to give him the injection. …On the theology story

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[220] F418

[221] Eleonore Stump, Augustine on Free Will, in: *Cambridge Companion to Augustine. 1st edn,* ed. by Eleonore Stump (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp.139-140.

> I have told, then, God gives grace to anyone who ceases actively refusing it, but these are not people who already assent to grace. They don't accept grace or reject it. Their wills were actively refusing grace, but then cease doing so, without moving all the way to accepting grace. Once their wills are quiescent, God acts on their wills in such a way as to move them to the acceptance of grace, which is the will of faith.

There seems to be a confusion here in Stump's argument. What is the difference between ceasing to refuse grace being accompanied by an understanding that grace would follow and accepting grace outright? If ceasing to refuse brings about a pre-recognized condition or outcome, then this is essentially acquiescing or torpidly accepting. If we argue that the individual does not have foreknowledge of the position regarding faith but moves to a position of non-resistance, this might seem very similar to the position of the seeker in F5 but the argument issues then in whether God accepts noncommittal of the will as equivalent to acceptance of grace. Where is the co-operation in grace in this case? (In essence this also applies to foreknowledge of outcome by the individual).

Stump's argument seems stronger, however, and closer to Pascal's when we consider her comparison of the searcher with an individual fearful of the mechanism or process of a cure for his illness and the gambler in F418. Pascal argues that it is the passions alone that prevent the seeker committing to the next stage of the journey into faith. They need a cure for passion, to be made 'docile' (Aquinas's neutral position of the will, Stump's quiescence of the will), to escape the fear of the unseen outcome of conversion. Like the patient fearful of the needle, the seeker, brought by habit naturally further along the route of faith, has the fear of docility (presumably, as indicated above, commitment without the full agreement of reason), which keeps them from advancement, overcome by agreeing to the doctor (habit) giving the antidote (calming of the passions). If we accept this, then Pascal's argument seems to align itself more to Aquinas than Augustine.

4.6 The machine, the automaton and habit

Pascal's views on the role of habit in belief are best laid out in the following:

> For…we are as much automaton as mind. As a result, demonstration is not the only instrument for convincing us. How few things can be demonstrated. Proofs only convince the mind; habit provides the strongest proofs and those that are most believed. It inclines the automaton, which leads the mind unconsciously along with it….It is, then, habit that convinces us and makes so many Christians.…In short, we must resort to habit once the mind has seen where the

truth lies, in order to steep and stain ourselves in that belief which constantly eludes us, for it is too much trouble to have the proofs always present before us. We must acquire an easier belief, which is that of habit. With no violence, art or argument it makes us believe things, and so inclines all our faculties to this belief that our soul falls naturally into it. When we believe only by the strength of our conviction and the automaton is inclined to believe the opposite, that is not enough. We must therefore make both parts of us believe: the mind by reasons, which need to be seen only once in a lifetime, and the automaton by habit, and not allowing it any inclination to the contrary: Incline my heart. Reason works slowly, looking so often at so many principles, which must always be present, that it is constantly nodding or straying because all its principles are not present. Feeling does not work like that, but works instantly, and is always ready. We must then put our faith in feeling, or it will always be vacillating.[222]

Pascal is clearly influenced by Descartes in his understanding of the automaton and machine and his association of automaton with 'the beasts' (for Pascal this is where we have fallen to). Of particular interest is the striking similarity with Descartes' views on habit's role in stabilization of reason,[223] something not previously stressed in the literature. Direct comments relating to Descartes are, however, sparse in the *Pensées* though two fragments relevant to our topic do seem to indirectly refer in a negative or ironic fashion to Descartes previously discussed mechanistic view of animal automatism and the senses/passions[224]:

> When they say that heat is merely the movement of certain globules and light the *conatus recedendi* [centrifugal force] that we feel, we are amazed. What! is pleasure nothing but a ballet of spirits? …The feeling of fire, the warmth which affects us in quite a different way from touch, the reception of sound and light, all seem mysterious to us. And yet it is as straightforward as throwing a stone. It is true that the smallness of the spirits entering the pores touches other nerves, but they are still nerves.[225]

> The adding-machine produces effects closer to thought than anything done by the animals, but it does nothing to justify the assertion that it has a will like the animals.[226]

How much of Descartes' reasoning on these subjects Pascal accepts is unclear but the inter-relationship in their thoughts is evident. He certainly sees the effect of the

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[222] F821

[223] See section 3.3.3.

[224] Section 3.3.2.

[225] F686

[226] F741

animal/automaton on the passions as important but his negative view of the effect of the passions, dependent heavily on Augustine, limits his usage to the value of the machine/automaton in reducing the passions. The machine is closely connected with 'proofs'[227] and these are human, not God-given proofs. It is a mode of action,[228] often presented as 'acting as if'. If we were to divide the methods of seeking or achieving faith into thought, action and feeling then the machine falls into the action category; closely associated with bodily action, but interacting with habit to produce persistent, learned behaviour. This behaviour is non-rational but not irrational.

It is of interest that the argument for Pascal changes with the topic; custom fortifies sense impressions (passions in Descartes' sense) in some circumstances[229] but in the wager habit clearly is needed to reduce the passions. Pascal generally seems to talk predominantly of passions in the sense of Descartes' understanding of 'higher passions', those involving the higher brain functions, those with emotional content, but the effect of the mechanical, of the senses, the body's disposition is also placed alongside the pious acts of the faithful. The machine is not acting in isolation, the mechanical (physical) and acts of will together produce a milieu within which habit can have its effect. At bottom there is still a virtue-based understanding here - acting persistently as the virtuous faithful act produces virtue. How habit acts for Pascal seems to be by affecting the will, altering its 'bias' towards faith and thus carrying reason with it. Reason is desirous of alignment with will. In some way penitence, self-abasement, is central to this process and one can see how habitual, simple, religious ritual might be expected to achieve this.

It is important to stress that Pascal advocates collective acts, not personal or individual practices to fix belief. Having masses said, taking holy water, etc. are not random acts but acts with their genesis in Church tradition and teaching, indeed the two he chooses are highly redolent in one sense of the acts and nature of Christ (baptism, anointing and Eucharist). These customs stand in contrast to Pascal's fragments on the unstable and non-uniform customs which Pascal criticizes whose changeability and

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[227] F7

[228] F5, F41

[229] F44

geographic variation he puts down to our corrupted nature and reason.[230] Pascal argues for the commitment to customs and habits of divine rather than human origin and he makes clear the necessity of virtuous company.[231] Not any repeated acts will do to reduce the passions and strengthen belief. There is no sense here of repetitive prayer, mantra-like praying for the calming of the troubled mind. Only acts performed collectively or individually by believers as integral parts of that belief. It is performance that fixes belief, performance acts through habit to produce belief but not faith, which can come only through God's gift of grace.

We cannot be clear in what way Pascal regards passion to have its effect, but his understandings seem to sit well with Augustine's views in his later writings (the City of God).[232] Augustine in earlier writings takes up from classical authors the concept of involuntary preliminary passions, perturbations which have not yet led to a decision by the soul, when it is unclear whether the soul will acquiesce or resist, but he later regards these as already effective passions and links them to a lack of confidence in God. He also argues for penitence to calm the passions. The mind (reason) hesitates or doubts because it lacks confidence in God in its fallen state. Passions for Augustine are good or bad dependent upon whether the will is good or bad, thus it is at the point of intervention by the will that anything 'affecting the passion's effects' must act. Freedom from the passions is not possible in this life but passions are rendered 'right feelings' by a will oriented to God. The weight of the will in fallen man is to wrong passion. Only the grace given by God can allow a degree of impassibility or freedom from passion. The will is the 'motivational source' of the passions and the fallen will is corrupted.

If, following Augustine, the will is for Pascal the motivational attitude in the highest part of the soul, habits must act here not, as for Descartes, in the rational soul. They direct the disposition of the will. By habitually, physically behaving as Christians do, we affect the senses and hence the passions and hence the will. By habitually initiating acts of piety, such as having Masses said, we alter the 'passion - emotions' of Descartes. But why 'reduce' the passions? Surely here Pascal should mean control, reject, or accept dependent on whether the passion is in line with 'good habit' or not?

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[230]Davidson, p.79.

[231] F814

[232] See section 3.2.4 and Augustine, *City*, §14.9-15.

Not necessarily, good habit produces a good disposition and well-directed will, but this then also reduces the availability of the physical circumstances, acts and states of mind that produce passions. The man spending his time in penitential acts, prayer, good works will be too busy to allow himself unworthy passions but also one might accept that the religious undertakings may allow the development of a single-mindedness, free to some degree from reason's turbulent vacillations, from the battle between will and reason, from the effects of misguided imagination.

In other fragments it also seems clear that 'proof' is not the direct outcome of reason but of the machine:

> Letter showing the usefulness of proofs, by the Machine. Faith is different from proof. One is human and the other a gift of God. The just shall live by faith. This is the faith that God himself puts into our hearts, often using proof as the instrument. Faith cometh by hearing. But this faith is in our hearts, and makes us say not 'I know' but 'I believe'.[233]

> Order. After the letter urging men to seek God, write the letter about removing obstacles, that is the argument about the Machine, how to prepare it and how to use reason for the search.[234]

Our disposition influences our will and Pascal sees habit as a way of changing our disposition, but habit may act at the mental or physical level. The machine, the automaton, is that part of us that acts 'beneath' reason, acted on by senses and affecting passions. It acts to redress the balance to some extent that is lost by the Fall and our duplicitous state. There is in a sense a bridge built between reason in its fallen state and the 'heart', between rationally derived opinion or 'proof' and sentiment felt by the heart by the action of custom/habit on the disposition - 'incline my heart'. The *body's* disposition, however, the persisting automatic actions of religious practice, alters the passions (in Pascal's understanding decrease the passions' effects and control) and thus the automaton through its mechanical action on the brain etc. (c.f. Descartes) affects reason's disposition, affects our mental processes to facilitate the disposition of the will towards our true end, towards faith in God, increases our receptivity to God's acts on the heart.

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[233] F7

[234] F11

Descartes sees the will as free, in one sense separate from reason and the cause of action.[235] Pascal sees it as separate but closely connected to reason and as still essentially free but so damaged that its real freedom to act is lost. Despite this we are still liable for our actions.[236] The position he takes here is fully Augustinian. Diminishing the passions, altering the passions through their link with bodily action, affects the will, draws the will in the desired direction and counteracts the damage of the Fall.[237] The intellect follows the will. We are not really talking here of belief coming through pretending to believe[238] but rather belief coming through disposing ourselves to believe by action. Acting 'as if' need not have pejorative overtones.

Humans are composed of mind, body and spirit and Pascal advocates the full usage of all three in achieving an end we both will and desire. For Pascal habit/automaton/machine are part and parcel of the whole of us, albeit operating on higher processes in an ill understood and subliminal fashion. To utilize this component and to choose the circumstances which are likely to produce one, rather than another, outcome is legitimized by our inability not to choose (see the wager) on the one hand and our desire for the happiness and fulfilment (and everlasting reward) that we have already moved towards by searching reason. The choice is really to persist with uncontrolled passions in our concupiscent state, disposed to a limited view of our true nature, or to alter, through habit, our mental disposition thus reducing the hold of concupiscence and diminishing the effect of those passions which act to our detriment. Clearly for us to place ourselves even at the beginning of searching for God already indicates an alteration in disposition, a change of viewpoint on the world and our life but dispositional change is a process, not a single event, and its interaction with faith unexplored. Disposition for Pascal seems to include a simple leaning of the mind and will one way or another but also has a deeper sense of our view of the universe/universal evident in Pascal's discussions on man's understanding of the infinite, the infinitesimal etc.

A hierarchy of proofs seems on offer in the latter part of F821. Taken in conjunction with F11 it seems clear that the action of habit only occurs after a

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[235] See section 3.3.2.

[236] F151

[237] F661

[238] Parker, p. 61.

preparation by reason which undertakes the search. F11 also gives the impression of a continuation of relationship between reason and habit rather than a temporal progression. Reason constructs the evidence for proofs and habit, through the machine, produces belief (proof) but for Pascal paradox and even lack of evidence can also reveal God. God's hiddenness offers evidence of His existence.

Thus, God uses proof to put faith in our heart, but the easiest proof comes through custom/habit. Proof is generally accepted to come from the action of reason but discursive reason for Pascal arises on the basis or foundation of intuition.[239] Rational certainty is based upon 'sentiment' or intuition:

> For knowledge of first principles, like space, time, motion, number, is as solid as any derived through reason, and it is on such knowledge, coming from the heart and instinct, that reason has to depend and base all its argument.[240]

The heart's knowledge is beyond the grasp of reason but both heart and mind seem in the final analysis intuition based for Pascal. Pascal's geometric and finesse minds are essentially extreme ends of intuition and reason.[241] Whilst the 'machine' is offered here as a means of proof, it is generally argued that habit, for Pascal, produces fixation of reason's deliberations rather than the machine or habit acting as a true, independent source of proof but this is not evident from fragment 7 which supports fragments 5 and 28 in offering the machine as a *source* of proof. Rather than fixing belief the machine is the source of the inclination towards it and itself is brought into action as a direct effect of habit. There is therefore a chain of action on disposition - habit activates the machine, the machine inclines the will, and the soul (reason) falls into line with the will which it naturally wishes to align itself with.

4.7 Abasement

Pascal offers three phases of conversion or coming to faith, corresponding to the three 'orders':

> The philosophers did not prescribe feelings proportionate to the two states. They inspired impulses of pure greatness, and this is not the state of man. They inspired impulses of pure abasement, and this is not the state of man. There must be

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[239] Davidson, p.1.

[240] F110

[241] See section 4.8.

impulses of abasement prompted not by nature but by penitence, not as a lasting state but as a stage towards greatness. There must be impulses of greatness, prompted not by merit but by grace, and after the stage of abasement has been passed.[242]

In phase one we search in our unrecognized, fallen, lost state; we search but cannot move on. Phase two is a phase of abasement or penitence before our greatness (if granted) in faith. The phases also reflect the duality of humankind and our divided will, extensively referenced in the *Pensées.* The state of penitent abasement that follows reason's limit would suggest that submission to tradition and custom represent an integral part of penitence. Abasement accords well with docility[243], the effect of habit/the automaton. Greatness, the final phase, awaits the infusion of faith in the heart. The seeker of F418 needs to submit to custom, which is after all a major element of our fallen state and the source of our second (arguably first) nature, in order to control his or her base nature with its associated free play of the passions. F944 offers further insight into the relationship between reason, habit, and penitence. Reason and habit must be combined but habitual activity is to do with penitence – down on our knees:

> We must combine outward and inward to obtain anything from God; in other words we must go down on our knees, pray with our lips, etc., so that the proud man who would not submit to God must now submit to his creature. If we expect help from this outward part we are being superstitious, if we refuse to combine it with the inward we are being arrogant.[244]

Submitting to God's creature presumably is a reference to the Church. We must reason our way to penitence because if we simply hold that ritual acts will provide help in our search for God in some mindless, non-reasoned way this is mere superstition. Led to understanding our place and God's in the process we can overcome pride and truly benefit from penitential acts of the Church. As the last line makes clear reason and habit must essentially be combined. Importantly regarding criticisms of Pascal's advice to 'act as if' one had Faith, here it is clear that one must enter the habit 'phase' penitentially and with no expectation of help. We must be motivated by the desire for God without self-pride.

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[242] F398

[243] F418

[244] F944

The specific acts that Pascal advocates, Masses, and holy water, are not just rituals of the Church, they act to reinforce the language of faith and favour the absorption of the opinions and beliefs of other 'good company' (role models) by shared custom and inter-communication. The language of faith produces belief through habit. This understanding of the importance of the believing community is further brought out elsewhere:

> Our minds and feelings are trained by the company we keep, and perverted by the company we keep. Thus good or bad company trains or perverts respectively. It is therefore very important to be able to make the right choice so that we train rather than pervert. And we cannot make this choice unless it is already trained, and not perverted. This is thus a vicious circle from which anyone is lucky to escape.[245]

> There are two ways of persuading men of the truths of our religion; one by the power of reason, the other by the authority of the speaker. We do not use the latter but the former. We do not say: 'You must believe that because Scripture, which says it is divine,' but we say that it must be believed for such and such a reason. But these are feeble arguments, because reason can be bent in any direction.[246]

Clearly habitual acts must occur in the right setting, that of believers, in good company, but there is a sense that we cannot achieve the choice of company on our own because we are in a 'vicious circle'. Opting to follow the advice in the wager and 'act as others have acted', in a communal setting with those who have gone before, might be seen to 'short-circuit' the process and break us out of the circle. As F820 indicates we do not usually submit to authority,[247] but this section strongly reflects Augustine's comment that he came into the Church through belief in its authority and not through reason.[248] Reason for him proved the validity of Church teaching after he had acted based on Church/ scriptural authority. His reason vacillated.

Following from Pascal's suggested course comes faithfulness, honesty, etc. (i.e., the virtuous life) and an end to 'noxious pleasures'. Strength (greatness) comes through lowliness in the biblical fashion. There is a sense here of a point of repose in custom whilst awaiting the gift of faith, but Pascal clearly sees this phase as carrying its own rewards.

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[245] F814

[246] F820

[247] see F808 on humiliation, etc.

[248] Augustine, *De Vera*, §45.

4.8 Intuition, instinct, sentiment and feeling

Pascal clearly regards reason, habit and heart as separate 'faculties'. Reason works slowly, methodically (geometrically) but only requires one episode of demonstrative proof. It then, however, continues to vacillate when the contents of the original proof are no longer at the forefront of its deliberations. The automaton, habit, prepares the heart for the reception of grace and stabilizes reasons vacillation. 'Feeling' works instantly and for Pascal 'feeling' and the closely associated term sentiment refer to the heart, intuition or 'intuitive intellect'. He also, however, seems to argue that custom may reinforce 'intuitive reasoning':

> Custom is our nature. Anyone who grows accustomed to faith believes it, and can no longer help fearing hell, and believes nothing else. Anyone accustomed to believe that the king is to be feared …Who then can doubt that our soul, being accustomed to see number, space, movement, believes in this and nothing else?[249]

Pascal holds that number, space, etc. are known intuitively rather than by discursive reasoning. They fall therefore under the remit of the 'heart'. These fundamentals are part of our 'natural principles' and subject to Pascal's critique of nature and custom/habit but they are 'given', intuited or instinctively known rather than 'proven'. At the beginning of F418 Pascal argues that we are 'cast into the body' and find these principles there, we reason about them and accept them but, confusingly, in F110 he says that first principles are 'known' intuitively, through 'the heart' and reason has no role here.

In view of habit's role in intuition etc. we can see an interlinking of the orders, none stands alone. In the latter part of F821 this relationship is further alluded to:

> …We must therefore make both parts of us believe: the mind by reasons, which need to be seen only once in a lifetime, and the automaton by habit, and not allowing it any inclination to the contrary: *Incline my heart.*

> Reason works slowly, looking so often at so many principles, which must always be present, that it is constantly nodding or straying because all its principles are not present. Feeling does not work like that, but works instantly, and is always ready. We must then put our faith in feeling, or it will always be vacillating.[250]

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[249] F419

[250] F821

Thus, the mind by reasons, the automaton by habit and the heart by intuition all act in coming to faith but, although the sense is not entirely clear, it would seem that feeling (the domain of the heart and intuition) also prevents reason's vacillation.[251]

Custom reinforces intuition as well as reason and it (according to F419) also produces belief in the truth of intuitions (natural principles) by accustomization to their continued presence, but even first principles may become so 'hardened' under habit that they obscure rather than reveal truths, i.e., under habit's effects we cannot see beyond them to 'intuit' the full range of possibilities, the possibilities inherent in God's creation. Also, by reasoning about sentiments we can reject them, even though sentiments seem for Pascal to be judgements of value or truth that impose themselves by spontaneous insight into their validity. Sentiment interlinks with the mind with what he calls finesse (the intuitive mind) rather than the alternative mathematical or geometrical mind, which is associated with reasoned argument:

> Difference between the mathematical and the intuitive mind. In the one principles are obvious, but remote from ordinary usage, so that from want of practice we have difficulty turning our heads that way; but once we do turn our heads the principles can be fully seen; and it would take a thoroughly unsound mind to draw false conclusions from principles so patent that they can hardly be missed. But, with the intuitive mind, the principles are in ordinary usage and there for all to see. There is no need to turn our heads, or strain ourselves: it is only a question of good sight, but it must be good; for the principles are so intricate and numerous that it is almost impossible not to miss some….These principles can hardly be seen, they are perceived instinctively rather than seen, and it is with endless difficulty that they can be communicated to those who do not perceive them for themselves….The thing must be seen all at once, at a glance, and not as a result of progressive reasoning, at least up to a point.[252]

> Mathematics. Intuition. True eloquence has no time for eloquence, true morality has no time for morality. In other words the morality of judgement has no time for the random morality of mind. For judgement is what goes with instinct, just as knowledge goes with mind. Intuition falls to the lot of judgement, mathematics to that of the mind. To have no time for philosophy is to be a true philosopher.[253]

Finesse is associated with 'seeing in the round' and deals with everyday accepted truths and principles. These truths are 'instinctively' accepted. Judgement (*jugement),* finesse (*finesse*) and sentiment (*sentiment*) also closely inter-related. Finesse is intuitive

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[251] F613

[252] F512

[253] F513

understanding and involves some process of judgement and the appreciation of intricacy. Proof goes with the geometrical mind, persuasion, belief, and immediate unreasoned apprehension with finesse. Nonetheless finesse seems to be presented as a form of reasoning, perhaps the hearts reasoning.[254] This is clearly not the whole picture for memory and joy are given by Pascal as sentiments[255] but there is a clear sense that sentiment is associated with the self-evident and that the heart, perceiving a moral good, produces a sentiment, a spontaneous, compelling, insight – it seems to be a representation of a truth to be acted upon. The mind with 'finesse' is strong in sentiment and sees the whole picture in relation to the complexities of the everyday or what is hidden 'in plain sight'.

In F646 we might ask whether Pascal is saying that habitual reasoning produces sentiment:

> Feeling. Memory and joy are feelings, and even mathematical propositions can become feelings, for reason makes feelings natural and natural feelings are eradicated by reasons.[256]

It seems that reason can turn sentiments into naturally held beliefs, into what seems obvious. Also, reason destroys 'natural feelings' – is intuition meant here or are joy and similar states meant?

The reason for this discussion of natural principles, feeling, sentiment, etc. and how they relate to habit and reason is, in part, that there are distinct resonances with what will later be discussed regarding Rush Rhees's understanding of 'Moore's propositions'.[257] These are at the heart of Wittgenstein's later writings and are unreflectively accepted underpinnings of 'forms of life'. Moore uses them in his argument against radical scepticism. Prior to writing the *Pensées*, in *De L'esprit Géométrique*, while talking of the practice of mathematics, Pascal refers to 'principles so clear that we can find no others that can serve as proof of them'.[258] He seems here to

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[254] Wood, pp.134-135.

[255] F546

[256] F646

[257] See section 5.4.

[258] Blaise Pascal, *Of the Geometrical Spirit,* tr. by O.W. Wright. <https://www.bartleby.com/48/3/9.html>. [accessed 14/3/2017], §18.

be confining himself to speaking of terms like time, space, movement, number, equality. Such terms are clear to all and require no definition, indeed no definition is possible. Pascal says that nature herself gives us clarity and certainty here. As Force points out[259] these primitive terms cannot be explained because nothing clearer than the term itself can explain it. Regressive explanation comes to a halt at these concepts. This does not mean, however that Pascal necessarily thinks that all who accept these concepts understand them in the same way. In F109 (importantly in a fragment headed 'Against Scepticism') Pascal argues that definition of these natural terms can only obscure their 'primitive' sense:

> It is odd that we cannot define these things without making them obscure; we talk about them all the time. We assume that everyone conceives of them in the same way, but that is a quite gratuitous assumption, because we have no proof that it is so…Such conformity of application provides a strong presumption of conformity of thought, but it lacks the force of total conviction…[260]

Their meaning lies, therefore, in their usage[261] and as they are consistently used by people, this seems to imply a similar general conception, Pascal seems to want to offer some concession to scepticism in admitting an inability to prove the matter, attempt at which would produce 'obscurity'. Elsewhere, however, he makes clear that neither does the sceptic's position triumph. What Pascal does not make clear is the compass and limits of what he is willing to include under the umbrella of 'principles'.

We can see therefore from the preceding sections overall that the habit, which is an easier way to belief, to God, than continuing with reason beyond its limit, continually vacillating, is a penitential habit and in this penitent state, freed from the presence of pride and passion we incline our hearts to God's grace. Grace's reception, although freely God-given, depends on intuition, on finesse, on finding it amongst the complexities of the life we lead, the everyday, non-scientific, non-mathematical, fallen life of man.

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[259] Pierre Force, 'Pascal and Philosophical Method', in: *The Cambridge Companion to Pascal*, ed. by Nicholas Hammond (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 219.

[260] F109

[261] Force, p.231.

4.9 The passions

When we come to look more specifically at 'the passions' in Pascal's thinking we can see distinct differences between his approach and that of Descartes, though clear resonances of 'the Passions of the Soul' do persist. The senses and reason are seen by Pascal as inter-related but at odds with each other, mutually deceiving, but despite the concentration on deception rather than simply Descartes interaction, Pascal maintains Descartes mechanistic reasoning in some ways, particularly regarding senses/passions, reason, animal spirits, the effect of illness and the physical brain. The differences are well brought out in the following fragments:

> Man is nothing but a subject full of natural error that cannot be eradicated except through grace. Nothing shows him the truth, everything deceives him. The two principles of truth, reason and senses, are not only both not genuine, but are engaged in mutual deception. The senses deceive reason through false appearances, and, just as they trick the soul, they are tricked by it in their turn: it takes its revenge. The senses are disturbed by passions, which produce false impressions. They both compete in lies and deception.[262]

> Civil war in man between reason and passions. If there were only reason without passions. If there were only passions without reason. But since he has both he cannot be free from war, for he can only be at peace with the one if he is at war with the other. Thus he is always torn by inner divisions and contradictions.[263]

It can be seen that Pascal separates senses from emotions/passions more distinctly than Descartes. Passions cause disturbance of the senses. Intellect and senses deceive each other. The senses and passions are viewed much more negatively than in Descartes writings[264] and much closer to the views espoused by Augustine.[265] It is unclear whether Pascal sees, as it were, a spectrum of senses - passions - emotions but sense wars with reason, passion wars with reason, passion distorts sense. Presumably higher passions are included in the war. If we add the message of F638 we see that illness, associated here with nature rather than the senses, controls the passions and brings forward those in keeping with the body's state but fear, generated by mind and not by nature, i.e., higher emotion, causes conflict by arousing inappropriate passions:

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[262] F45

[263] F621

[264] Section 3.3.2.

[265] Section 3.2.4.

When we are well we wonder how we should manage if we were ill. When we are ill we take our medicine cheerfully; our illness settles that problem for us. We no longer have the passions, and the desires for diversions and outings, which went with good health and are incompatible with the exigencies of our illness. Nature then inspires the passions and desires appropriate to our present state. It is only the fears that we owe to ourselves, and not to nature, which disturb us by linking the state in which we are with the passions of that in which we are not.[266]

But what of the senses here; is illness not acting through the senses? Whatever Pascal sees as the medium of nature's action, it is reason, the soul, that generates the disengagement of passion and physical state. The passions offered by way of example here are, however, those activities considered elsewhere as arising from imagination and diversion, from our true fallen state, i.e., activities allowing our persistence in concupiscence. Nature (presumably the natural process of illness rather than human nature *per se*) is overridden by fear, a self-generated state of mind. We see reflections of Descartes correspondence with Elizabeth of Bohemia here on illness and rationality[267] but the conclusions are very different and underline Pascal's antipathy to Descartes' views on the control of the passions by the mind and our ability to achieve happiness through reason. Even mundane diversions and 'modest' passions cannot be guided by reason for our good. Pascal does not consider 'mental fortitude' here sufficient to control or drive the passions. Descartes talks more of illness effects on the senses. Illness affects the 'humours' and thus inclines us to sadness, etc.

In F119 similar opinions are evident to those above:

…I should therefore like to arouse in man the desire to find truth, to be ready, free from passion, to follow it wherever he may find it, realizing how far his knowledge is clouded by passions. I should like him to hate his concupiscence which automatically makes his decisions for him, so that it should not blind him when he makes his choice, nor hinder him once he has chosen.[268]

Knowledge (intellect, the soul) is clouded by passion and concupiscence makes decisions for reason, blinds, and hinders it. Concupiscence, passion, the senses - all elements brought into dominance by the Fall. Concupiscence, turning to the world, away from God seems here associated with the 'sensory apparatus' - blinded by concupiscence has striking similarities to 'blinded by passion'.

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[266] F638

[267] Moriarty, *Passions,* Art 14-19.

[268] F119

Pascal does seem, on occasion, to offer a more optimistic opinion of the control of the passions, akin to Descartes:

> …the righteous man takes nothing from the world or its applause for himself, but only for his passions, which he uses like a master, saying to one 'Go' and [to another] 'Come'. Thou shalt rule over thy desire. Thus mastered his passions become virtues; avarice, jealousy, anger, even God ascribes these to himself. And they are just as much virtues as mercy, pity, constancy, which are also passions. We must treat them like slaves, and give them food but prevent the soul feeding on it. For when passions are in control they become vices, and then they give their food to the soul, which feeds on it and is poisoned.[269]

The key here, however, is in 'the God-fearing man'. We control our passions only if we are righteous and God-fearing. The archetypical God-fearing man is Abraham who acts against reason in his obedience to God, trembles before Him. He takes nothing from the world, i.e., shuns concupiscence and pride (applause). But how does he take these things for his passions? The sense is of worldly passions and emotions being transformed under righteousness into true virtues (e.g., righteous anger) - taking worldly elements to control passions, taking them to serve that purpose.

4.10 The virtues

Beneath F603 lies again a deeply Augustinian position on passion and virtue. The virtues are not seen in the classical 'Aristotelian' way but viewed under a new 'aspect' or 'disposition', that of Truth and a God-directed life under which all passions can be virtuous and even worldly vices can become Christian virtues. What the world regards as virtues are passions out of control, passions under the rule of concupiscence. The war between passion and reason can only be cured by the control brought by righteousness. This attitude is restated in elsewhere:

> Nature is corrupt. Without Christ man can only be vicious and wretched. With Christ man is free from vice and wretchedness. In Him is all our virtue and all our happiness. Apart from him there is only vice, wretchedness, error, darkness, death, despair.[270]

All true virtue lies in Christ; human virtue is not true virtue. *Eudaemonia* is a fantasy in our fallen state and all true happiness also lies only in Christ. Pascal's position on

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[269] F603

[270] F416

human virtue is complex. It appears to be best evidenced in a balance both of virtue and vice and to be essentially brought about by holding two opposing vices in balance:

> We do not keep ourselves virtuous by our own power, but by the counterbalance of two opposing vices, just as we stay upright between two contrary winds. Take one of these vices away and we fall into the other.[271]

> When we try to pursue virtues to either extreme, vices appear and imperceptibly slip into the same paths, imperceptible at the infinitesimal end of the scale and in masses at the infinite end, so that we get lost amid the vices and can no longer see the virtues. We take issue even with perfection.[272]

Presumably Pascal is thinking here of a midpoint between anger and indifference, hatred, and love etc., reflecting closely Aristotle's *Ethics*.[273] Elsewhere a similar emphasis is given:

> I do not admire the excess of a virtue like courage unless I see at the same time an excess of the opposite virtue…Otherwise it is not rising to the heights but falling down. We show greatness, not by being at one extreme, but by touching both at once and occupying all the space in between. But perhaps it is only a sudden flash of the soul from one extreme to the other; perhaps greatness only ever lies in a single point, as in a glowing ember? Maybe, but at least that shows how agile the soul is, even if it does not show its range.[274]

Here the balance is held apparently by a completeness of levels of virtue along the scale. One might interpret these fragments as essentially concerned with the age-old argument over the inability to hold one virtue without all of the others (all held in a single point) but the meaning is not entirely clear. Whatever the meaning here Pascal makes it clear that even the virtues we do possess we displace to our worldly 'false faces':

> We are not satisfied with the life we have in ourselves and our own being. We want to lead an imaginary life in the eyes of others, and so we try to make an impression. We strive constantly to embellish and preserve our imaginary being, and neglect the real one. And if we are calm, or generous, or loyal, we are anxious to have it known so that we can attach these virtues to our other existence; we prefer to detach them from our real self so as to unite them with the other….[275]

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[271] F674

[272] F783

[273] Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics,* trans. By Terence Irwin. 2nd edition (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1999), Book II, Chapter2, 1104a-b. p.20.

[274] F681

[275] F806

Imagination takes over and our imaginary selves take over from our true selves, acquiring what virtue we had for effect. We thus act to provide the appearance of bravery etc. and in the process risk, or acquiesce, in the loss of any virtue we do have. Pascal reiterates that even if we struggle through religion (prayer) to achieve virtue it is God's gift of faith which makes this possible. All true virtue derives from Him. Hope also has a role in that through hope in our personal redemption in Christ we have the persistence to acquire, through habit, true virtue:

> When you say that Christ did not die for all men, you are abusing a weakness of men, who at once apply this exception to themselves, and this encourages despair, instead of turning them away from it to encourage hope. For in this way one accustoms oneself to inward virtues by outward habits.[276]

> Why has God instituted prayer? 1. To impart to his creatures the dignity of causality. 2. To teach us from whom we derive virtue. 3. To make us earn other virtues by our efforts. But, in order to preserve his supremacy, he bestows the gift of prayer on whom he pleases. Objection: We may think that prayer derives from ourselves. That is absurd, for even with faith we may not have virtues, so how could we have faith? Is it not further from lack of faith to faith than from faith to virtue?[277]

Pascal sees custom/habit as stabilizing and creating a 'habit of obedience'.[278] Despite Pascal's comments in some fragments reflecting Augustine's views on the limitations of 'human' virtues he accepts that habit/custom do lead to desirable virtue.[279] Here again there is a difference between acting as if one believes, in the sense of acting essentially falsely, and what Pascal advocates. Surely most individuals who wish to be virtuous, Christian or atheist, would accept the necessity to acting persistently charitably, honourably etc. To do so a disposition of the will, often against one's innate desire in the matter, is needed but we would not regard this as reprehensible or false. For Pascal, as for Augustine, true virtue is Christian virtue, and its attainment requires effort against the fallen will, but this does not alter the matter. Pascal's acting 'as if' is essentially 'acting to achieve'.

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[276] F912

[277] F930

[278] Davidson, p.79.

[279] F912, F936

4.11 Chapter summary

In this chapter we have examined Pascal's presentation of habit, custom, will and passions in depth. The influences upon, and differences between, his views and those, in particular, of Augustine and Descartes have been brought out. Deeper understanding emerges of his selective use of Augustine's view of habit and Descartes' opinion related to habit's stabilization of reason and the role of the 'machine'.

We see in Pascal's writings a presentation of our habit and custom based fallen reality. Habit is pervasive but may be both negative and positive in its effects. After reason's limits are reached it is the only operative route to come closer to faith that is under our control.

Unquestioned principles underpin reality; reason shows that Faith is not irrational; habit and custom in the setting of a religious community may provide a limited, 'human faith'. The fullness of true faith, however, lies only in God's gift, perceived by the heart's intuition. We must now look at the links and differences between these concepts and Rhees's philosophy, proceeding, at first, by an in depth overview of Rhees's general and religious philosophy.

5. Rush Rhees's philosophy

5.1 Introduction and Overview

When one examines Rush Rhees's own publications and those produced by Phillips and co-editors based upon Rhees's letters, teaching, and notes then 'in the round' one pervasive theme is found, that of 'what it is to say something'. Rhees also sees this concern with 'what language is' to be the concept that unites Wittgenstein's writings throughout his professional life. In view of this it seems unlikely that Rhees would accept any thematic division of Wittgenstein's *Nachlass* into pre- and post-*Tractatus,* with or without a putative 'third Wittgenstein'.[280] 'What it is to say something' relates

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[280] See Moyal-Sharrock for an overview of the evidence for these terms – Moyal-Sharrock, *The Third Wittgenstein: Post-investigations works* (Oxford: Routledge, 2016).

to the logical foundation of language and with this goes the nature of reality and the age-old conflict between scepticism and realism:

> We cannot understand the central ideas of philosophy – such ideas as reality, truth, things, intelligibility, understanding – we cannot understand the rôle they play in language unless we try to understand what language is. We cannot understand how it is that puzzlement about them and puzzlement about language (about what "saying something" is, for instance) are so run into one another that we can hardly distinguish them. So that scepticism regarding them is scepticism regarding the reality of discourse.[281]

The challenge of scepticism is as real now as it was in Plato's time, indeed Plato and Socrates are a clear, major influence on Rhees's views on the matter. The challenge of radical scepticism, of course, is also a major theme in Pascal's writings and seen by him as the greatest challenge to religious belief made by philosophy and the most difficult to counteract.[282] As we shall see this theme reveals deep and fundamental connections between the two writers.

Deeply bound to the challenge of scepticism is the whole question of the nature of reality and its connectedness to the possibility of discourse. Rhees regards reality as co-constituted with language; for Rhees different language means different 'world-view' and different reality. This theme is central to Rhees's opinions on the 'scientific viewpoint' and its relationship to religious belief. These concerns have connections with Pascal's discussions of the evidence for the existence of God from nature, rational scientific understandings, etc. and his arguments regarding the 'reality' produced by habit/custom compared with the 'false' reality associated with imagination. There is, however, a more fundamental connection here in the inter-relationship of logic and reason. 'What it is to say something' concerns the logic of the language used, its rationality or reasonableness, what makes it comprehensible language at all.

The reality co-constituted with language is developed and made apparent for Rhees in conversation, carrying on a dialogue, expressing reasonable opinions and ideas in contrast to rhetorical posturing. Wittgenstein takes a similar view regarding language

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[281] Rush Rhees, *Without Answers* (London: Routledge and Keegan Paul, 1969), p.135.

[282] See for example: *Entretien* and F131, F4, F33.

as behaviour[283] but the centrality of conversation and dialogue is far more to the fore in Rhees's writings. It is here that the rules and limits to what constitutes language emerge. Pascal's interest is in the limits of reason and thus, on Rhees's understanding, limits of language, in the search for religious faith. Reason for Pascal is concerned with inferential or evidential knowledge, rational deduction, statistical evidence (the 'wager'). Reason can lead us to understand belief in God as not against reason, for some it can lead to belief, but it cannot produce faith. For Rhees the 'reality' of religion comes with the language within that 'form of life'. Where the comprehension of the irreligious 'outsider' fails, is in his or her inability to cross over into a reality co-constituted by the language/reality of religion. One cannot reason one's way into religious reality, the reality of the religious believer. Religious belief is neither reasonable nor unreasonable – it is there like the religious life is there. It 'arises' on its own given, unchallenged bedrock.

For Pascal reason can prepare one to decide to partake in the life, language, and ritual of the Church and one can see this as then providing Rhees's reality of religion. I hope to demonstrate that both see the new viewpoint, 'form of life', 'world-view' of religious belief as arising in the final analysis out of custom/habit, though Rhees speaks in different terms. For Pascal habit/custom alters the disposition of the will, for Rhees it is an integral part of learning the language and thus producing the reality of the religious 'form of life'. In the final analysis faith for Pascal comes as the gift of God and it is the intuitive heart that is the channel of entry. The role of habit is dispositional, it alters the will and draws the reason towards the acceptance of the gift. Rhees's philosophical discussions, with just a few exceptions, terminate at the point of belief, not faith.

Knowledge, belief, and faith are separated by Rhees and Pascal, but they differ in approach. Intuition is generally taken to mean immediate or unmediated knowledge and Pascal associates the heart with our unpremeditated or innate knowledge of space, time, etc. It is a non-inferential knowledge. He also, however, separates minds (or sections of minds) into intuitive and mathematical (logical, rational) and argues that certain types of 'principles' are the preserve of the intuitive element (F110). Wittgenstein, on occasion, seems to reject the sense of intuition as a psychological

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[283] See for example: Fergus Kerr, *"Work on Oneself". Wittgenstein's Philosophical Psychology* (Arlington: IPS Press, 2008), pp. 7-18.

process and concentrates on it acting through language and action.[284] There is no evidence Rhees disagrees with this. This is clearly a significant philosophical move in Wittgenstein's work and one we will need to return to later. 'First principles' for Pascal are intuited by the heart. For Rhees and Wittgenstein they are swallowed down with the acquisition of language and living of a life.[285]

The layout of this chapter of the thesis will be firstly to look at 'what it is to say something' and Rhees's interpretation of Wittgenstein's writings on the logical basis of language, language-games etc. Secondly, to clarify Rhees's interpretation of Wittgenstein's later *nachlass*, in particular *On Certainty,* with particular regard for his interpretation of what underpins the reality of language, what 'generates' the logic of language, the sense of speech at its foundational level, the bedrock on which reality depends, including religious reality. It is only at this level that some understanding of the connections between belief in God and faith can be seen, that one can appreciate the links between Wittgenstein's understandings of 'what holds fast', his 'hinge propositions' and Pascal's intuitive (non-mathematical) mind with its apprehension of (first) principles. Here also lie the points of contact between Rhees's and Wittgenstein's views on what is 'given' but not subject to ratiocination in language and its logic, what constitutes 'rules' and 'rule following', and Pascal's position on the interaction of custom/habit and the intuitive heart in achieving faith.

Prior to further discussing Rhees's views it is extremely important to point out that the deeper one studies Rhees's writings the greater one is impressed by the immense care he employs in the words and phrases used in expressing his viewpoint. This makes any summary or interpretative comments inadequate to the task of representing his position accurately. Much, therefore, of the sections following, which directly address Rhees's work, will be re-arrangements and re-orderings of his own phrases, often near quotes. For this reason, very regular page references are given in the text to make clear this dependence.

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[284] Nicholas F. Gier, *Wittgenstein and Phenomenology: A Comparative Study of the Later Wittgenstein, Husserl, Heidegger, and Merleau-Ponty* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1981), p.113.

[285] See section 5.4.

5.2 'Saying Something' and the meaning and intelligibility of life

Rhees begins his philosophical arguments on 'what it is to say something' near the historical beginning. Plato and Socrates, a clear source of inspiration for Rhees, have in his view a dominant concern with life's intelligibility and they understand this to be the 'meaning of life'[286] and dependent upon the intelligibility of language. There must be an underlying unity of being and of discourse; language must have a single logic and life must have a unity to be intelligible. The 'conditions of the possibility of discourse' seem to fit with 'the conditions for the intelligibility of a life'.[287] They go together and for Plato are the same.

Plato, Rhees argues, does not seek life in the sense evident in Christ's words. He wishes to see life as in some way analogous with the divine, analogous in a mathematical sense. It seems here that Rhees means analogy in terms of likeness or shared relationship to the original, a position much favoured in Aquinas' analogy of attribution. Through practicing philosophy (an aspiration to the ideal) one becomes more like the divine, but this is not like the Christian understanding of transforming one's life to come nearer to God nor is there the sense of seeking God as a Christian does. Image, imitation, analogy do not operate here as in Christian terms where one talks of relationship to God. Rhees would argue that Christian life is not about the *intelligibility* of life at all, and worship is perhaps synonymous with relationship when talking of the Christian God, or it is at least where that relationship is seen. It is not the relationship to an ideal.[288]

Philosophy is concerned with the nature of reality and 'what I take my life to be' raises the question of appearance and reality. It brings in the possibility of something beyond the reality evident to our senses, beyond ratiocination; some overarching 'something' which *is* the reality of life. But is there even a simple 'shared' reality to, for example, science and religion? Do they have a common intelligibility? Rhees stresses that the principles of science or religion are not intelligible as 'pure forms' outside a connection with a life in society, a way of life, with the practice of language, discourse.

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[286] Rhees, *On Religion*, p.179.

[287] Ibid., p.183.

[288] Ibid., pp.179-181.

This does not mean that their sense and reality are found in their utility, nor does it mean that intelligibility is ever complete. There is on Plato's account a difference between intelligibility and effectiveness or success[289] and success can only be measured within an intelligible society but there is no difference made clear between the conditions for the intelligibility of language and the conditions for the intelligibility or rationality of life. Here criticism of truth and falsity of statements are not differentiated clearly from those of men's actions.

We, however, draw greater and clearer differences between the actions of men and standards of truth and falsity in language.[290] These are very important for questions of what one's life is but the nature of the difference between word and act must be made clear if Wittgenstein and Rhees's emphasis on the interdependence of language and 'action' are to be understood ('in the beginning was the deed"[291]). To not do so risks conflating language and action in the debate on their interdependence.

An intelligible life, for Rhees, is one in which intelligibility is learnt in community, in word and act, and where discussion is possible not just rhetoric (thus, for Rhees and Wittgenstein, there can be no private language) and the intelligibility of life to oneself (what one says to oneself) depends upon intelligible language. The *form* of understanding, however, need not be the same in language and our active lives in community; one is not always trying to do the same thing with the same phrase. This is extremely important when discussing religious language and belief. Intelligibility depends on circumstance, social setting. There is not just one form of intelligibility or understanding:

> *Intelligibility* and *Understanding* are names which cover families of related activities.[292]

In living our lives and interacting with others there is something analogous to rules of language; certain ways of acting are deemed sensible or in keeping with the socially accepted patterns of behaviour, others are unacceptable or nonsensical. We also have

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[289] Ibid., p.183.

[290] Ibid., p.185.

[291] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value,* ed. by G.H. von Wright with H. Nyman, trans. by P. Winch. Amended 2nd edn. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1980), p.31.

[292] Ibid., p.186.

institutions, by which Rhees means established ways of carrying on areas of our lives. Language itself might be considered an institution and enters into all the others. We learn to live in a similar way to learning to speak and the two processes are interdependent but the 'rules' of the institutions are not just rules of language. There are non-language standards of enormous variety which have grown up in a way similar to aesthetic standards, in association with regular ways of acting and accepted standards of effectiveness or excellence.

The standard of acting and the criticisms of such are not the same as the standards applied to truth and fidelity in speaking. Understanding and criticizing the lives of people go together (or at least they should) and this does not depend on the same criteria employed in criticizing speech and arguments. This is seen particularly in questions of morality, excellence or worth, exemplified by 'what do we think of the man?' This critique can only make sense, indeed can only take place, because of the life we lead with others. There is an analogy with value judgements concerning language and argument, but the 'object' of the criticisms is not the same.

My concern for my own moral behaviour is guided by my opinion of others (how I stand in relation to those I judge 'better' or 'worse') and is not just a concern for intelligibility. Our criticism or praise of our own or another's morality would not, however, be what it is without language, but language would not be what it is without the lives we lead – a life with judgements and criticisms.

A question of what my life is springs from perplexity about it and understanding it is nearer to a value judgement or aesthetic response than a question of intelligibility. It is, for Rhees, not fundamentally based on evidence or argument. He argues it is as if we try one 'painterly view' then another to see which fits. It is not really a personal matter, not answerable in entirely personal terms, not a personal 'contribution' but not a public one either. The 'religious question' and 'the question of the meaning of life' are not a contribution to anything, not a contribution to human intercourse but not my own conception or work, as it were, and in this sense impersonal. It is not a matter of inspiration or ratiocination producing an understanding that can be shared. I do not appear as the answerer to the question and the form of any answer that might be forthcoming is not the important thing.

5.3 Rhees beyond Wittgenstein - language and life

Moving from the ancients to Wittgenstein, Rhees also sees his talk of language-games and grammatical confusion as all part of his persistent effort to tackle the question of 'what it is to say something'. Clearly the concern relates centrally to contradicting sophism and scepticism, particularly scepticism around how confusion about 'what it is to say something' leads to general scepticism around knowledge, understanding and truth. What makes language language rather than nonsense or rubbish?[293] For Rhees, Wittgenstein would include metaphysics and any other areas where we seem to be saying or asking something but where a close regard for the use of language reveals we are not as sham discourse.

Rhees's argument that this central pillar of Wittgenstein's concern persists throughout his professional life should not be taken to mean that Rhees sees no development in his thought. He would, I think, fully endorse Winch's summary of Wittgenstein's change of viewpoint for example concerning the nature of propositions.[294] In the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein seeks the 'general form of propositions', i.e., what makes propositions possible (a 'rule of rules' for the proposition to be intelligible) and concludes that the general form is 'this is how things are'; the proposition was true (said something) because there was identity of structure, or an analysable dependence, between the proposition and reality (sense data).[295] In the later *Investigations* Wittgenstein has eschewed this view of a general form of the proposition. The relationship between the mental and the outside world is not what connects facts and propositions. There is no primary datum on which all language depends, on which the possibility of discourse depends. There is also no one way of distinguishing what is language from what is not: 'You cannot check language to see whether it is accurate by looking outside it'.[296]

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[293] Rush Rhees, *Wittgenstein's On Certainty. There- Like Our Life,* ed. by D.Z. Phillips (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), p.6.

[294] Peter Winch, 'The Unity of Wittgenstein's Philosophy', in: *Studies in the Philosophy of Wittgenstein*, ed. by Peter Winch (Abingdon: Routledge, 1969), pp. 1-19.

[295] Rhees, *On Certainty*, p.7.

[296] Rhees, *Possibility of Discourse*, p.37.

Saying something is a family of notions, not a single notion and this goes also for language.[297] Rhees argues that for Wittgenstein 'If one says that language doesn't always mean the same thing, it isn't simply that there are different styles or grammars…but that '*what you mean by speaking of it as language is different in one case from others'.*[298] To investigate agreement with reality requires investigation of use of language and cannot be determined prior to this:

> There is no sense in asking what the relation of propositions to reality is. (You cannot compare them with reality in that sense. What you get in verification is always the comparison of one proposition with another)…You do not tell what their relation to reality is when you have said what the names in them refer to.
>
> You recognize that a proposition is an *Abbildung der Wirklichkeit* (representation of reality) when you recognize that it really says something. This is the reality of language and the reality of logic too. And the application of logic.[299]

'What it is to say something' thus has no single answer apart from a set of sounds playing a part in a language-game[300] and what can be called a language-game is very varied, open-ended. Whether the sounds play a role is determined only by whether they make a difference to what people say or how they respond:

> …to believe in the reality of language is to ask somebody a question.[301]
>
> ….expressions must be intelligible in some way other than the sense of 'logically permissible', if the notion of 'logically permissible' is to have any reality at all.[302]

Rhees brings to the fore that, for him, language must have a unity for there to be mutual understanding but what unity can this be? It is not a 'formal' unity but there must be a generality to it.[303] It must operate across the circumstances of a life; it must allow conversation under all usual circumstances. Intelligibility cannot be for a limited set of circumstances if life is to have a cohesive reality. For Rhees the question of the relation of logic to reality is not the same as the question of the relation of language to reality. You cannot get at the reality of language, i.e., you cannot get at what understanding is,

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[297] Rhees, *On Certainty*, p.8.

[298] Ibid., p.37.

[299] Rhees, *Possibility of Discourse*, p.35.

[300] Rhees, *On Certainty*, pp.9-10.

[301] Rhees, *Possibility of Discourse*, p. 33.

[302] Ibid., p.35.

[303] D. Z. Phillips, in: Rhees, *Possibility of Discourse*, p. xxix.

by studying the logic of language. Without the reality of language there could be no reality in logic: 'The force of logic… depends on certain uses'.[304]

The relation of language to reality is found in the concept of talking about something; it is most clearly evident in conversation. The relation of logic to reality might mainly lie in whether there is any reality in the difference between valid and invalid arguments and in the ruling out of contradictions. Rhees argues that discussion is only intelligible, only is discourse, when it is something in which lives are being carried on together[305] but, despite its unity, there is no one way in which language functions, there is not one form of understanding. Intelligibility and understanding cover families of related activities, they are not always one thing. Language does not have one point. You are not always trying to do one thing when speaking or trying to understand or be understood thus intelligibility in one area such as science or mathematics should not necessarily guide a search for intelligibility in other areas of our lives.

Rhees claims that 'the deepest forms of confusion about language take a general form'[306] and calling language a family of games is one of them. He argues that for Wittgenstein the connections in language happen within the language-game but this allows some of the older conceptions of language and logic presented in the *Tractatus* to survive in his later writings. Language is still predominantly looked at as a practical method or technique. The structure of the proposition is replaced by the structure of the language-game – still 'doing things' with words, though the connection of words to the 'outside world' now occurs within the language-game. Rhees stresses that the meaning of words within the language-game depends upon the meaning that they have in other games.[307] Speaking is not just using a set of signals and Rhees saw Wittgenstein's builder's language-game to be just that. It had no room for distinguishing sense from nonsense, no development in understanding; they did not really have anything to say to

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[304] Rhees, *Possibility of Discourse*, p.33.

[305] Rhees, *On Religion*, p.185.

[306] D. Z. Phillips, in: Rhees, *Possibility of Discourse*, p.5.

[307] Rush Rhees, 'Wittgenstein's Builders', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 60 (1959-60), pp. 179-180.

each other.[308] For Rhees all language is not part of just one conversation (Plato) but nor is the only alternative a family of language-games. Language must be an extension of what is said.[309]

Rhees argues that if you explain a game to someone you already assume that they can speak. You have already accepted the 'fundament' of language ability, its innate capacity, and some proficiency. But how do we explain 'speaking'? What is being ignorant of speaking? Following, repeating, or mastering a game, developing a skill are all too external to discourse and all miss the crucial matter of the unrepeatability of conversation, the inability to have the exact same conversation again. We do not say anything in a game, and language and games have no 'formal' relation. Language is not just a collection of techniques or learned skills and the growth of understanding in a conversation is central to our growth as persons, our conceptual understanding. We become persons in speaking a language and vice versa. This is not just an exercise of a technique, employing a mode of action. The relationship between speech, intelligibility and action is in a sense 'internally corresponding' in scenes in a life.

If my life is changed by what people say to me this is not like a difference in a game. Interest in a conversation, debatability, is what gives it a personal or 'internal' aspect. Individual contributions interweave and 'interpenetrate' with those of the other participants – the conversation in this sense is not self-contained. It is two or more people interacting and we are not external to it.[310] There must be a common ground or understanding for conversation to be 'fruitful'. It is not about common rules. Whether you understand speech depends on knowing how the language is spoken, the role that it plays, how it fits into the lives of the participants. Just having the grammar, the syntax, the usage is not enough. If something is 'missed' in a discussion, if an error goes unrecognized, then it shows itself in the life then lived. What is missing if there is a misunderstanding is not a capacity or skill.[311] You can only see connections when you understand the overall background, the setting.

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[308] Hugh A. Knott, *Wittgenstein, Concept Possession and Philosophy. A Dialogue* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p.89.

[309] D.Z. Phillips, in: Rush Rhees, *Possibility of Discourse*, p.xxxvi.

[310] Rhees, *Possibility of Discourse*, p.55.

[311] Ibid., p.66.

For Rhees using language is not a matter of obeying rules or 'just going on' with anything. It is not a doing in that sense, it is speaking *to others*. Clearly, he accepts that not all language is conversation, but this acts as an interpretative standard for all language use. Could that language be part of a conversation? This is the test. There must be the possibility of the growth in understanding through interaction. Language, speaking, human action are all intrinsically interwoven – 'language makes sense if living makes sense'. Reflecting on conversations is of the most importance here. Conversation is a dialogue with connections outside the dialogue[312] and a word cannot have a meaning confined to one circumstance, it must have a meaning established in different settings. We must have an understanding of the life outside the conversation. The generality in speaking is not that of a technique nor is training to speak just imparting a technique, it must have at least the capacity to be part of a conversation, an interaction– 'to imagine a language is to imagine a form of life'.[313] People must have something in common to have a conversation and scepticism is essentially the denial of the *possibility* of understanding.

Rhees argues that in *Zettel* §99[314] Wittgenstein's main concern is to dispel the idea that for something to *be* language, rather than mechanical movement, thought is needed. For Rhees this is not enough. Language cannot be free from thought, the mental process, or it would be simply a mechanical technique, but it must also be related to the social and behavioural and not be subsumed into a private, inner, mental world. Wittgenstein wants to stress the completeness and logical independence of the language-games but the use of words for Rhees cannot be confined in this way and retain the name language. What is said is said 'in the language' and in some sense there is a language common to all language- games. The interconnections with other situations, other places of usage, are necessary and the meaning of a word within a game is dependent on its meaning in other games.[315] We live language.

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[312] D.Z.Phillips, in: Rhees, *Possibility of Discourse*, xxxi.

[313] Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations,* §19.

[314] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Zettel,* ed. by G.E.M. Anscombe and G.H. von Wright, tr. by G.E.M. Anscombe (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), §99.

[315] Knott, p.89.

For Rhees the unity of language is simply the unity of common intelligibility. This makes it possible for people to understand and converse with one another and the fact that people *do* understand each other *is* the unity which language has. Language, dialogue brings *understanding*. You understand when you learn from it. There is a unity of dialogue, of understanding, not of form (the way we speak). Asking what the difference is between rubbish and discourse is not a sensible question, it is clear within the context of the speech. The growth of understanding is related to meaning in life. Meaning, sense, and reality are all interrelated:

> The possibility of understanding is not simply the possibility of communicating. It is the possibility of distinguishing waking from nightmare.[316]

> Unless you can see the kind of unity that a dialogue has, you cannot see what it is for anything to make sense.[317]

For our purposes it is critical to understand Rhees's interpretation of how a child comes to understand speech. A child comes to understand others in the context of conversations going on around it intermingled with the actions of life. Children clearly have some rationality prior to developing language but reason and the development of language are directly connected. The child becomes a person in the interaction of reason, speech, and life. As Knott puts it, for Rhees: 'the concept of a person and the concept of a language – or speaking a language – are mutually constitutive'.[318] The child does not learn 'the way we speak' before it comes to understand, the two are not 'set against each other'. Understanding comes in conversation and action – the child contributes, argues, answers back. When you teach a child to speak it is not like teaching someone a foreign language and it is not simply learning to do something.[319] It is not (as Rhees thought Wittgenstein believed) just training in reaction to or with words, that is too mechanical, even children speak out of the life they lead.[320] The vexed issue of the relationship of instinct and habit to language acquisition will be fully covered later in discussions of the 'groundlessness' of language but it is clearly important here.

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[316] Rhees, *Possibility of Discourse*, p.14.

[317] Ibid., p.14.

[318] Knott, p.86.

[319] Rhees, *Possibility of Discourse*, p.253.

[320] Raymond Gaita, 'Language and Conversation: "Wittgenstein's Builders"', in: *Wittgenstein's Centenary Essays,* ed. by A. Philips Griffith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp.101-115 (p.108).

Understanding is an ability fostered not a state of mind or a process. There can be no general answer to what growth in understanding consists in. It is not a matter just of correct responses, pointing etc. but shows itself in the development of judgement in the child, which has similarities to growth in aesthetic judgements. Intelligibility depends on how things hang together in dialogue and meaning isn't a process or act of any kind. Similarly, interpreting isn't an act which invariably accompanies understanding. Understanding things, a growth in wisdom, in maturity, is not about learning specifics, gathering information.[321] There needs to be sufficient common understanding in the beginning of the conversation and there needs to be facility in the language. A way of living is not simply operating with a language, it is sharing a common way of living, history, institutions, etc.

Rhees stresses also the importance of 'non-conceptual understanding',[322] such as that associated with appreciating art, music, etc., analogous to discourse in many ways, though not the same. Much of the growth of understanding, even the growth of understanding through discourse, is co-existent with that. There is also a connection between growth of understanding and 'seriousness'. Philistinism is the opposite – a lack of seriousness - and leads to a lack of understanding. What is missing in the man who likes good art and bad art equally well?

5.4 The foundations of language and belief

Considerable debate has been engendered in recent years regarding the significance of certain passages in Wittgenstein's *On Certainty* concerning the nature of religious belief and religious language on the one hand and the foundational basis for all language on the other. As we shall see this tends to centre around the sections in *On Certainty* on 'hinge propositions',[323] also termed propositions forming the 'axis' central to

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[321] Rhees, *Possibility of Discourse*, p.73.

[322] Ibid., p16.

[323] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, eds. G.E.M. Anscombe and G.H. von Wright, trans. D. Paul and G.E.M. Anscombe (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), §341.

language,[324] the 'background', the 'riverbed',[325] 'scaffolding',[326] and the 'foundation'. Wittgenstein, for Rhees, is concerned with the insight gained into human thought, language, language-games, logic, and science that can be obtained by the study of these particular propositions.

In Rhees's writings, lectures etc. gathered as *Wittgenstein's On Certainty. There like our Life* he clearly sees Wittgenstein's concern to be expressible also, in essence, as the *justification* for the language we use and Rhees focuses on what constitutes 'doubt', 'mistake', 'knowing', 'believing', 'understanding', 'seeing an aspect' as critical areas for understanding such justification. One cannot really determine Rhees's own views fully from the writings gathered in this book, particularly in view of the complexity of the editing of Rhees's papers required for its production, but Rhees clearly regards Wittgenstein's views as highly important and provides what is, in total, a critical elucidation of the meaning of Wittgenstein's comments with numerous areas drawn out where he finds Wittgenstein's points wanting or requiring further explanation. It would therefore seem reasonable to presume that Rhees is in general agreement with Wittgenstein on those areas where he makes no critical comment, and we shall proceed on that basis.

Rhees explains that *On Certainty* is composed essentially of the notes Wittgenstein made regarding the above unusual propositions discussed by G.E. Moore (now often termed 'Moore's certainties') in his papers in from 1925[327] and 1939.[328] He argues that:

> Moore is protesting against the view that I know only such propositions as the propositions of mathematics or 'I know I see red now'; he is insisting I know other things of quite a different kind, e.g. 'I know that this is a tree.[329]

Rhees interprets Moore as arguing that the propositions are ones which we do not question and are dependent upon immunity from doubt. This, Rhees comments, is what

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[324] Ibid., §152

[325] Ibid., §97.

[326] Ibid., §211.

[327] George E. Moore, 'A Defence of Common Sense', *Contemporary British Philosophy* (second series), ed. by J.H. Muirhead (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1925), pp. 192-233.

[328] George E. Moore, 'Proof of an External World', in: *G.E. Moore: Selected Writings,* ed. by Thomas Baldwin (London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 165-6.

[329] Rhees, *On Certainty*, p.56.

holds them together as a type and other than this they are not sub-classifiable. He believes that Moore does not, in fact, 'know' them to be true but the assertions 'stand fast' for him and to regard them as solid is part of our method of doubt and enquiry. He does not 'know' them because he cannot produce convincing, adequate grounds for his knowing.

Rhees argues that, crucially for Wittgenstein, for Moore to be correct about knowledge of his hands, the tree in his garden, etc. the grounds for that belief must be stronger than what they are meant to justify. The evidence must be more certain, more compelling than the belief itself. This is not the case in Moore's propositions because, for normal people, in everyday circumstances, nothing is more certain than his propositions.[330] They are truisms. Winch has argued, and Rhees supports this, that in some ways 'On Certainty' is concerned with finding alternatives to 'I know'.[331] If we accept Wittgenstein's argument against Moore 'knowing' his propositions are true how do we account for our still unshakingly accepting them; for us in living our lives they cannot be doubted. To argue against them is evidence of madness or serious sensory abnormality.[332] Hence the concentration in *On Certainty* on the foundation of this certainty or rather its lack of foundation.[333]

One can throw further light on Wittgenstein's and Rhees's understanding of epistemology by looking at their comments on the difference between knowing and believing, being certain, etc. Their comments on these topics will also be seen to be of considerable importance regarding Pascal's understanding of rational knowledge, belief, and faith. It is very important at the outset to make clear that Rhees's discussion on this matter is a *philosophical* discussion. Rhees is not arguing against the common interchangeable usage of 'believe' and 'know', he is pointing to conceptual philosophical difficulties in conflating the two words. Rhees argues that there is a confusion if you treat knowing as a state of mind – a confusion of grammar – and perhaps 'I know that this is a tree' is an example of this kind of confusion. States of

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[330] Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, §125

[331] See D.Z. Phillips, in: Rhees, *On Certainty*, p. 150

[332] Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, §526

[333] See for example: Ibid §136, §137, §151.

mind such as feeling sad, also perhaps believing, feeling doubtful and feeling certain, are not in the same category as 'knowing'.

There is a difference between knowing and believing and it is not like the difference between 'believing' and 'being sure or certain'. Saying 'I know that …' in a sense is irrelevant because, taken alone, it does not show in fact whether you know a thing or not. It is a statement of a different kind to 'I believe' or 'I believe I know'. Knowing depends on giving acceptable justification, reasons, common evidence recognizable by others. It is not a matter of personal conviction. If you say you believe something and really do not, then you are lying and at fault. With knowing, for example, that someone is present when he is not then you may not be lying if that turns out not to be the case. Your evidence may have been faulty. You can say that you knew but turned out to be mistaken, had not properly checked your facts, were duped, etc. You may still be at fault, but this type of mistake fits into our everyday pattern of life, what goes on generally with us. This is not the case with 'believe'. You can always ask 'how do you know this' but asking 'how do you believe this' (used in the same sense) is different.

Rhees argues that, fundamentally, Moore is saying what he does because he is perplexed about the use of the word 'know'. To reiterate, this is not an everyday conundrum but a philosophical investigation of 'I know'. Wittgenstein says 'I know Jones is in the room, I saw him go in a minute ago' is correct use. The speaker might find out he was mistaken but he did not indulge in conjecture and had good evidence for 'knowing'. Rhees felt that Moore wanted to say 'know' and 'believe' were similar in the sense that both could be wrong but then, for Wittgenstein and Rhees:

1. It does not make sense to say one is mistaken in saying one knows it.
2. It doesn't make sense to say they said they knew it, but it wasn't so.

According to Rhees, Wittgenstein's interest interlaces with concerns on understanding 'mistake' and 'doubt' which date back to 1937-8 well before writing *On Certainty*.[334] Talking about doubt, for him, only makes sense in a certain language-game, environment, etc. Philosophical doubt about the reality of objects is groundless – he could not say what 'doubting' was here, let alone give grounds for doubt. How could

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[334] Rhees, *On Certainty*, p.68.

you answer a question as to whether there were physical objects? Could the conclusion that there are none be a mistake? No, it would be madness here. If we called into question Moore's propositions then we wouldn't know what to say, we couldn't carry on language:

> You cannot be doubtful – because it makes no sense to 'be doubtful' – unless there are some things you do not doubt.[335]

> This does not mean that that there is any specific class of 'things which cannot be doubted' In fact that is just the point.[336]

> They are not a certain class of propositions that cannot be doubted. On the contrary.[337]

Rhees says that the chief theme of *On Certainty* is 'the part that they (the odd propositions) do play in our life and language – the difference there would have to be, for instance, if we recognize some way or form of being doubtful about them. *On Certainty* is not a polemic by Wittgenstein against Moore but several of Moore's propositions together with others discussed by Wittgenstein are of interest because Wittgenstein believes they play an unusual role in our thinking and speaking. The *unnaturalness* of Moore's propositions in the circumstances described by Moore struck Wittgenstein. They are not postulates and their logical role is only made evident by imagining the effect of removing their immunity from doubt.[338] They 'aren't even expressed in our thoughts'. We have not satisfied ourselves of their correctness, they are just accepted. They are accepted in so far as we act. They are swallowed along with what we learn and are held fast by what is around them[339] but we also learn by using them.[340]

Wittgenstein does not argue that the propositions account for the grammatical form that we use and Rhees does not feel that Wittgenstein regards them as the foundations of language.[341] He does talk of them on occasion as a foundation or

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[335] Ibid., p.57.

[336] Ibid., p.58.

[337] Ibid., p.66.

[338] Ibid., p.62, p.78, p.114.

[339] Ibid., p.63. See also: Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, §143, §144.

[340] Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, §476.

[341] See: Ibid., §519.

background, but they do not explain the existence of language.[342] We achieve language by using it, starting with matters of fact and the language and action associated with those. But why does language have the form it does? One can see that in talking of matters in physics then mathematics has a concept forming (linguistic) role, it determines what can sensibly be said. The odd propositions do not seem to have this determining role though they may sometimes play the role of empirical propositions,[343] they can in some circumstances be used to make informative statements, to assert something, to convey information but a "'whole body of such propositions' determine the form of the language-game or the game in which we make empirical judgements".[344] Wittgenstein, for Rhees, is interested here in empirical judgements and drawing conclusions – 'induction'. He wants to find the role of these unusual propositions in the 'the game of making judgements', of certainty, questioning, testing, etc. 'Empirical proposition' itself does not seem well defined and these peculiar propositions point up that conclusion.[345]

Rhees attempts in *Wittgenstein's On Certainty. There like our Life* to bring out the importance of Wittgenstein's comments relating to certainty in human action.[346] When we act we do not base our action on calculated probability; when we accept given understandings on science etc., we have no conclusive knowledge or statistical evidence of validity to justify our actions. We act as we do within a system formed on experience, custom and habitual usage and not referenced prior to action. Statements such as 'here is a hand' and 'at this distance from the sun there is a planet' may both be accepted but the foundation of that acceptance differs, the statements show different 'conceptual linguistic situations'.[347] When moving from statements of the second kind to those of the first (Moore's type of statements) there is no steady gradation of the possibility of a mistake: 'No: at some point it has ceased to be conceivable'.[348] In the first case it makes no sense to talk of doubt. Every reasonable person believes that they

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[342] Rhees, *On Certainty*, p.79.

[343] Ibid., p.14.

[344] Ibid., p.45.

[345] Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, §319.

[346] This is based in major part on: Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, §600, §603 and Wittgenstein, *Investigations*, §466.

[347] Rhees, *On Certainty*, p.84.

[348] Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, §54.

have two hands.[349] This relates to how we judge, the game of judging, grounded in experience. We learn this judging from childhood in connection with other judgements not as rules and no deeper ground is needed.[350] We come to have convictions or beliefs and are not simply dependent upon taught rules or grammar.[351]

Taken together these unusual propositions, often termed *hinge propositions,* though unstated, give us our way of thinking, the way we go about things. 'What goes unmentioned' is the underpinning of our 'world-picture', the way we think, and all holds together by what surrounds it.[352] Doubting them brings down all 'measuring modes'.[353] It would be wrong to think that they give language sense, or that you deduce facts from them but one's 'world-picture' just *is* making judgements in this way, to 'read' the world in this way. Rhees argues that they are not pre-suppositions in all our thinking but are nonetheless something involved *in* all our thinking. The propositions discussed underlie, or form a background to, what we regard as 'good reasons'.[354] These propositions are 'withdrawn from doubt', not certain or proven. We cannot reach out to doubt them.[355] They are the fundament of all acting and thinking.

5.5 Varieties and variants in 'hinge propositions'

Rhees makes clear that hinge propositions are not of a single type and not 'fixed' in a 'world-picture'. Each one may be variable in its usage, i.e., may or may not act as a hinge proposition. This is clearly evident in the difference between 'I have two hands' and 'the world has existed for 50 years'. In view of the following argument on the importance of hinge propositions in religious belief, however, it is necessary to look further into this area.

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[349] Ibid., §252.

[350] Ibid., $128, $131, $140.

[351] Rhees, *On Certainty*, p.85.

[352] Wittgenstein, *On Certainty,* §167, §143, §144.

[353] Rhees, *On Certainty*, p.88.

[354] Ibid., pp.88-89.

[355] Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, §87, §88.

In traditional philosophical terms one can argue that what cannot be doubted equals certainty and the exemplar of my own mental state are more certain than my knowledge of the outer world. For Wittgenstein and Rhees certainty and knowledge are distinguished, where knowledge requires the elimination of the possibility of error, but certainty occurs where no possibility of error exists. Thus, the statement 'I can know that I am in pain' is senseless because there is no possibility of error to be eliminated – 'the pain that I do not know' makes no sense. To use 'I know' there must be the possibility of error and the possibility of elimination of the error.

Rhees and Wittgenstein argue that 'belief' is justified not within the mind but within the language-game, i.e., it is contextualized. How one proves a statement is dependent upon the language-game being played. One may for example doubt whether what one sees is a dog, the language-game will be different if the context is that of differentiating a dog from a cat and differentiating a dog from an automaton. In the first the language-game will relate to the differences within the animal kingdom, in the second between real and mechanical. Evidence in the first case cannot be used in the second and vice versa. The context of a conversation alters the justification for knowledge. 'I know that p' varies with language-game. The 'rules', as it were, of 'justification' vary with language-game. In the case of hinge propositions, if they were not true then the 'rules of justification' cannot operate, they cease to be in effect.

This point has been well brought out by Yamada[356] utilizing Wittgenstein's statement in *On Certainty* §337: 'If I make an experiment, I do not doubt the existence of the apparatus before my eyes. I have plenty of doubts, but not that'. We can have doubts relating to an experiment, e.g., is this chlorine or is it fluorine being produced? This is one language-game. We can also have anomalous situations where one might doubt the existence of the apparatus without being mad or speaking nonsense, e.g., the whole apparatus might be a projection or hologram. That is another language-game. 'I know that there is apparatus' is then meaningful but in the *ordinary situation*, the ordinary or usual language-game, such doubt is meaningless as no error can be entertained.

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[356] Keichii Yamada, *What is Wittgenstein's View of Knowledge? An Analysis of The Context Dependency of Knowledge* <https://opac.ll.chiba-u.jp/da/curator/100541/S18834744-33-p019-YAM.pdf> [accessed 20/2/18].

Although Rhees is clear that hinge propositions are not presuppositions for the use of language, there is a sense in which hinge propositions, not dependent themselves on justification, determine the direction of what should be doubted within the language-game (what 'justification rules' apply), e.g. in the case of the dog above one has to accept that the dog is a living being if one is to engage in conversation regarding whether it is a dog or a cat. What is doubted is dependent upon what is taken as read. One can have *certainty* about the dog being a living animal without justification of the hinge upon which this certainty depends i.e., that this is an animal.

Hinge propositions vary in generality of application enormously and do not apply in many anomalous situations.[357] What, however, is a 'normal' situation? 'I know that I am in pain' seems senseless in all situations but 'I know that I have two hands' has clear anomalous possible situations when it might not be true (after surgery, etc.). 'I know that this is a living thing' has broader possibilities for sensible disagreement. Knowledge and doubt are 'grammatically' connected, knowledge and certainty grammatically separated. Knowledge is said within language-games, certainty is shown by the way we 'go about things'. The non-acceptance of hinge propositions can only be addressed by training, habituation, enculturation.

5.6 Excursus – Hinge propositions, 'God' and religious belief

 Prior to further discussion of Rhees's concerns with 'world-picture' and faith it is desirable to examine developments in the understanding of hinge propositions/commitments from a religious point of view which have arisen since Rhees's death, but which interact with his interpretation of Wittgenstein's view of the subject.

There is a considerable literature regarding the validity of the concept of hinge propositions as a defence against the arguments of radical scepticism in general which we cannot enter into in detail here.[358] Our concern is with their employment in the

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[357] Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, §25, §27.

[358] For a useful summary see: Duncan Pritchard, 'Is 'God Exists' a 'Hinge Proposition' of Religious Belief?' *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion,* 47, (2000), pp. 129-140.

argument over the existence of God and religious belief in general. The essential point is that of the value of empirical evidence in the 'proof' of the existence of God. For modern man, it is argued, there is no objective evidence for the existence of God and thus no warrant for religious belief with God as its core. The empirical evidence that is provided, e.g., based on authority, revelation, testimony, etc. is only allowable if one already assumes the existence of God. If one rejects the idea of God, the evidence put forward has no traction and support from natural theology has been ruled out by science.

The basis of the counterargument for religious belief, based on hinge propositions is seen in *On Certainty* §341-$343:

> …the questions that we raise and our *doubts* depend upon the fact that some propositions are exempt from doubt, are as it were like hinges on which those turn.
> That is to say, it belongs to the logic of our scientific investigations that certain things are *in deed* not doubted.
> But it isn't that the situation is like this: We just *can't* investigate everything, and for that reason we are forced to rest content with assumption. If I want the door to turn, the hinges must stay put.

This argument, it should be understood, is not one that removes the challenge of radical scepticism, but it essentially employs a 'parity argument' – that the concept of hinge propositions, when applied to religious belief, to the existence of God, shows that as many of our beliefs are not warranted by empirical evidence but rather accepted, swallowed down; religious beliefs are no different. Religious beliefs and other generally held beliefs, both of which are firmly adhered to without question, both have the same epistemic basis, both are not warranted by 'proofs'. Several authors have pointed out that this argument is found in its essentials also in Cardinal Newman's *Sermons* and *Grammar of Assent*[359] and that it seems that Wittgenstein was aware of Newman's writings.

The argument as to whether Moore's account, Wittgenstein's position, or variants of Wittgenstein's and Rhees's stances as laid out by, for example, Pritchard,[358] do address the challenge of radical scepticism *per se* is a complex one and still not philosophically settled. From a theological viewpoint, however, if the existence of God

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[359] See: Ian Ker, *The Genius of John Henry Newman* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1989), pp. 39-58, pp.75-80.

is accepted as a hinge proposition, then religious belief is warranted on the same basis as much ordinary, unquestioned belief, i.e., held on firm but unproven grounds – if all rational evaluation pre-supposes arational commitments, religious belief has parity with belief generally.

Pritchard expands on this parity argument using the concept of 'quasi-fideism. His position is laid out as follows:

> Whereas standard parity arguments aim to show that religious belief can be just as rational as another kind of belief which is generally considered to be through-and-through rational, quasi-fideism takes a more radical line. According to the quasi-fideist, our everyday beliefs that we take to be through-and-through rational in fact pre-suppose fundamental arational commitments – i.e., commitments which are not rationally grounded. This is where the parity argument comes in, since the proponent of quasi-fideism claims that although it is true that religious belief presupposes fundamental arational commitments, this is not the basis for a specific scepticism about the rationality of religious belief since *all* belief, even beliefs which we generally hold to be paradigmatically rational, also presuppose fundamental arational commitments…all belief is, at root a matter of faith rather than reason.[360]

He argues that hinge propositions are not, in essence, beliefs at all. These animal,[361] primitively held[362] commitments are not 'truth directed, propositional attitudes' as they are unresponsive to rational considerations. This clarification on the nature of hinge propositions is important in preventing the extrapolation of epistemically proven knowledge to hinge propositions, a problem seemingly appreciated by Wittgenstein: 'It is certain that after the battle of Austerlitz… Well, in that case it's surely certain that the earth existed then.'[363]

Up to this point Pritchard really offers a clarification of what is already in Rhees's writings. Rhees states that hinge propositions cannot be used to deduce facts, are not postulates and that we do not 'know' them to be true. Rather than simply arguing that they are commitments but not beliefs his stance is subtler but more radical

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[360] Duncan Pritchard, 'Faith and Reason', *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement*, 81, (2017), p. 104.

[361] Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, §359.

[362] Ibid., §475.

[363] Ibid., §183.

– he argues that they do not enter our thoughts, they are not the subject of any mental attitude at all, neither belief, disbelief nor commitment, but simply manifest themselves in language as it is employed.

Pritchard also addresses the apparent great variability in hinge commitments and their alteration in time and place with the concept of an 'uber hinge commitment' whereby all the more variable ones are subordinated to the 'basic certainty that we are not radically or fundamentally in error'. We therefore cannot rationally evaluate individual hinge commitments because to do so would threaten the uber hinge commitment, i.e., mean that we were fundamentally mistaken in all beliefs.
One can immediately see the value of such an argument for theology - if God's existence is a hinge proposition, then the role of faith might be to bring about the acceptance of the 'hinge', which by faith would be held with 'even greater certainty than the principle of non-contradiction'.[364]

Pritchard's elucidation of the nature of hinges as non-beliefs also allows for the rational basis of other articles of belief, other 'proofs' of religion, without allowing an argument that they pre-suppose God's existence and are only valid on that basis. Again, however Rhees holds a more radical but equally useful role for theology. Following Wittgenstein, he argues that a whole mass of such propositions is swallowed down and all hang together. You *cannot* question these individual propositions as to do so brings all rationality down. Their range relates 'internally' to the differences in lives led. Their *variability* depends in the changes in lives led. One might say that the uber hinge for Rhees is all possible hinges together. How would one begin to determine whether that fitted the uber hinge commitment as presented by Pritchard?

Religious beliefs are in some ways like hinge propositions, e.g., they seem unquestionable to the committed believer (though he will usually accept the legitimacy of others questioning his beliefs) and justification for them is either not seen as necessary or is offered from within the religious form of life rather than from globally accepted 'firm evidence'. Even biblical evidence might be considered internal as it is

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[364] Roberto di Ceglie, 'Faith and Reason: A response to Duncan Pritchard.' *Philosophy*, 92, (2017), p.276.

testimony-based and from believers. As Wittgenstein says,[365] the believer has an unshakeable belief which shows not by reasoning or having ordinary grounds for belief but in regulating all in his life. Probability, hypothesis, and objective evidence are not to the fore and the religious beliefs are not held in the way that opinions are. They rest on a firm foundation for the believer where questioning them might even be considered sinful, but that foundation is testimony, dogma, and faith. Degrees of uncertainty do not seem to apply here as they do in empirical propositions.

Also, like Moore's propositions, attempts to offer contradictory opposite positions often founder as the positions of the two protagonists are so far apart – I know that my God saves' cannot be countered by 'no you do not know your God saves'. The 'disagreement' does not seem to occupy the same mode of discourse. The original statement is too far beyond the reality of the world of the rejecter to be contradicted in this way. Contradicting is usually from outside the view of reality presented by religious believers. Religious beliefs are not stated in the form of judgements about matters but have a necessary, all or nothing, character. Offering a contradictory position cuts one off from the discourse. Rhees makes a similar point in a different manner[366] - the religious statements of a believer are expressed as judgements of absolute not relative value in a similar way to ethical judgements. To the believer the alternative means nothing in that no alternative exists within their world-picture. To question the religious belief is to offer an alternative reality.

The situation is far from clear cut, however. The religious believer has a certain world-picture/form of life with its attendant hinge propositions, the majority of which are shared with non-believers. The believer's attitude to life, his perspective on what matters in life is the key difference and this is a matter of relationship to God. Others who question his religious beliefs are not cut off from reality, reason, and the meaningful use of language generally, only from religious reality and the religious perspective. The non-believer's life goes on normally in society, conversation continues. Moore's propositions in general relate to concepts with a wide inter-related series of usages, activities, and situations in life. Religious concepts are more limited,

[365] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief*, ed. by Cyril Barrett (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966), §54.

[366] Rhees, *Discussions,* pp. 94-96.

and their denial or loss does not impact life in the same way as denial of Moore's propositions.

From our viewpoint these arguments will be later seen to directly impact on Pascal's utilization of a prudential approach to conversion in 'the wager' and the mode of achievement of the 'habit of belief' central to our thesis.[367] It also impacts upon Pascal's understanding of the role of intuition (the heart) in faith.

5.7 World-picture, form of life etc.

To differently restate what we said previously, for Rhees, in *On Certainty* Wittgenstein is concerned with the success underlying the way we speak, what we say and the way we act, with our sureness of judgement, our justification for speaking, behaving, believing as we do. Essentially, as Rhees argues, it simply is that we do things that way. We have 'swallowed down' the bedrock propositions which underpin our unquestioned world-picture. In operating 'within' this world-picture our inductions are not always justified. Our world-picture is not our pre-suppositions about reality, how the world is, but shows what we accept as explanations, as inductive conclusion, as reasonable, why we regard something as an explanation.

Rhees brings these points out in his discussions of the scientific world-picture and by comments on the world-picture of primitive tribes. Rhees says that in talking of whether those of differing world-picture are guided for example by 'living in a scientific age' or by oracles etc. Wittgenstein is interested in the use of the term 'mistake'. What might constitute a mistake in the way we go about things based upon our world-picture? A mistake would have to be a logically based error, but the use of a world-picture is not based on an employed logic. One should not regard it as reasonable to look for justification of our trust in physics, nor is it sensible to look for the 'logical foundation' of science. We can only look for the logical foundation of a specific theory or hypothesis *within* the scientific discipline, within the purlieu of science. The justification operates only within the scientific world-picture. A logical foundation here for a world-picture is meaningless, absurd. That is just the way science goes.[368] The

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[367] Terence Penelhum, 'Pascal's Wager', *The Journal of Religion,* 44, (1964), pp. 201-209.

[368] Rhees, *On Certainty,* pp. 80-81.

scientist follows their nose, their own expectation based upon their scientific world-picture and their knowledge of what is usual within that world-picture, not logic. A projected curve in science may logically suddenly deviate after many constant points but 'in the circumstances' the scientist doesn't consider this a sensible deduction to be made before the fact.

Such a 'fixed background', 'matter of course foundation'[369] or 'scaffolding of our thoughts'[370] is our 'world-picture'. We know from within the scientific viewpoint when it is rash to extrapolate. We do not found our methods of experimentation, etc. on probability data or calculation[371] but this is not to say that reproducibility, regularity of occurrence is not important. Rhees says that when in *On Certainty* §603 Wittgenstein comments 'so far as I can judge, yes' this is an ironic denial. We plan our activities based upon the whole of our experience and insight bearing upon the problem, on a whole established world-picture. This world-picture does not make up or provide pre-suppositions of how things are, rather how we go on in our world simply *is* our world-picture. Frames of reference, categories of interpretation can be altered *within*, for example, physics, within that world-picture, but this does not answer the question why do we rely on science? Why do primitive tribes not have our understanding of causality? Why do different societies have different moral understandings? Why do artists paint in the style they do? Why do writers employ the stanzas they do? Why do we think as we do? – life just goes that way.[372] A world-picture is not an environment, it *is* the scientists making experiments in that way, you cannot deduce what is wrong or right from it.

Much is written in the literature about 'form of life', a term much more widely used than world-picture. Rhees is quite clear that *Weltbild* (world-picture) and *Lebensform* (form of life) come to much the same thing. Wittgenstein also used the term *steady lebensformen*.[373] It is important for our purposes to re-iterate that Rhees thinks that Moore has taken on the task, with his propositions, of proving what he really *knows*

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[369] Wittgenstein, *On Certainty,* §167.

[370] Ibid., §211.

[371] Ibid., §613.

[372] Rush Rhees, *On Certainty*, p.82.

[373] Ibid., p.97, p.115

and showing by philosophical argument that his view is the *right* one. This can be interpreted as considering his philosophical viewpoint the correct world-picture. For Rhees and Wittgenstein the position is completely different. Rhees sees Wittgenstein arguing that world-pictures can change; the hinge propositions underpinning world-picture can alter with time and are connected to cultural changes. World-picture cannot be considered one's environment, but different peoples have different world-pictures, and it is not the job of philosophy to analyse and assess the 'truthfulness' of different world-pictures.

Wittgenstein and Rhees's use of 'world-picture' cannot be equated with 'view of the world'. Humour is a way of looking at things and is a view of the world. Lavoisier showed a world-picture or form of life by the way he worked. His world-picture/form of life was not a personal matter. It was accepted by other chemists as obvious. Groups, communities, nations can have the same world-picture but the worlds of individuals differ.[374] As Rhees says: 'Our world-picture is shown, e.g., in what we take as an explanation'.[375] Asking why we regard this sort of thing as an explanation would not make much sense.

Central to the possibility of any meaningful debate on the 'validity' of one world-picture rather than another is the question of what a mistake in a world-picture/form of life would be like. A world-picture is founded upon a nest of propositions that are not, for Rhees, *presuppositions* in all our thinking, presuppositions which might be 'wrong' individually or collectively. They are propositions involved 'in',[376] as it were internal to, our thinking. Our customs, upbringing and living our lives in a society or community provide the nest of propositions and thus our world-picture. People who have a different world-picture do not regard as 'good reasons' or 'good grounds' to guide their actions or beliefs what those with a differing world-picture do. Thus, a primitive tribe may consult an oracle to determine the weather whereas we might look to a meteorological forecast. Both actions have underlying ways of thinking but in both the subject has not gone into the evidence for the value of the oracle or meteorological prediction prior to using it to determine the validity of their approach.

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[374] Ibid., pp.109-110.

[375] Ibid., p.117.

[376] Ibid., p.87.

They simply accept it is how they go on with things and it is consistent with the whole of their world-picture within which all hangs together. Our world-picture holds 'internal' to it turning to science or oracle.[377]

World-pictures are not fixed, they may change with time and environment but also as patterns of reasoning in a community change. One cannot determine which is the 'right' world-picture; such a term has no meaning. A world-picture cannot be 'known' and encompasses not just environment and action. It does not tell us about the structure of the world common to all. Our inductive principles are not based upon a set of propositions which make up a world-picture (e.g., the scientific set). If our world-picture is called into question regarding why we consider something probable then the evidence we provide must necessarily come from within our world-picture, the inductive method remains similar. Those who do not have, for example, the scientific world-picture would question why we consider any or all our conclusions as probable, just as we would do theirs. The only way for us to provide them with insight into our world-picture is by initiation into our procedures, modes of acting, etc. - elements of our whole way of life, i.e., by training.[378] To call their attitude a 'mistake' is to essentially bring two world-pictures into conflict but is an empty accusation. We might say that a scientific world-picture proves itself by results, that that is how the world really is made up, but really that is saying no more than scientific methodology gives the results it does – the scientific question gives the scientific answer. The natural world may teach us much, but it does not dictate *how* we learn.[379]

The importance from the religious point of view is obvious. If one accepts, as Rhees and Wittgenstein do, that religious belief and practice constitute a world-picture the atheist cannot regard that belief as a mistaken viewpoint, an error of judgement not based on evidence, because his evidence against it is based on his world-picture. The two sides can only offer insight and understanding through initiation into aspects of the form of life each inhabits.

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[377] Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, §611.

[378] Rhees, *On Certainty*, p.169.

[379] Ibid., p.170.

There is no suggestion for Wittgenstein of an innate language before learning to speak. Someone knows the meaning of a word or words when he 'goes on in the same way' with use of them – there is agreement in *lebensformen* and language, agreement in actions and agreement in form of life.[380] Rhees stresses Wittgenstein's point that it is acting which lies at the bottom of the language-game. 'A totality of judgements is made plausible to us' by our form of life or world-picture. We are taught judgements in connection with other judgements and judging is closely related to our world-picture.[381] Rhees argues that for Wittgenstein the idea that there is a pre-linguistic, instinctive behaviour as the foundation of language is thoroughly confused. The foundation of all judging is the hinge propositions that are 'withdrawn from doubt'.[382,383] These propositions are the 'ground on which we stand', 'the table on which the game is played'.

The relationship between the hinge propositions and world-picture/form of life is therefore that the propositions, taken as a whole, provide the underpinning for the logical basis of the language we use and the way of life we use it in, this is our world-picture, but their use is not based on an applied logic. The hinge propositions neither form a class nor do they form the basis of instinct, they are simply there and accepted without proof or doubt. Whilst Rhees points to the wide variation in what Wittgenstein might regard as a hinge proposition and stresses the fluidity in this group, the understanding remains that to question them is to question rationality, something which does not seem the case with religious beliefs.

5.8 Plurality of forms of life

In Rhees's writings world-picture is clearly associated inextricably with 'reality' or 'realities'. Rhees, however, does not make clear what, if anything, can define or delineate a reality. Is there a limit to a single world-picture beyond which one talks of a

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[380] Ibid., p.98-99.

[381] Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, §204, §139, §140, §167.

[382] Ibid., §492, §614.

[383] Rhees, *On Certainty*, p.101.

new reality? When applied to forms of life, this problem of limits has not led to consensus in the literature since Rhees's death.[384]

For Rhees the 'certainty' that comes from the acceptance of hinge propositions is not an analysable state, it is simply lived out in a life, within the reality of that world-picture, shared with others who share that world-picture. In *On Certainty* §358 and §359 Wittgenstein seems to be clear that forms of life, arising beyond justification, at the 'animal' level, are not to be confused or conflated with hinge propositions but associated with the certainty which underpins a *lebensform*. If even speaking a language is only part of a form of life[385] then it would seem that a form of life encompasses many individual certainties making up the certainty or sureness of one's whole form of life.

Clearly many certainties are enacted in common in the life of all humans, others such as religious certainties apply to large groups, but there is no clearly defined limit to how few certainties produce a specific form of life or world-picture. This has led to the understanding of a single 'human form of life' with multiple 'forms of life' within it[364]. Others, such as Baker and Hacker take the view that the multiplicity of forms of life is all that Wittgenstein intends to portray.[386]

It is important to stress that Rhees's association of world-picture with 'realities' seems to provide a different perspective near to that of Baker and Hacker. If there were one overarching from of life with multiple forms within, then how would one associate this with a single reality with multiple realities within? Surely one's reality is a cohesive whole and not separable into common and particular components. One either has a world-picture *in toto* or one does not. A human form of life encompassing forms of life seems to collapse into being human and having a form of life. Rhees would also never accept the understanding of 'common elements' inherent in this understanding. World-

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[384] For an overview see; Daniele Moyal-Sharrock, 'Wittgenstein on Forms of Life, Patterns of Life and Ways of Living', *Nordic Wittgenstein Review,* special issue, (2015), pp. 21-42. <htpps://doi.org/10.15845/nwr.v4i0.3362> [Accessed 12/1/2019].

[385]Wittgenstein, *Investigations*, §23.

[386] Gordon Baker and Peter Hacker, *Wittgenstein: Understanding and Meaning. Volume I of an Analytical Commentary on the Philosophical Investigations: Part II – Exegesis of $1-184.* 2nd ed. (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2009), p. 74.

picture is all or nothing, all hangs together or all collapses and even the most 'animal', the most universal, is subsumed into the whole reality of the one person.

It is also imperative to point out regarding Pascal's understanding of habit/custom that, for Rhees, world-picture is cultural, not biological. The certainties undergirding it are taught, swallowed down with cultural background and the actual living of a life amongst others who already hold the fully developed world-picture, the same certainties. Again, this also seems to be the view of Baker and Hacker. 'Facts of nature' and natural responses also undergird the world-picture, but it is encultured and varies with culture. As they point out, what Wittgenstein calls natural is not uniformly biological. One might say that elements of 'first nature' may make up the substratum of a world-picture but much of Wittgenstein's 'natural' and 'cultural' is 'second nature' in Pascal's terms. For Pascal also, of course, his argument would be that much of what is seen as first nature, as well as all our second nature, is acquired through habit/culture/custom. The interaction of cultural and 'animal' will be further discussed later but Rhees does not seem to disagree with Wittgenstein's presentation of man as cultural and animal, nor does he separate custom/culture and animal nature artificially, both are inseparable and integral in providing a world-picture. Language-games themselves are clearly bound inextricably to customs.

Language-games are not forms of life but are inextricably bound into a form of life. World-picture/form of life are in a sense perspectival, though Rhees argues they are not perspectives on life. The religious form of life includes specifically religious language-games such as praising God, praying to God, etc. but the religious form of life includes much more - belief, behaviour, hope, trust etc. One can attempt to speak from the position or perspective of a believer, to gain insight into that perspective, but that is not to attain that form of life or any aspect of it.

5.9 Aspect seeing[387]

It has been widely argued that the reality behind empirical statements such as 'that's a chair' or 'I have two hands' is the actual sense data rather than the object itself (Russell's 'logical fictions'). Wittgenstein, however, in Rhees's view, argues that

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[387] For a fuller discussion see section 8.2.4.

'seeing' is not as simple as analysis in terms of sense data suggests. He brings this out in his sections in *Philosophical Investigations* on colour appreciation and concludes, as Rhees puts it, that '- if the concept of seeing itself stands in need of conceptual analysis – it does not have the unquestioned character that seems to qualify it as the basis of all analysis'.[388]

Rhees stresses that Wittgenstein is particularly interested in *seeing something as something*. Two men may see drawings of two faces which are accurate copies but only one may see a likeness in common that the other does not. There is no problem in visual response here, no difference in visual perception in terms of sense data and this is not a matter of ambiguity – they see different *aspects*. Wittgenstein's discussion of different aspects is part of his discussion and interest in language and understanding[389] as the interest in aspect seeing is not confined to visual interpretation but extends to language; how do words or groups of words convey a particular meaning, even a particular feeling? When we see a picture of someone what makes us understand that it is a particular person when much of the image could apply to many people and the differences may be very minor, are vague and not easily listed – Wittgenstein says that this sums up 'the problem of the representational character of language'.[390] In part he argues against a desire for a logical ground for seeing and language here, hence the extent of his examples and variations, but at root he is elucidating the fact that there is nothing 'behind' or 'deeper' than simply using particular words in particular life circumstances, seeing particular aspects in our way of life.

As Rhees says Wittgenstein is interested in how such seeing as one thing, then another, bears on the understanding of speech; 'seeing' and 'thinking' run into one another often in bewildering ways and so do 'speaking' and 'thinking'. Seeing is just as puzzling as thinking. It is not a simple matter. Realizing an aspect is for Wittgenstein not seeing plus thinking[391] and realizing the meaning of a phrase or word also is not a two-stage process – the meaning dawns on us with the word. When we see a face, a rabbit etc. in the similarity on paper, when we see an aspect, we are *seeing* not

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[388] Rhees, *On Certainty,* pp. 8, 17.

[389] Ibid., p.19.

[390] Ibid., p.18.

[391] Ibid., p.23.

interpreting what is seen and, in speaking, in using the fitting word thinking is not interposed between word and use.

There is an assumption that language is 'an outward attempt to express something which is a hidden process and logically prior to it, namely mental processes which have to do with images and thoughts whose intelligibility does not depend on language'.[392] How does language relate to reality? Wittgenstein and Rhees would argue against a private inner realm, a privileged personal space. Pain, intention, etc. do not have hidden, mental, inner states which are observable by the subject. The animal *in toto* is the subject of psychological attributions. As Hacker puts it 'the limits of thought are the limits of the behavioural expression of thought' and 'the capacity to think in anything other than the most primitive manner is parasitic on the ability to speak'.[393]

Rhees stresses that in *Philosophy of Psychology* subsection xi[394] Wittgenstein talks of 'aspect blindness' by analogy with colour blindness. Such people might not be able to see something *as* something, they might not be able to make the 'shift' between a triangle angle now as left or right base now as apex. There seems to Wittgenstein to be a learned capability or technique here,[395] dependent on training or learning. Such a deficiency is perhaps like having no 'musical ear'. The problem is not that there is an ambiguity to be solved. We talk of seeing here not interpreting, similarly 'seeing as' is just how you see it not how you interpret it. For Wittgenstein custom and upbringing are important here in acquiring the facility to 'see as' but this 'coming to see' is not 'directing' thought but 'swallowed down' with what you learn about objects, shapes, etc.[396] Also, aspect seeing itself is not a single entity. In the famous 'duck-rabbit' example interpretation does depend on seeing the images in other contexts but the 'cross on a background' example does not. One requires mastery of a technique the other does not.

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[392] Ibid., p.27.

[393] Peter Hacker, *The Development of Wittgenstein's Philosophy of Psychology,* <http://info.sjc.ox.ac.uk/scr/hacker/docs/TheDevelopmentOfWittgensteinsPhilosophyOfPsychology.pdf.> pp.8-10. [Accessed 5.2.2019]

[394] Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, p.224, §257.

[395] Rush Rhees, 2003, p.21.

[396] Ibid., p.23.

The use of words and phrases mirrors the above, we 'swallow down' modes of use with our training in speaking, we come to use an increasing range of words under different aspects, we use different tones of voice to convey different senses, etc. As Rhees says, in some cases the word itself seems to be a portrait of its meaning.[397] We have a personal attachment to words and a word may be filled with meaning as if it were a 'picture of the whole thing'. We derive pleasure from finding and using the correct word or narrative – we appreciate the 'correctness of fit' of the word in that place – rather like musical appreciation. Rhees points to 'background' in a culture and value judgements as important here and aspect seeing is clearly part of this – an aspect dawns and some may be blind to it or blind to the whole understanding of this feature of words.

5.10 Chapter summary

In laying out Rhees's fundamental philosophy we can see that he regards radical scepticism as scepticism about the reality of discourse. His understanding of world-picture/form of life is that it is co-constituted with the development of language through conversation and social interaction. Alteration in world-picture is alteration in our reality and the reality of religion is only intelligible within the overall reality of life. Reality and intelligibility do not have a single form, they depend on social setting, custom and habitually accepted interpretations.

Religious *questions* are, for Rhees, closely tied to questions about the perplexity of life rather than intelligibility and conversations on religion, in a setting of the faithful community, develops religious belief and the world-picture of the believer (or seeker); we become 'religious persons' in developing this conversation which interpenetrates the whole of life; we live the religious language, its grammar.

The foundations of our certainty, our believing, why we make the decisions we do, do not lie in knowledge. Believing is contextualized and does not depend on giving reasons and justifications. In our fundamentally accepted beliefs (founded on hinge propositions, Moore's certainties) the idea of a mistake is without sense. These

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[397] Ibid., p.23.

propositions are the underpinnings of our world-picture which just includes making judgements the way we do.

A brief overview has been given of emerging arguments since Rhees's death concerning the similarities between religious beliefs and hinge propositions/Moore's certainties. These stress that both require no empirical evidence. The underpinnings of all these fundamental beliefs include a measure of faith and the beliefs are part of the scaffolding of all our thoughts. Religious belief might be considered in itself to depend on a hinge proposition – the presence of a God. This leads us directly into a deeper study of Rhees's philosophy of religion in the next chapter.

6. Rhees on Religion

6.1 Introduction – Philosophical concepts and religious faith

Before discussing Rhees's writings which relate directly to religious belief we should comment on the relationship of philosophy to theology in his writings. How should we interpret the impact on theology of his ideas? Such a brief introductory commentary is made more pertinent by the fact that, purely on the evidence of his published writings, Rhees did not consider himself to hold belief or faith sufficient to regard himself as a Christian.

Firstly, it should be made clear that use of religious language is part of faith and is not just talking about faith. To put this in Wittgensteinian terms, the language of faith and the life of the believer belong to a single grammar.[398] Another way of expressing this is that theology is involved in a language-game that has a different purpose to that of philosophy i.e., they are separate games. The grammar of faith is a separate grammar, 'God's grammar'. The interpretative 'story' told by theology, even if it were the identical 'story' to one told by philosophy, would have a different interpretative purpose. Theology's basic purpose is to incite emulation of the life of Christ, there are no neutral, hard 'facts' here. It operates within a world-picture in which Christians understand themselves *in toto* as religious – whether the concepts under consideration

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[398] Paul L. Holmer, *The Grammar of Faith*. (New York: Harper and Row, 1978), p. ix.

are biblical, moral, spiritual, or everyday.[399] Unlike most disciplines, therefore, theology, if it aspires to knowledge of God, must be personally appropriated, individually utilized to increase the love of God, another 'mood' altogether. This mood requires imagination and the language, the grammar, of faith itself is imaginative.

When we come to the matter of 'God' we can see that philosophical, and much theological, discussion of the 'concept of God' wants to examine it in isolation. As we shall see, Rhees regards this as futile but, even if we were to show that such examination was 'meaningful', that meaning would only operate for those who believed, worshipped, feared, loved, and prayed to Him,[400] otherwise the term God would not be the *Christian* term 'God'. Perhaps the difference here is in the speaking 'about' and the speaking 'of' God. Speaking *about* religion and God is the commonplace of all, speaking *of* God, to be sensible, requires the world-picture of the faithful. Its meaning, its depth, is determined by its context and use. This does not mean that it is simply expressive.[401] The 'speaking of' is acted out in the whole of life. As Holmer puts it 'the language of faith is not *about* the faith – it becomes another instance of faith'.[402]

A further point needs to be made that will later be enlarged upon in Rhees's writings specifically on religion. There is a widespread tendency today to talk of the lack of relevance of religious language for the modern, scientific person. Religious language no longer 'refers'. The concepts of God, sin, salvation, etc. no longer hold meaning and the language is no longer understood or related to. Rhees would thoroughly agree with the argument that language must 'express' something, it is not enough that the language uses correct grammar (in the common usage of the word); it must mean something. Where Rhees would disagree is in the conclusion that the lack of meaning simply relates to concepts that the language is supposed to represent, in essence to the view that not only is the written word symbolic but language itself is supposed to be symbolic of thoughts, ideas, meanings. For him the sounds of language are not symbolic of meanings; meanings are not 'events' separate to words. Speech may

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[399] Ibid., p.9.

[400] Ibid., p.52.

[401] Ibid., p.62-64.

[402] Ibid., p.66.

be symbolic but not all speech is symbolic. Language cannot be shown to be symbolic of thought and meaning cannot be shown to be 'mentalistic', private, inside our heads. We apprehend meaning through words.

As we shall see symbol, concept and reality go to the heart of Rhees's discussion of the basis of faith. The argument from philosophy that 'God' has no 'thought content', that the *concept* of 'God' is disappearing fast from mankind's thought, rests on the misapprehension of a clear division between thought and word as do some arguments against God as prime mover, first cause, creator of everything. These arguments ignore the point that conceptual meaning is a product of the way ordinary, everyday language works. Concepts do not inhabit a separate place from words, this is a 'metaphysical' view of language that Rhees and Wittgenstein rail against on philosophical grounds. Concepts are expressed by words, they are abilities expressed by words used effectively and, for Rhees, are understood and expanded on in and through conversation. There is no special science or ability that allows a grasp of meanings or concepts separate to language. We talk with concepts and meanings and impart them to others. Talk *about* them cannot confer meaning on the concepts. Further analysis cannot confer further meaning; the meaning is contextual and located in speech. Words come to life as it were in life situations,[403] in conversation their role provides their meaning. Words do not acquire meaning through 'metaphysical' conceptual study. This applies to philosophical and religious 'talk' equally.

From the above it follows that the meaning of religious language is found in the religious speech-forms within their context, where uses for the words are present, i.e., in worship, praise, prayer, etc. If 'God' no longer has meaning it is because the 'matrix' is lost – religious practice. The concept of 'God' is acquired by mastering the ways the word is used in the religious context. To lose the concept 'God' is not to lose a definition, it is to lose a practice, and this applies just as much as too any philosophical concept.

As will be shown, central to Rhees's writings on religion is his understanding that God is not an object; you cannot ask 'what is that?' of God. Similar objections hold for God as a force, a tendency, etc., which we call God. The word 'God' is a concept

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[403] Ibid., p.128.

not a proper name and the concept is learnt along with the whole of religion and a religious life. A concept is like a potency, skill, or ability, not a 'psychical' entity, not simply a thing. It is not possessed in the way one has a definition.[404] One has the concept 'God' if one has a certain set of functions in one's life, functions core to one's humanity, which go with it.

6.2 Creation and Creator.

6.2.1 The existence of God.

Rhees argues that belief in a creator, the source of all that is, is not belief in a *cause*.[405] He makes the enigmatic statement that the cause of everything could not be the cause of anything (I think that here the explanatory element is *thing*). One can ask scientific questions regarding cause – big bang, vacuum fluctuations, etc. One can ask philosophical questions leading to debate on the cosmological argument, etc. but *religious* understanding relates for Rhees to 'there might have been nothing at all' or 'Isn't it extraordinary that anything at all should exist' – statements of wonder, specifically *religious* wonder at the world. It is not like wondering, for example, at the cause or explanation of a natural phenomenon. Even if one could come to a firm conclusion that a necessary being existed, a being that produced the whole universe, why call it 'God'? God does not enter our thinking on that basis. These statements are about the glory of God and gratitude for God's gift not causality – 'God's hand is in all of this'. They are not questions awaiting an answer, not comments avoiding a question of cause – questions of cause are not *religious* questions.

Underlying this account is Rhees's often repeated iteration that God is not 'an object', a 'thing', one entity among others.[406] We can expect a mechanic, a scientist, an electrician to know more about their fields and perhaps teach us more about it but no one can teach us more about God *in that sense*. The child or adult seeker does not make an investigation, test hypotheses, proffer experimental evidence to gain knowledge of

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[404] Ibid., p.144.

[405] Rhees presents his views on causality as contrasting with those of Aristotle and Brentano – Rhees, *On Religion*, pp.3-6.

[406] For example: ibid*.,* p.22.

God. A quest to discover what God is 'would not be a quest at all'.[407] We may follow others singly or in community to deepen religious understanding, to lessen our naivete and to come to understand what constitutes religious doctrine etc. but this is not a scientific quest and cannot result in 'factual evidence'. God is not an object in the universe and cannot be discussed in terms of historical existence or non-existence. Questions of objective existence entail questions about disappearance, destruction, birth, death, resurrection, regeneration, about finding out whether something exists or not, none of these can apply to God and thus, for Rhees, it is *meaningless* to say someone might *find out* whether God exists or not. *Evidence* of God's existence, even from miracles, revelation, etc. would have to mean evidence of the creator of all, the holder of all in existence and such evidence is impossible no matter how gifted, holy, or powerful the seer is.

For Rhees, asserting that 'God exists' is really committing oneself to a form of life with activities, moral codes, beliefs. Proving the existence of God might be considered similar to proving the *validity* of science[408] – its nature at its deepest and most fundamental level, its most profound point, not just explaining its experimental and practical methodology. It might also be similar to proving the validity of morality, rather than the importance of specific sins. We might say that the 'how come' at the basis of science is like the 'how come' that arises when one sees the anomalies or gaps that are evident in a world-picture which excludes the question of God and the basic one of 'why this', 'why anything at all'. One can ask 'how come' about the objects in the world, the animals, the people, in specific and general terms – how come he has brown hair, how come he is not a she, etc. and this can go from the simple to the depths of biochemistry or astrophysics but the most radical question is 'how come this instead of nothing?' and this question seems of a different order to the others. It is not about objects in the world. It is not for Rhees, a question where the subject 'nothing' is put into a relationship with *everything*, all that is, all that exists. 'All that is' is not a category or a collection like all the planets or all the stars and 'everything has come to be' is not the same statement as 'the world has come to be', even if we include all that was and will be in our 'everything'.

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[407] Ibid., p.6.

[408] Compare with: Herbert McCabe, *God Matters*, (London: Continuum,1987), p.2.

The unity which the world has is the crux of the matter and this is not the unity of a thing or 'one thing' which can be said to exist. Rhees argues that he doubts the sense of 'the world exists' just as he doubts the sense of 'everything exists' because the statements use the terms 'everything' and 'the world' as collections, which they are not. He certainly sees more sense in the religious understanding of God as *source* of all, but this understanding is as much, for him, about the present as the beginning. The problem we have is that our words do not stretch to discussion about everything, which is bounded only by nothing, and Rhees stresses the difficulty in the concept of 'nothing' itself; can it be sensibly talked of at all? If all that exists were removed, even including all that has been and will be, this would not amount to finding sense in 'there is nothing'.[409] God is not part of everything, nor can God be put alongside the universe as a separate 'entity'. Also, creation itself cannot be a matter of 'making' as there isn't anything to make something from. Rhees also stresses that talk of 'the world' is itself problematic. Should the world include all that was, is and will be? We talk of my world, the world of the Greeks, the world to come, this is not the same as talk of the universe or the earth.

If one accepts the radicality of Rhees's interpretation of the question 'why anything at all' and his understanding of the basis of the reality of God and religious belief in language, then is it sensible to put the question 'does God exist?', to consider whether God might not 'be'? If it is valid to ask the question 'why anything rather than nothing' (and this is accepted as the crux of the God question), then surely this governs the use of the term 'God' and His non-existence cannot be put in sensible terms. The infinity or finite nature of the universe, its origin in 'big bang' or other events make no difference to the question as to whether the universe depends on God who holds all in being timelessly. Causes generally bring things about in a world without these things, this is not true of God and His creation; by inference it is difficult to see how God can interfere in the universe as he is not an alternative alongside it.

Language about God, including language about His existence, is not a mistake or a pretence, nor is it symbolic in the usually accepted sense, but nonetheless, for Rhees, 'God exists' is not a factual statement, but an expression of faith and 'necessary existence' simply restates that. It does not have the potential for future change of a

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[409] Rhees, *On Religion*, p.15.

statement of fact and not believing in God carries opprobrium in the believing community. Necessary existence cannot mean exists in the sense of objective existence. Here Rhees expresses the crux of his disagreement with Malcolm on the interpretation of Anselm's argument[410]; it depends on accepting a difference between contingent and necessary existence that is founded on the understanding that the existence of the world is contingent, but what would the alternative be? Talk, for instance, of God's goodness, justice etc. does not arise out of answering the question 'is there a God'. Existence is not a further attribute. God's reality gets its unshakeable character for believers from what lies around it and holds it fast, particularly religious language, ritual, prayer. Such comments raise the question as to whether Rhees should be regarded as a realist or non-realist but for him these are abstract labels which throw little light on the real problems of reality.[411]

Questions of contingency and necessity, for Rhees, cannot have anything to do with religion. If one deduced the existence of a necessary being why call it 'God'. An understanding of God comes in a similar way to language and comes through language. At first the religious concept of God is immature, naïve, but that is not because God will be described later in more detail, or the blank spaces filled in. Biology, chemistry, physics can tell us about objects and processes in the world; experts can enlighten us but trying to discover what God is can be no quest at all.[412]

6.2.2 God and Reality

The connections between the previous discussions on hinge propositions and world-picture and religious apologetics might seem at first to be nebulous and it is necessary to offer a preamble to their connections with Rhees's writings specifically on religious matters. Clearly the religious believer does not concern themselves day to day about the existence of their hands, whether the world existed during the lifetime of their grandparents, etc. As pointed out such discussions operate only at the philosophical level; the uncertainty about material objects is not a practical one and cannot be solved

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[410] Laid out in: Norman Malcolm, 'Anselm's Ontological Arguments', *Philosophical Review*, 69, pp.41-62). See: Rhees, *On Religion*, pp.17-20.

[411] Lars Hertzberg, 'Rush Rhees on Philosophy and Religious Discourse', *Faith and Philosophy,*18 (2001), 431-442 (pp. 431-2)

[412] Rhees, *On Religion,* pp.5-6.

by recourse to pointing to the objects themselves. It is a discussion as to whether a rational, intelligible account can be given over whether something does or does not exist. It is in essence an investigation into the nature of reality. The philosophical versus the everyday position does not apply in the same terms when one talks of aesthetics, morality, politics, etc. though there are clear similarities. In these cases, the clear separation between philosophical and practical doubt does not apply but the arguments that arise are not usually about the reality of the moral problem, etc. In the matter of God's reality, however, the question is one of whether God has a reality at all[413] and the same question applies both to a philosophical and a 'general' discussion.

The nature of the reality of God and religion is absolutely central to Rhees's writings on religion. Rhees expands the discussion to include reference to what we count as evidence in talk of God, what constitutes error in such accounts and in religious practice, etc. When we come to world-picture, again the central issue for Rhees is how religion might or might not be considered such a form of life, how forms of life constitute different realities. Thus, for Rhees, there is not one overarching reality but multiple ill-delimited and interacting realities making up the existence of humankind. What then constitutes evidence, proof, reasonableness within each form of life? In particular, he investigates how the scientific form of life and the religious inter-relate and differ.

The development of Rhees's argument around the multiplicity of realities, founded in forms of life with their varying underpinning hinge propositions, if it is to be successful apologetically, must contrast several philosophical positions regarding religious belief[414] based upon philosophy's premise that it is its role to act as a judge on religious matters. Firstly, there is the question of God's reality or existence; even if talk of God is sensible, rational, there still may be no God. The coherence of arguments does not prove their subject's existence. Philosophers may argue that God-talk is meaningless because it has no content at its base, God has no reality. Then there are philosophical positions around whether religious practice is itself 'valid'; even if the existence of 'God' is taken as rationally acceptable the practices, rituals, moral understandings, etc. here are not justified based upon their purported rational base. If

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[413] Dewi Zephaniah Phillips, *Religion Without Explanation,* (Oxford: Wiley, 1977), p.3.

[414] Ibid*.,* pp.3-5.

one argues that religious belief must be accepted on its own terms, then it forfeits its argument to be rationally based but even here this still leaves the argument that religious believers are making a mistake and are not doing what they think they are. Believers do not use words and concepts as they should be used, e.g., necessary existence is a contradiction in terms, the language of human love, etc. is wrongly applied to God, etc. The doubter can also fall back on arguments about underlying cultural or subconscious motivation for mistaken beliefs and practice. Beliefs can be explained away.

The reaction from some theologians has been that religion is apparently irrational but has a grounding above reason; its grounding is not in the rational but in God who cannot be comprehended. Rhees's argument depends upon the acceptance of rationality (or reality) not being a single, homogeneous entity. Ethics, art, politics, etc. for him have differing rational bases to the objective world of things and 'proven facts' and religion, whilst not fully similar to any one of these, shows similarities and yet still has a rationality, a reality, of its own. Much of his religious writing explores the nature of this religious reality.

The problem, at root, Rhees argues, comes with expecting a reality to religion like that of physics, etc. Rhees sees the question of reality as in many instances the same as 'what things are' – what it is to be a *thing*. This is a question regarding how one can speak of things at all and the question of the reality of anything is therefore 'relative to the kind of language in which that anything enters'.[415] Critically for Rhees '…what we *mean* by reality is determined by the character of a language, and the notion of a *single* reality would seem to be replaced by the conception of ways of living'.[416] The context here makes clear that 'ways of living' equates to world-picture, forms of life, *lebensformen*.

The reality of a physical object relates in part to whether it is illusory, whether a mistake of some sort has been made, but also to how it can be discussed, whether one can understand the statement that something exists, whether you can understand statements about the object, respond to comments regarding it, imagine its'

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[415] Rhees, *On Religion,* p.24.

[416] Ibid*.,* p.24.

disappearance, etc. The reality of objects is seen in their being part of conversation, discussed, and debated, not just in having independent confirmation or proof of existence. Such discussions occur within a 'particular form of discourse' or 'form of grammar'.

When one comes to talk about the reality of religion or God, Rhees argues that the situation is different. Here the idea of God as illusion is a misunderstanding – illusion and reality in this sense belong to the objective world and God is not an object, nor is He, in a similar sense, *in* the world. Logic, morals, aesthetics, God, religion all have reality but not the reality of the physical object world or of physical science. Clearly there must be a reality corresponding to religion but the scientific and the religious are differing realities. Without a corresponding reality religion and morals would lose their 'vindication'.[417] They would not have the importance they do have, and belief and behaviour would be a matter of happenstance.

To argue for a reality corresponding to religious beliefs is clearly central to religious apologetics but what sort of reality might be found? Rhees argues that there are similarities here with the question of reality or realities underlying moral questions: if there is none then then surely moral imperative becomes no more than a point of view or convenience and loses its essential force. Would a moral decision or judgement be amenable to being underpinned by a 'proof', 'conclusion' or 'reality' of the type found in physics? However, even if it were, it would not have the importance that it does have. They would not be moral problems in the same sense as they are. Religion is similar in this sense. What could be elucidated by a scientific investigation would not be religion. What would furthering our understanding about God be? If it was an undertaking by specialists with a conclusion to follow it could only provide an understanding of a God who was an object, an entity among others, not the God of any major religion. Why would one worship an object, why one and not another?

There must be a 'reality' corresponding to God in the sense, at least, that morality has a reality otherwise religious practices, beliefs, etc. would also be a matter of convenience, a personal undertaking, potentially operating in isolation. We may hold to the moral principles on which we were raised and argue for their 'rightness' but this

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[417] Ibid., p.7.

is a value judgement, a statement of adherence to those values. To state that a religion is a true one is similarly a statement of adherence to that religion. It is nearer to a value judgement than a testable theoretical belief, but it is, however, a *religious* decision. It does not, as it were, 'operate outside' the religious belief. The reality that is argued for by those who profess belief in one 'true' religion is clearly understood by them as going beyond belief in a human convention. Moral questions, art and aesthetics might be argued to not be, or be above, human conventions as well but this understanding only goes so far; art, aesthetics, morality 'go deep' and seem to produce a tangible affective response but the reality of God lies in knowing and obeying the will of God, living life wholly in God's presence and directed to Him.

Rhees argues that the 'reality' God has, as with moral distinctions and decisions, can only be established within moral and religious terms. God's reality must be seen in religious discourse, liturgy, and practice. If we attempt to compare the reality of God with objective reality, then we start to come adrift. The reality of objects in the physical world relates to what we 'come up against'.[418] The reality of worldly objects has the sense of an independent reality which can be studied, subject to agreement and correction on their nature and form, seen as independent in contrast to mental ideas and concepts. As previously stressed, Rhees also does not find enlightenment in the separation of God's existence as necessary and the universe as contingent.[419] Such a separation only has sense in the contrast between the two positions, but contingency is usually taken to mean what is accidental and necessary to what is predictable. To reiterate, talking of the contingency of the 'world' (all that is, has been and will be) brings in further confusions. Can one argue from contingency of the world (contingent on God presumably) to the existence of God? Rhees would argue that, using the language of religion, God's existence is *divine* not *necessary,* and His *perfection* would be better termed *holiness*.

For Rhees belief in God can only be discussed in relation to human life and he sees the belief as in some ways akin to belief in the *reality* of physical objects (not in the existence of individual objects). 'Justification' and 'correctness' seem not to sit with religious belief. It is certainly not dependent on proof of the existence of God. There is a

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[418] Ibid*.,* p.9.

[419] Ibid*.,* pp.17-18.

reality to art, aesthetics, morals, and there is a reality to the 'human spirit' seen in opposition to the everyday world. But why should we consider these to need comparison with the objective world in the same terms as it. There is a 'peculiarity' (perhaps 'particularity') about God which extends to His reality, existence, role as creator, indeed to all that can be attributed to God.[420]

Moral concepts may have 'universal' importance and religious beliefs show similarities here. What matters matters to all adherents to that faith. Their reality, however, is not like, for example, a scientific law or rule of physics. Religious statements regarding belief, judgement, etc. are generally 'expressive', not 'factual' in the sense of statements about the physical world but they are not to be seen as arbitrary, personal, or conventional. The questions and concerns that arise from them are valid, internally consistent and can be instructional and fulfilling. It is in this sense that religious reality can be considered 'independent'.

Just as moral and aesthetic realms have realities which are not established by relating them to non-moral, non-aesthetic distinctions but are integral to the lives of those who experience them, so religious reality is seen in lived religious life, in worship, prayer, etc. Their reality is seen in how we live, our way of life. It is not 'the world', the objective reality of 'things' that arbitrates between nonsense and sense here but the world-picture, this 'underpins' reality and reality is, as it were, the reason for 'going on as we do'. The importance of religion, logic, morals does lie in their reality but the reality they have is seen in the way we infer things using them. Nothing else will provide the same basis for the lives we lead. In the case of religion, however, the great difference is that 'the reality of God must be a divine reality'.[421]

God's reality can only be seen from within the religious use of language. The reality of God and what is real and unreal generally shows itself in the sense that language has.[422] The concept of agreement with reality and what is real and unreal belong to *our* language where they occupy a central and commanding position. Real and unreal, to be understood, must therefore be examined in their usage within the culture

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[420] Ibid*.,* p.23.

[421] Ibid*.,* p.9.

[422] Dewi Zephaniah Phillips, *Religion and Understanding,* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1967), p.13.

and language in which they reside. There can be no legitimate application of conceptions of reality outside this cultural milieu. This is true as much for secular and scientific discourse as for the religious or moral. The outcome of a scientific experiment can only be analysed and evaluated utilizing methods of verification which have arisen and developed within science. An individual with no scientific training could make nothing of them. Magical rites for savages and religious rites for us are not parasitic on a 'scientific outlook' or a society encultured to the scientific viewpoint (as one might argue astrology is). They occur within a way of life, which is internally consistent and logical, and within it they are not contradictory, but they do not derive their sense from that culture. Mystical, mythical, and religious beliefs are not scientific hypotheses and religious belief, for example, cannot be a mistake. It is difficult to see what would constitute a mistake in religion other than a deviation from the internal consistency or coherence of the dogma, rituals, and practices under study.

When we are introduced to God as children the understanding we have comes to us in a similar way to language, admittedly it comes in a simplified form and we may have a naïve and rudimentary understanding of it, but the understanding is not *wrong*. The child has an understanding that is very different to a popular understanding of science, compared to that of a professional scientist. What the child is given is the 'language of religion' in its basics and like language it will develop with the life lived. The child's inclusion in a community where praise, worship, etc. occur allows the child to develop an understanding of a religion lived. They do not learn a more accurate account of religion or God by it being described more accurately, more closely related to the reality of God. The child's naivete is for Rhees more like the naivete of a child about moral questions. The complexity found in worship, prayer, etc.is not because they describe or relate to complex objects beyond the child's understanding which will later be described in more accurate detail.

The independence and general acceptance of the 'order of things' does not apply to religion and ideas of God. Believers would argue for shared understandings of the reality and idea of God, but ideas of God are not derived from contact with, description of, or pointing to God. We have no first-hand knowledge of the 'properties' of God or even whether God can be described as having 'properties. In a sense we cannot compare God with our imaginary understanding of what we take Him to be, and we cannot react to God in the way we react to the objective world.

6.3 Religious Belief

6.3.1 Belief and language

To draw out and clarify the relationship between religious belief, language and the reality of God Rhees approaches the problem from several angles. He argues that the language of religion is not directly comparable with the language used to talk of matters of fact, of objects in the world. Religious language makes a difference to one's life and this is not a difference which can be achieved in some other way, by some non-linguistic means or by non-religious language, however subtle and insightful.[423] Religious language enters into and determines what one understands by 'God" and 'worshipping God". One cannot bring about the change in one's life brought about by religious belief and its attendant way of life without the language of religion. Usually, questions of religious practices and questions of the language of religion, for him, come to the same thing and it is inconceivable that the change in one's life associated with religious belief might occur in the absence of the practices and language integral to it. The association is not causal, and language does not *aid* in belief; language and belief are 'internally related', co-constitutive.[424] Religious language is not concerned with calling forth attitudes possible without the language nor does it subserve some end. No more than the language of love or morality does. The *character* of belief depends on the *character* of language.

Rhees, through an analysis of human love, offers two complimentary ways in which the language is integral to practice and belief. There is both a general and a specific sense to religion and love being dependent on language and in both cases the 'grammar' of the specific language is different. Firstly, without our living our lives with language as we do, we could not come to love another human or God. Our language is integral to our desires, loves, plans, and hopes. The language of religion or human love are not just complementary, however, to this 'background' use of 'normal' language – '…there could not be religion without the language of religion, and *just as little* could there be love without the language of love'.[424] The specificity is in the differing grammar – in Wittgensteinian terms grammar determines meaning or sense in language

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[423] Rhees, *On Religion,* p.39.

[424] Ibid*.,* p.40.

– in the language of belief, worship, praise, as in the language of love, saying 'I believe' or 'I love' is not the statement of a simple fact such as 'I support Sheffield Wednesday'. It is a profound statement, and it points to a deep and lasting difference in the life of the speaker, a change that cannot itself be put into words in an alternative way. A change has occurred in the individual's world, their life, all aspects of it seem changed but the difference cannot be pointed to; it is only evident in the grammar of the language of religion or love. The language of religious belief expresses the profundity of the belief and 'constitutes the character' of it.[425] The believer *thinks* in the language of belief, the lover in the language of love. The languages are not recognized by differing words from 'usual' speech but by what they express, and their differing grammar governs this.

One might ask what difference, if any, there is between the identical use of words in a person pretending belief or love and the true believer or lover. Clearly, they are not *induced* to believe or love through the false use of language. Rhees's answer is that the language does not bring about the difference; it is part of, internal to, the difference but it is not the reciting or writing that makes the difference, it is the role it plays, the way it is used in a life, the deep and profound meaning it has to the lovers and believers which brings about the difference; Rhees wants to say *is* the difference.[426]

Rhees fully recognizes the limitations of the comparison of love and religious belief. Love has no theology, it is not centred on the divine, the eternal, the moral absolute. Without theology, Rhees argues, religious devotion would have no sense at all.[427] For him theology is just learning the things that it is correct to say about God, religious practice, praise, and worship. We must learn the words and the way that words are used in a religious context (the grammar) and these words, this language, is not productive of religion but an integral part of it. Theology and religious devotion 'grow out of' each other.

In talking of belief in God, in the reality of God, a question which must be asked is whether different people mean the same by the word 'God'. This is, of course, usually related to questions of variants of Christianity, theological disputes, etc. but at a basic

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[425] Ibid., p.42.

[426] Ibid., p.43.

[427] Ibid., p.44.

level one can even ask whether we believe individually in the same God as we did when we were children; how can we be sure of this? The development of one's belief and understanding with religious practice raises the question of what in one's belief has changed? This question can also be applied historically – do we worship the same God as our ancestors, do we still practice the 'true' religion? If dogma changes how does this relate to what we believe *in* – but this comes back to the previously laid out argument on the difference between the 'objective' world and the world of the sacred. Rhees sees this question being better reworded to 'what we should be sure of if we *were* sure'.[428]

When believers speak of God they are often using the term as a substantive, a name for the 'supreme being'. This, in Rhees's opinion, leads to erroneous talk of God as if He is similar to the universe, the sun, an all-powerful human being but these are all physical objects and here 'the same thing' has clear meaning – the same that arrived last month, the same moon as last night, etc. What could it mean to say that God stands for something different now? Only by removing all that the word 'God' means in religious language would such a statement make sense. God would have to be a worldly object. The *criteria* for differentiating one object from another do not apply to God. Nor can God be regarded as a person in the story of faith or to derive His reality from the history of the bible. God is not a fictional character and the language used about God is not fictional nor is it purely historical. Rhees argues that the idea of truth in opposition to fiction just does not apply in discussion of God.[429] One cannot say in the same sense as in a historical account or fictional account that any truly religious account of God is true or not. The truth in connexion with God and religion is a different kind of truth altogether (perhaps a truth with a capital T expresses a broad understanding of this).

Whether we are as individuals talking about the same God is a matter of theology, religious practice, the way religious 'grammar' operates for that person or community, what the religious language means at its deepest point for them.

Rhees argues that concepts are not used in the same way in religion as elsewhere in non-religious language generally. There are similarities with the use of concepts in 'musical language' in this sense i.e., in language used in the discussion of music, its

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[428] Ibid., p.45.

[429] Ibid., p.46.

appreciation etc. The concepts of 'guarantee', 'warrant' and similar 'hard' understandings, firm indications of the reality of the objective world, of what goes where, do not apply.[430] This does not, however, mean that religious belief is a feeling, it does not stop and start in the same way as affective states do.

Religious belief is 'internally' connected with behaviour, and this is where belief shows itself, but one cannot infer underlying religious belief as the cause of the person's actions. The action does not result from the belief in that sense but the person themselves may nonetheless be clear that his reason for acting in a particular way is his religious belief; he may even consider his action to be divinely inspired, motivated, or enabled, but this is not externally evident to others. Nothing outside his belief offers a confirmation or guarantee of its religious basis, no external sign shows, it is simply accepted and acted on as religious in origin or inspiration by the believer. Rhees calls this a difference in the 'because'[431] in offering explanations in religious and non-religious matters. No guarantees apply in religion as they do when statements are tested in the objective world. One believes, and acts on that belief, 'because' it is the word of God. The believer accepts it and acts on it and deceit or doubting the veracity of the source do not apply; it is guarantee-free but held with personal conviction, from personal experience. One recognizes the truth of scripture, etc. not by 'finding out about them' but by living by them and experiencing the change in one's life brought about by being guided and inspired by them, acting in accordance with their precepts. The change is at the level of the meaning of one's life.[432]

6.3.2 The reality of religion and morality

The above understandings all come back to Rhees's opinion on the inter-relationship between mistake and reality. Making a 'mistake' about God would have to operate at the level of a mistake about the existence or otherwise of physical objects at all, not at that of individual objects. It would reflect a breakdown in that reality in its entirety, a loss of the grounds of sanity. One can immediately see here the connection with 'Moore's propositions'. Rhees is making a direct connection between the propositions

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[430] Ibid., p.50.

[431] Ibid., p.52.

[432] Ibid., p.53.

which are foundational, the undoubted bedrock of our world-picture and religious belief. To the believer the foundational nature of the belief depends upon it being 'the word of God' and the conviction has been 'imbibed' with the language of religion, with the religious life lived. This is like the situation with morality – to be convinced of moral issues is to live by them – their reality is in the experience of the issue, how one personally relates to it, how its fundamentals have been taken up into a life. It does not make sense to ask *whether* God exists. If you can ask that with meaning you are already giving sense and therefore reality to the conception.

Having an 'idea', a 'concept', of God is not like an idea of an object or a quality of something in the everyday world – the 'idea of God' to the believer does not relate to God's properties or characteristics, things which give objectivity, form, existence in time and space. We do not refer either to an idea in my head, an invention. God's 'independent reality' is evident within the religious way of life in the fact that one can be mistaken in what one says about God; one can hold erroneous views, anathematous beliefs, etc. As Rhees says, religion cannot be an invention, any more than language can.[433] A personal religion would not seem to be sensible to him, nor would a humanly invented one; practice and community are intrinsic to a real religion.

To worship the 'true' God is simply to worship God and the 'true' God is the one we worship. That worship is an expression of our belief, it is not at core a matter of personal judgement or a matter of judgement by facts available. In religious commitment, as with moral issues, to recognize its intrinsic importance is to recognize its reality, to personally feel the importance of moral decisions and religious worship. This sense of importance and duty, the centrality and depth of this commitment is what makes people speak of their reality, unlike the reality which pertains to the world of objects, conjectures, and hypotheses where their reality is in a sense forced upon us by senses and observable laws. The justification of religious belief is something that is borne out in a life. Faith is neither conjecture nor based on externally supported evidential judgement. To believe there is a reality to morality or religion is simply to accept the overwhelming *importance* of acting morally or religiously, the importance of worship of God and adherence to His laws. That is what truth and reality boil down to here. There is no ground for religious belief outside the belief itself and no possible

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[433] Ibid., p.55.

confirmation of that belief other than its effect on a whole life lived. Truth in religion equals the right and wrong way of thinking about God[434] and is equivalent to true and false reasons in moral action.

One needs to analyse further what one is denying when one denies the existence/reality of God. What is the relationship between what it is to believe in God and to believe in a purpose in life? As Rhees says, to be convinced morality is real is to be convinced of the reality of moral issues (i.e., to take them seriously) and 'to be convinced that God is real is to be convinced of one's duty to God'. The need to worship leads people to speak of the reality of God. You cannot understand the reality of God unless you understand the worship of God.[435] Worship is not regulating one's life in accordance with a highly probable hypothesis. To believe in the reality of God is to recognize the importance of religion and the worship of God,[436] like the way of taking in a musical work – it is a matter of appreciation or insight rather than proof. There is no sense that God's reality is 'relative' or 'non-cognitive'.[437] Just as you cannot say anything *about* reality, you cannot say anything about the reality of God. The reality of God is what gives sense to religious worship and the reality of God is the same as the reality of religion. Is the reality of God and the reality of discourse the same? Does the concept of reality fall within language and thus mean we are confused if we think of reality as something on which language depends?[438]

When one looks at aesthetic and moral issues, we can see that these relate to problems and issues in the way we handle our lives, in our ways of living and acting, how we understand life, difficulties in knowing how to act. All these issues are reflected in our language and, even when the words used are the same, the 'grammar' of the language in these areas differs from that of the everyday language of the objective world. For Rhees, the distinction between 'wanting' and 'thinking important' is one central matter here and comes out and is developed in conversation with others and in our internal dialogue, in how we react to others in need, our moral questioning of our

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[434] Ibid., p.59.

[435] Ibid., p.55 onwards.

[436] Ibid., p.57.

[437] Ibid., p.60.

[438] Ibid., p.108.

own actions. Religious belief clearly has similarities to these areas both in having its own grammar and in that it interacts and informs moral issues. Rhees argues, however, that it is not a resource to solve these issues, as science can be for objective matters - 'religious importance is concerned not so much with ways of living or acting as with the fact of living itself'.[439] A major concern is the how and why life is important, what sense our lives make and from where such sense might derive.

The relationship with God expressed in prayer, praise, worship, etc. goes together with how the believer views the importance of life, in particular the gift of life, and its meaning and this can only be learnt in society (perhaps community is a better word here), amongst others sharing that worship and belief. Praying, sacrifice, rites and rituals all have importance and significance in the same way that life is important through their relationship to, and response to, belief in God. The obvious connection with fear of death, annihilation, is there because this links back to wonder at what life is for and what it depends upon. This comes out in the language of religion in procreative associations – Father, Son, rebirth, etc. Fear of death in animals does not lead to religion; in humans the fear is different – thinking of the importance of death is not just thinking of mortal danger but of the importance of death in relation to life's value, its intrinsic importance, and the value of the gift not its achievements.

Religion relates to 'finding some good in life', not in the moral sense but in the sense of the goodness of God, which, for Rhees, is synonymous with the existence of God – 'to believe in God and to believe in the goodness of God are the same'.[440] Belief in God is also belief in something about this world, its existence and my existence in it, an expression of gratitude for life – not for this or that occurrence or feature of my life, not for personal wellbeing but for 'life'. Gratitude for the good things in life is beside the point, not relevant. Rhees makes it clear he is not talking about 'feeling grateful for existence'. Gratitude despite the knowledge of one's sins and failings, gratitude even for my failings. There are similarities here to gratitude to one's parents related to duty, respect, reverence, simply because they are my parents – associated with gratitude for bringing me into life, caring for me, etc. but gratitude for life independent of how it turns out. Rhees sees this gratitude in essence as thanking God for the existence of the

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[439] Ibid., p.62.
[440] Ibid., p.160.

world and seeing the goodness of God in it despite all its problems. As Rhees puts it 'the good of life …. seems to be anterior to moral issues'.[441] The impression he gives is of gratitude for *all* life.

Rhees says that '…whereas the belief that there is a meaning in life is largely a belief that it is important how you live, the belief in God is much more a belief in the importance of life (the mere fact of life, not the manner of it)'. Rhees sees the latter as the same as a belief in the holiness of life; it is what we mean by the holiness of life. As he says 'belief in God is not just a concern with the meaning of life, it is a concern with God' but even 'losing one's life to find it' is still a special sort of concern with life. `It would not be religion without that'. Belief in God, Rhees thinks, is perhaps for most people largely a seeking for God.[442] One seeks to find a relationship with God. It is not just seeking to find an answer to a theoretical concern, but it is not asking what makes life worth living either. How can such questions be asked?[443] How can one life mean more than another? – this is a concern with profundity as in music and art – depth or shallowness in art and in living – it concerns itself with both language and communal life, traditions, etc. He says that the common life itself is something like language and presumably the common life of the religious believer is something like the language of religion.

6.3.3 Profundity and truth in science, life, and religion

In dealing with the modern attitude to religion we can see Rhees's understandings from his comments on the effect of science on the 'general outlook of our age'.[444] Science makes possible many specific discoveries and changes our view of *things* in the world and the relationship of one thing to another, but problems arise when one starts to talk of a scientific 'outlook', a generalized and pervasive change in perception which influences lives in a broad way. Serious and committed science may increase understanding but it is a pursuit open only to a skilled minority. Often talk of a 'scientific outlook' presumes that this outlook is a maturing and improving of what

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[441] Ibid., p.164.

[442] Ibid., p.172.

[443] Ibid., p.173.

[444] Rhees, *Without Answers,* pp.1-13.

humanity, nation or society previously held; a throwing off of immature and erroneous views, often superstitious and unfounded; the sense of a mistaken, wrong-headed viewpoint. This superiority of position Rhees sees as not acceptable. Why should there only be one standard (the scientific) to which all is compared and within which all should be subsumed? Just because science may alter outlook does not mean that the altered is intrinsically better – many judgements in law, education, etc. are based on balancing of facts, intuitive knowledge, etc. Much of the personal and cultural milieu, which determines whether our lives are fulfilling, worthwhile, meaningful, for example our attitude to our work, our personal relationships, friendships, artistic and cultural understandings, is not determined or altered by scientific advances.

Science produces great advances and achievements in the practical life of men, but *wisdom* is not brought to the mass of men by science. The deep and fully committed engagement in science may produce wisdom in the expert. Scientific methodology may provide the best methods for study and understanding of the objective world in which we live, but science has limits and always will have.[445] An understanding of 'the world' in its totality is not something science can provide. This is bound up with an understanding of one's own existence, life's value and meaning.

It is important to understand that Rhees accepts fully that the prevalence and penetration of science in modern society has changed our point of view on numerous subjects, even when questions about them are not subject directly to scientific methods. We can no longer accept or understand arguments that previously held sway in religion, art, etc. because they no longer seem *sensible*. Rhees uses the example of miracles; how could we today accept a miracle as *evidence* for anything. They have, for most, completely lost their evidential force, not because they were based on falsehood or lies but because people can no longer think in the way that believers in miracles did. Similar arguments could be made regarding out attitude to the explanation of mental illness, the cause of skin lesions etc.

Rhees indicates that he thinks Wittgenstein would not say that religion forms a language-game on its own and one can, I think, presume that he concurs with this in the sense that religious language does interrelate to the non-religious. Meanings of words

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[445] Rhees, *On Religion,* p.6.

clearly carry over into both areas and the grammar of religious language cannot be clearly separated from that of secular but what is true and false is not settled by appeal to something outside religion in the sense that a scientific hypothesis requires *testing* – an appeal to what happens, the outcome of a trial, the experimental results. There are analogies, however, between the *foundations* of mathematics and religion. You learn what justifies mathematics within mathematics and 'justified' here has as a sense within mathematics which is different to 'correct' and 'incorrect' in calculation, which can be *criticized.* There are links here with the misconception that philosophy of religion is an attempt to *establish* religion. Establish here might associate with truth of religion. This is not the sense of true as used in true God and true worship and the sense it does have, for Rhees, is not clear.

You only solve the problem of mathematics, what it is, its nature, by doing maths. Mathematics cannot be 'put right' by philosophizing, only by mathematics (philosophy leaves everything as it is – Wittgenstein); the same applies to religion; what religion is must be found in what believers do.

Determining what is real in science is a matter of understanding the ways that scientists try to *find out* what is real and what is not. The meaning of real is seen in what is taken as evidence of it. Rhees does not mean here that reality is equivalent to scientific methodology. This is about the *conception of reality*. Distinction of reality and unreality can take many forms. *What reality is* can be seen in how people *find out* what is so. The *finding out* may differ greatly in different fields. These differences in finding out can be called differences of language-game.[446]

Rhees pithily shows the difference for what might count as evidence in a 'secular scientific' sense in comparison to religious terms in the following elucidation of Wittgenstein's views: Lavoisier has a particular world-picture. He is a scientist and carries out experiments, tests hypotheses, develops theories. He does not imagine he would get different experimental results at a different time, even though this might occasionally occur. His world-picture includes acceptance of the 'scientific method' which is intrinsic to it. It is not a hypothesis; it is the foundation of his research and is

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[446] *Ibid.,* p.108.

taken for granted and 'unarticulated'[447] World-picture itself offers no insight into the structure of the world. For Lavoisier it simply *is so*. To ask whether he has good reason for this view makes no sense – the experiment is a model of what he would call a good reason. It is the way he thinks. A reason or correct inference belongs to our world-picture[448] and to speak of a foundation or justification for our world-picture is to say nothing. Society's world-picture may change with time. It is 'the inherited background against which I distinguish between true and false'.[449] There is no way to distinguish correct and incorrect world-pictures. One may use scientific propositions; another may consult oracles.

The 'prestige of science' prevents us from realizing that there are other ways of speaking in matters of concern and importance. The divide between those who are religious and those who are not is not like the difference between two scientists, not a divide between two theories nor between investigation and prejudice. Religious belief does not come through evidence or proof.

One of the results of the confusion over science revealing 'what the world is like' relates to what Rhees calls 'confusion about profundity'. Scientific discovery and understanding do not produce the profundity or importance that they would if they really did show 'what the world was like' and this importance and depth would not be to do with medical progress, mechanization, health, and happiness, etc. but would go much deeper. Scientific understandings have led to a confusion between profundity and sham. What is profound may have nothing to do with complexity or being beyond most people. Here obscurity is confused with profundity. What is profound cannot be *explained* only recognized when it is found. One cannot make a profound scientific discovery but there is profundity in science, and this is at the level of the problems raised and the mode of their treatment. This is where the 'finding out' relates to the finding out in aesthetics, religion, morality. It relates to the development of a view, or the sort of answer science seeks. It does not relate to the persisting acceptance or applicability of results or findings, or their reproducibility or practical value but it does

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[447] Wittgenstein, *On Certainty,* §167

[448] This section essentially paraphrases Rhees, *On Certainty,* p.64.

[449] Wittgenstein, *On Certainty,* §94, §96.

relate to the 'fundamental character' of the subject, the depth of the problem, but problem and investigation are not separable at this level.

What is profound is what is at issue in the deep problems of the fundamental nature and questions of science not in complex investigations or theories. It lies in the scientist's perception of what sort of answers he finds, what is at issue or sought in the scientific investigation. It relates to the perception of what science is. The fundamental nature of the problem is the level of its profundity. To find such profundity would in the great majority of cases require someone of ability and insight capable of a 'deep treatment' of the subject, a profound study from which profound results might arise.[450]

The parallels with religion or art cannot be taken too far but what is sought there is profound and the understandings regarding the importance of viewpoint – viewing as in science from the position of a Newton or Einstein, with what might be regarding as a purity and depth of vision, are important. This may best be brought out by the following quote:

> The deep problems which a scientist may recognize are problems of his science, and they do not stand by themselves. The depth of what he has said about them does not depend so much on whether his answers can be accepted just as they were given. In one sense it does not matter whether they were right or wrong. Of course the scientist's work could not be deep if he were indifferent to that himself. It would not be a serious investigation at all. But the profundity of his work lies rather in his perception of what sort of answers they are.[451]

Such profound understandings 'do not stand alone' they are part of the depth of 'the world'. Profundity cannot really be discussed; it shows itself and is recognized where it is found. The relationship to Wittgenstein's comments on 'what shows itself' in the *Tractatus* are clear.

This understanding of profundity or depth in science has interconnections with depth in art, music, architecture. Rhees argues that there is a basic connectedness between the arts without which we cannot separate the trivial from the serious and such arguments might just as well apply to science. Art is deep, profound, or serious in its underlying ideas, but they are deep 'within' the language of e.g., music, visual art, or

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[450] Rhees, *Without Answers,* p.9.

[451] Ibid., p.10.

poetry. Deep familiarity with the language of poetry is needed to fully appreciate the 'depth' of a piece; one needs to recognize the relationships to appreciate the profundity, the way music or spoken language fit together and the connection with the more mundane is essential to the appreciate the 'depth'.[452] Clearly this is more marked in poetry than music or visual art, but the same insight is offered here by familiarity. This is not a matter of an interest in particulars of music or language but a matter of grasping the underlying 'ideas' and at this level the arts interact to produce and provide mutual development. The relationship between the poem or music and the rest of music or poetry does not provide or constitute what one understands nor is it essential in the case of music or visual art, but it provides the 'milieu' for understanding, allows serious and trivial to be more clearly defined. Works of art belong to a culture, a society. In this sense religious art does not receive ideas from religion, it contributes ideas to it. Religion grows along with art. There is religious art because there is religion and there is religion because there is a religious life.[453]

The above comments may seem trivial or obvious but lie at the heart of Wittgenstein's comment on a religious viewpoint (or disposition as Pascal would have it) and Rhees's understanding of the relationship between what is deep and what is superficial. Profound art, music, poetry speak universally, not individually, though they tend to be individually produced; in a limited analogous way the wonders and beauty of nature also do so. There is a sense of learning or deepening one's understanding evident in great art, music, the beauty of a landscape, but it is impossible to point to what is learned. Something is shown which cannot be shown in any other way. This increase in insight or understanding, the 'finding out', is not, however, isolated, it occurs within a life lived and the change in perspective is within that life. One needs the *whole* of a life in the round to experience the power of the profound. Listing or describing the contents of an event is not helpful. The explanation must be personally undergone. Even the slightest difference in a note, a colour variation may change the banal into the profound. We must be 'present' to the experience, and it is against the background of the everyday, similar though so different, that the profound shows itself.

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[452] Ibid., p.135-141.

[453] Ibid., p.141.

Regarding religious practice, the direct involvement in the everyday activities of religion (and the holding of the religious way of seeing life), we can see clear parallels here; to experience the power, depth, profundity of religion we must have the everyday background, the experience of the mundane, against which the profound makes itself known. We must attain the perspective that allows this to dawn on us. We may prepare ourselves for the profundity of the gift of faith by the preparatory experiences of life within the Church. Such a life allows receptivity to faith, counteracts the alternative perspective of modern society, including the 'scientific outlook'. Liturgy, collective prayer, tradition, following church law all are central to the 'finding out' about true religion, separating obscurity from profundity, attaining a 'state of mind' where the profundity of faith can manifest itself.

We must, as Rhees points out[454] be careful to understand that the experience attained through art, literature, etc. is not the same as living through what the artist lived through and here we see also the differences between such experiences of the profound or 'numinous' and the religious life. Full understanding comes through the living of the life of religion. There can be no understanding of the gift of faith outside the gift, but receptivity may be made easier by sensing the potential overwhelming profundity within it, gaining some insight into the true and essential meaning of religious belief.

There is a striking warning regarding liturgy and the presentation of the 'story' of Tradition within Rhees's analysis. He argues[455] that without distinguishing depth from superficiality there can be no growth in understanding. This is clearly central to his consistent concern with 'what it means to say something'. Without understanding what is 'deep' one cannot do more than learn proficiency or superficial knowledge. Whether one talks of art, literature, music or, one could argue, liturgy and morals, the language must hold the deep, the profound and must be the source of insight into the essence of the topic both for the individual and community. It follows in the case of the liturgy of the church that any loss in profundity through alteration risks the loss of understanding and preparedness for the gift of faith. Profundity is not necessarily made easier to realize by approachability, transparency or inclusivity and may not be best manifest in surface understanding of language or ritual. It must continue to deepen and accurately

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[454] Ibid., p.146.

[455] Ibid., p.149.

reflect the lives the Church has been built on and obviously the life of Christ and His disciples:

> The language itself must be a source of ideas. And people will speak with a sense of standards expressed in their phrases and construction. For we speak as others have spoken before us. And a sense of language is also a feeling for ways of living that have meant something. This is as true of language as it is of song, or ritual and dance and of art. If people were all the same to one another, if it made no difference what sort of men there are and have been, then speech would be empty and sterile; or a sham, like quoting poetry to impress people.[456]

6.3.4 Vocation, faith, language and meaning in life

Rhees stresses that however committed a person may be to religion and however much their life is taken up with it, true religion is not a vocation and does not play the role a vocation does. This in no way commits Rhees to arguing that the priesthood, monastic life, etc. cannot be a vocation. One may wish to serve God in and through one's vocation, but religious belief and commitment is not concerned with an interest, a career, a vocation, etc. There are very important differences between judgements of value in morals and aesthetics and religious statements and these come into the difference between vocation and religion. The religious person does not subordinate anything to religion, it is not a matter of their life being dominated by religion, instead his or her life is transformed by the religious belief.[457] As Rhees says 'a religious man tries to let everything he does be an expression of his religion'. That role can only be played by religion, that determinant of outlook and world-picture. Art may be the overwhelmingly important thing in the life of an artist, music in that of a composer but in religion it is not really the *life* that is the important thing – 'he who seeketh his life shall lose it'. Rhees says it is not a selfless devotion as in a selfless devotion to art. Nor is it selfish i.e., looking only to salvation. That contrast cannot be applied. One cannot be selfish or selfless towards God – it is senseless. The selflessness in religion is abandoning pride and that is at the root of losing one's life to find it in God.

For Rhees, it perverts religion to seek joy and satisfaction in it; the crucifixion and passion reveal what worship and love of God is. Your life must become nothing. A

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[456] Ibid., p.150.

[457] Rhees, *On Religion,* p.174.

life devoted to God is not like a life devoted to art or music, which might be suggested to carry special abilities or powers in those fields. The devotion to God is not to anything performed in the life of the believer. It is not sacrifice of life to a cause; that compares or measures the importance of a life to the importance of something else within the world. Religion does not *compare* my importance with that of God and the believer does not sacrifice himself for his religion.[458] Religious sacrifice is a way to glorify God – a sacrifice to God. This is not like a sacrifice made to advance science or for the good of your country – 'not self-sacrifice in the ordinary sense'. It is not a sacrifice for God but to Him.

The meaning of one's life and thus its value and reality is, of course, inextricably linked to one's religious beliefs and Rhees's attitude to reality and religious belief is summarized essentially in the following quotes:

> We pray to God to accept the sacrifice. And if my life before God is nothing, my life is acceptable to God, is a glorification of God, has all the reality anything could have. That is why in being nothing before God it may approach God and (to) reality – and not otherwise.

> So the worship of God has something important to do with the reality of life. The belief in God is something to do with the belief in the meaning of life.[459]

Rhees argues that finding one's life, finding meaning in it, and finding God may be the same thing – the seeking and the finding are much the same in both cases and very different from the seeking and finding of anything in the world. 'Coming nearer to' and 'turning away from' God also reflect the same seeking and finding of what one takes one's life to be and this is related to the difference the religious person feels or senses between appearance and reality, the deeply felt understanding that all would be an empty show without something more. 'What one takes one's life to be' is related closely to what one feels is the *depth* of one's life and it is here that the distinction between appearance and reality is important and where one's relationship to God is paramount. What life *is* raises in religious terms the depth and connection with another world, something 'beyond'[460]; something beyond both in terms of this life's meaning now and its persisting meaning 'later'. It is not to do directly with the important thing in life or

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[458] Ibid., p.175-6.

[459] Ibid., p.176-177.

[460] Ibid., p.178.

chief duty in life, indeed it carries the feeling that one must concentrate on something other than this life's failures and successes. The understanding of the temporal and eternal seem different here to in philosophy; the eternal is with and in God, not abstracted to a comparison of within and outside time.

Understanding of God's eternity is, for Rhees, central to religious worship and belief and references God's unfamiliarity and unfathomability to believers. This is not to say that the believer has a different or better grasp of the eternal than the atheist but rather that his life is lived with reference to the eternal rather than the transitory. The love of God, God's love for us and ours for our neighbour is inextricably linked with the Christian understanding of the eternal and the acceptance of His love is the cornerstone of belief. God is only known through love and that love is eternal. Coming to some understanding of this eternal love is coming to believe in God, coming to some understanding of the reality of God and thus the reality of life. Even when someone who believes resents that belief or claims to hate God, when faith is weak and resistance strong, his position takes root in belief and love of God.

For Plato/Socrates and philosophy generally the question of what one takes one's life to be is about the intelligibility and unity of life and the unity of discourse. This is far from the Christian concern with life; life as sacrifice, a journey or pilgrimage seeking God and seeking to fulfil His plan, trying to become more Christ-like (becoming more like the divine is seen in Plato but seems different – there is a relation to the Christian idea but for Rhees it is a puzzling one).[461] Plato wants to understand life as becoming more like the divine but in the sense of an analogy with the divine. This seems very different to the Christian sense of becoming more like God. For Rhees also the religious attitude to God's infinity is very important – why worship a finite being, who could have other gods or limitations to bind him; worship here would seem to be appeasement not glorification[462] and worship of God best shows the relationship to God (almost is the relation). Plato's concept is aspiration of an image towards an original – the form of the good. A Christian relation to God is not that to an ideal. Plato's ideal has no personal relationship to the individual human; hence the sense of personal sin does not arise in relationship to it.

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[461] Ibid., p.150.

[462] Ibid., p.181.

Even when put in the same words the question of the meaning of life seems different in philosophy and religion and Rhees suggests that the key difference in the question is that for philosophy, as exemplified by Plato, the question relates to life's *intelligibility* whereas for Christians it relates to *perplexity* concerning one's life, one's life's value, its moral purpose, how it should be lived; value judgement comes in here but is not the essence of the problem. The perplexed individual does not seem to be the answerer of the question though he addresses it to himself personally. It would be a mistake to consider the love of God, coming to love God, as just finding the meaning of life.[463] The love of God (the acceptance of faith, coming to belief) gives meaning to the life of the believer but that is not its purpose. The love of God and commitment to belief in Him does not derive its importance from giving meaning to life but because of God, what God is, what the word 'God' means for the believer. It is what informs the Christian as to what his life is, what its meaning is. This can only be understood in relation to understanding sacrifice in the Christian sense. 'Sacrifice' along with understanding, teaching, following, believing, seeking are words used within and outside religion, but their meaning differs in the two cases.

Rhees offers the illustrations of 'following', 'doubting' and 'perplexity' to point up the fundamental importance of their differences in meaning between their 'usual' and religious grammatical usages. Following someone in common parlance means to follow his or her example but following Christ cannot simply mean following a great leader or exemplar. Christ is God. How can we follow that? Does Christ really expect us to follow Him to crucifixion? Rhees says that only in the eucharist can he make sense of following Christ. If one uses following Christ in the usual sense of trying to follow His example, then for Rhees there is nothing expressly religious in that.[464] Even following His teaching is different, accepting His teaching means accepting Christ into one's life not responding as to any gifted teacher. It does not mean believing what He says is true. It is a believing *in* and acting in emulation of that life, following His 'rules of life', attempting a life given for Christ ('If you believe in me, you will do as I say"). Accepting Christ's teaching means embracing incarnation, atonement, glorification.

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[463] Ibid., p.192.

[464] Ibid., p.193.

Doubting also cannot mean the same as elsewhere. One can doubt matters of fact, opinions, beliefs in general, but religious doubt encompasses how I understand the purpose and meaning of my living at all.[465] Likewise, perplexity about religion is not just incomprehension or lack of understanding as in secular matters. Such perplexity depends upon having a grasp of the 'language', for example perplexity about theorems or calculations comes about in an individual who already has the basic 'language' of mathematics – he knows generally 'how to get on' with maths, but he has come up against a problem which he has difficulty solving or fitting in. Religious perplexity also requires that one is familiar with the language, the 'grammar' of religion, but perplexity here, at root, seems based in perplexity regarding God's reality or existence and lesser complexities for Rhees seem subordinate to this.

In maths or engineering etc you can get the problem 'sorted', solve the equation, repair the engine, etc. There are conceptual problems of a different type in perplexity in religion where one cannot find a solution in that practical way. If one understands 'how maths goes' or 'how engineering goes', you have the means of solution given a deepening of ability or clarification. As Rhees puts it 'you could not say that…someone understands mathematics perfectly but does not believe it'.[466] In religion there is a clearer distinction between belief and understanding and understanding the language of religious belief is not in itself enough; for the perplexity to be a *religious* perplexity one must have familiarity with belief because religious perplexity is about *belief*. It is wrong to think of grounds for religious belief outside the belief itself. A confirmation of religious belief, a guarantee of any kind would put supernatural authority and philosophical proof on the same footing.

6.3.5 Belief, Scepticism and understanding

The question as to whether the non-believer is qualified to comment on the nature, validity, reality, etc. of religious belief has, of course, excited theologians extensively in recent decades. Rhees makes it clear that he cannot come to firm conclusions on this matter.[467] We must also bear in mind that Rhees himself states that he feels himself to

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[465] Ibid., p.194.

[466] Ibid., p.195.

[467] Ibid., p.196-205.

not be a 'religious' man. He raises the question of when a man can be said to understand the language of religion. He clearly feels that normally one would want to say that this entails being able to carry on a conversation with a religious believer, to learn from them and them from him. These are the essential characteristics for Rhees of conversation. But can a non-believer really contribute anything to a believer's understanding? Rhees cannot offer a clear answer.

Rhees points to the nature of understanding and believing. If we are talking about what is *said* then the key point is that the difference usually lies in being able to check what is said, being able to back the speech with firm evidence and this is possible because we are usually talking of matters of fact. This does not apply in religious speech and therefore how does one distinguish between understanding and believing? Religious belief is not, for Rhees, belief in what is said; it may be a question of believing but not in the same sense as believing matters of fact. When one looks at understanding and accepting or believing in for example, mathematics then the two seem to simply go together. If we can follow a mathematical proof, we accept it based upon our acceptance of mathematics *in toto*. This is clearly not the case when it comes to religious teaching or doctrine, liturgical statements, or even religious faith overall. One can also sham belief, speak, and even act as if one had faith without doing so and even with faith one may well not accept all dogma and apologetics.

When one says that a person is shamming or is not acting truthfully in saying prayers, taking part in liturgy, etc. it would be wrong to say that they are invariably not reverential in their acts. They may well be trying their hardest to act fully as a man of faith does, trying to come to faith and deeply reverential of the process of worship. A sceptic may be shamming, essentially lying about belief, but the person may equally be trying in all sincerity to 'inhabit' the form of worship.

Rhees has taken an unusual viewpoint in arguing that the sceptic (and presumably the genuine seeker, though Rhees does not say so) has a problem not with accepting that there is a God ('someone at the end of the telephone line' as Rhees puts it) but rather that he or she lacks the ability to understand what it would be like if there were a God. They cannot really think of God, do not have the ability to make sense of the *concept* of God. This inability is not a problem with understanding the concepts or logic of for example, impassivity, omnipotence, omniscience, etc. but lies at a 'deeper'

level. The sceptic may be able to converse fluently about the nature of God, may be theologically fluent in this sense and may even accept the logical consistency of religious 'God-talk'; they lack the *conception* of what it is to feel that there is 'someone', 'something' to whom one is addressing one's words in worship and prayer. In a sense the problem is deeper than belief in the *existence* of God as an entity and relates to God's unknowability.

The unbeliever's understanding is not anchored or rooted in religious life and actions. Religious concepts for the sceptic exist on their own in the same sense as mathematical or physical concepts but religious concepts must extend throughout a Christian's life and their reality depends upon this. An understanding of what "God' means, the involvement in worship, prayer, etc. and the effect of belief and worship on all the rest of the believer's life all go together and without all three there is no authentic belief and no reality to one's 'God concept'.

When we converse with others the role of the conversation may change with circumstance and topic, we may pontificate, support, deny, address a crowd, speak to an intimate friend etc. but interconnections are there with those addressed, responses may be expected; with God it is the role in, and change made by, the speech to one's whole life which is the essence. Even conversation or correspondence which is central to our lives, our work, our hobbies, commitments, etc. has a more 'external' aspect than our conversation with God, the reality of which depends upon its bearing on our whole life, the meaning of life. This is not true of even the most pervasive communication or conversation of 'secular' life.

The true believer shows *commitment* through the way the worship and belief affect *all* aspects of life. The previously discussed points regarding sham belief, scepticism and true belief emphasize the importance for Rhees of commitment in language generally. Underlying this is Rhees's understanding that all the elements of belief and worship are integral to the religious world-picture or form of life. In everyday affairs we commit ourselves in our conversation by our consistency in statements and by our behaviour in relation to our statements, otherwise our language would not be, as Rhees puts it, 'in gear'.[468] Saying you did not mean what you said previously also puts

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[468]Ibid., p199

language 'out of gear' and this is true also of religious language; analogies therefore clearly exist here but there are important differences. The believer's worship carries over into his deepest hopes, the understanding of what his behaviour and moral conduct is for, his debt to God, etc. He or she is not carrying on a conversation in the way that normal speech is.

Talking to God is not committing oneself to another person, a group or club, etc. Here there are relationships based upon reply, debate, etc. that do not exist in the same way in prayer. Your commitment and responsibility is to the person conversed with or the group, but in worship your relation and commitment does not make a difference in the same sense, here responsibility is to God and the sense of the personal and private is to the fore. Rhees suggests community worship is more like a dance with all doing the same thing together but your commitment, your responsibility, is not to the group of dancers but to God, and unlike a dance the whole of life is affected, the whole of one's reality. The statements made in worship have a unique role and they are addressed to God; the unique difference cannot be clearly described or attributed to the circumstances, place, etc. of worship. The true believer addresses God, the sham believer does not.

The pervasiveness of our everyday beliefs, our everyday assumptions and modes of thought, our immersion in a society dominated by a 'scientific world view', with its fundamental commitment to experiment, proof, problem, solution, validity, etc. gives us a world-picture which we inhabit and perplexity and inability to believe arises in part because we cannot break free from that, with its embedded hinge commitments We cannot find sense in religious belief and dogma because this alternative world-picture is incompatible with the religious one. The difficulties of religion are difficulties with life's deep meaning and many people may not even be able to see a difficulty here. Difficulties in the modern world-picture are simply awaiting solutions, resources, advice, expert intervention, scientific advance. Who or what can help with the problems of our personal salvation, sin, remorse, fear of death? These are not perplexities with solutions ever to be found in a non-religious life and if our lives are orientated to the modern 'scientific' world-picture then religion may simply seem incomprehensible, empty – 'what can it mean to say there is a God' is the real religious doubt in Rhees's

eyes.[469] The doubt seems rather like doubt whether the whole way of religious speaking makes sense – 'can they mean anything by what they are saying'. It is not like discussion of moral or aesthetic matters in this sense. There it is clear what is being debated; with worship what is it to mean something in your prayers, etc.? No debate occurs, no points are made.

Rhees sees this problem as essentially seeing worship and prayer as something by itself, separated from the rest of the believer's life. Worship then, to the outsider, seems like recitation, its purpose is not evident and as the addressee is not evident it seems feigned and pointless. Worship is unique because its meaning derives not from its being a sensible conversation or discussion but because it cannot be separated from faith. Its meaning derives from this not from its association with other people, other partakers in the speech. Community worship is important but the argument above still holds. The sceptic can understand the language in that he can be aware of its meaning and use in non-religious circumstances, they can grasp the theological basis of the responses, prayers, etc. and in this sense understand the religious belief but at its most profound and meaningful point really cannot understand belief as it is for the believer and the language that goes with this and co-constitutes it.

There is a pertinent and very interesting relationship between Rhees's evaluation of Wittgenstein's views on the 'spirit' of a work and religious belief and perplexity.[470] He points to the difference between 'misunderstanding' and 'failing to understand' the spirit of a work, act, etc.[471] If the spirit of a book, ritual, etc. is misunderstood it 'obstructs the clarification' which the book, etc. might have brought. Failing to understand the spirit (e.g., Frazer's attitude to ancient myth and ritual) means not understanding what they are despite extensive knowledge of their background and technicalities. Misunderstanding the spirit may relate to not being 'attuned' to the way the book is written, the good will as opposed to the self-seeking way it is written, chicanery and goodwill – one might alter the spirit, for example, by reading aloud in parody of it etc. To not be in keeping with the spirit of, for example, a book does not

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[469] Ibid., p.204.

[470] Wittgenstein MS109, pp.206-209 <wab.uib.no/transform/wab.php?modus=oprjoner> [accessed 4/1/2018].

[471] Rhees, *On Religion,* p.84.

mean that the contents cannot be understood, it relates to the understanding of the writer's intent. It makes the work into something the writer did not want it to be, it corrupts its 'deeper' meaning, the spirit in which the book was written. Individuals may hold beliefs, perform rituals, enact historical events in a particular spirit which may change with time – this itself raises questions about the relationship between religious belief and its 'form' or the way it shows in the living of believers.[472] One could talk of the 'spirit of our age' and its effect on our readings of the myths, beliefs, etc. of others without that spirit, which must be associated with world-picture, but even in this broad sense of the spirit, they are not synonymous. There are also close associations between performance of religious rituals, prayers, etc. by those who comprehend the spirit of the religious group and those who do not.[473]

How does the spirit relate to world-picture and those who lack the concept of God? If prayers, religious rituals, etc. all acquire a particular spirit (e.g., goodwill, veneration, self-abnegation) from the spirit of a community, can one say that they cannot in any way truly be understood by those not within that community of spirit? I do not think that this is Rhees's understanding or belief. Rhees points out that 'the senses of the expressions "spirit" and "myth" may partly coalesce in special contexts'. 'Spirit' seems associated with genuineness, acceptability, unambiguity and truthfulness and it gains resonance with us by a connection with how we individually and collectively feel, an internal relation with 'depth' or 'engagement'. It is perhaps here that the relationship between the spirit and religious ritual can be best seen. The religious rituals grow out of a community of belief with a shared spirit and shared beliefs which imbue the ritual with its inner nature and depth. Hence the lack of any likelihood that such rituals could be 'invented' from outside the believing community.[474] This is not to say, however, that the spirit *requires* belonging to that community to resonate, only that the rituals may have a common deep function or spirit that touches experiences in ourselves, or possibly all people; we extend the deeper sense of the ritual to ourselves through interactions with our beliefs, fears, hopes, etc.

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[472] Ibid., p.87.

[473] See also section 8.23.

[474] Ibid., p.93.

It is worth re-stressing at this point Rhees's statement that when one calls a religion the 'true' one or takes doctrinal teachings to be true, this has nothing to do with testable truth, there is no sense of hypothesis or theory here, the statement is simply acceptance of that religion and its doctrinal content. Discussion of 'truth' here, Rhees says, should start with 'I am the way and the Truth'.[475] Believing a religion to be true is adopting it and adhering to it in the same way that accepting moral issues as the right ones is accepting them as those to live by. As soon as one even tries to explain religious beliefs such as the transformation, resurrection, etc. you are no longer talking about the religious belief but have moved to discussion as in the discussion of a hypothesis or objective fact. Offering historical 'proof' or a factual basis for beliefs cannot carry explanatory power either – how could one historically explain the meaning of the rite of the Mass which gains its power from its institution by the Son of God? Is the Mass itself a hypothesis?[476] There are no independent facts that throw light on these religious beliefs, no objective justifications. Truth here is not used in the same way as in science or maths. There is nothing that can be appealed to outside religion. Some will clearly argue that proving the historical existence of Christ aids acceptance of the Christian faith but the reality of that faith, the 'happening' of the faith, is not dependent on external evidence. Justification of belief occurs within belief just as justification for the use of methods of calculation occurs within mathematics, it is learnt by learning mathematics; asking whether it is justified to do mathematics at all has no meaning.[477] Asking whether it is justified to believe in religion and God is in this sense similar. We come back here to our previous comments on the nature of reality, its basis in the finding out that something is so. In religion we would be deluded if we were trying to do what we would normally do with science or maths and vice versa.

Rhees quotes Wittgenstein's comment that meaning in the language of religion can really only be understood where it is expressed in action. This is the only way to know what a person means by belief in God and by other religious statements. The meaning of the religious language is expressed in a life – 'practice gives words their sense'.[478]

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[475] Ibid., p.98.

[476] Ibid., p.100.

[477] Ibid., p.109.

[478] Ibid., p.228.

6.3.6 Myth, ritual, world-picture, and mistakes

In Rhees's discussion of Wittgenstein's 'On Certainty' he makes the following comment:

> There is no theory of language. The ways in which we speak are not hypotheses. Why do we speak as we do? Why do we live as we do? Why is human life the sort of thing it is? There is not much that can be said in answer these questions.[479]

In discussing Wittgenstein's views in 'Remarks on Fraser's Golden Bough' Rhees agrees with Wittgenstein's criticism that Fraser seems to regard 'primitive' rituals as *mistakes*. None of these can be mistakes for Rhees and Wittgenstein because they are not theories and likewise 'religious responses are not theories'. They are part of a life along with song, dance, art, etc. Can dance be a mistake? Rituals are better understood if recognised as 'forms of language' rather than poor 'would-be substitutes for science'.[480] Rhees argues 'practice and belief are found together'. One does not derive from the other nor is one an explanation of the other.

Rhees argues that ritual 'processes' show the kinds of shifts in meaning or grammar that we use in figures of speech such as personification, but myths and rites also show gesture-language and the gestures, even if only present in the ritual, derive their meaning and power in the same manner, because of connection with gestures in daily life, as ritually used words and sentences. The power of the words and gestures is transferred into the ritual with its power. If this were not true the ritual gestures and ritual words would not have meaning. They would not be deeply 'anchored' in the lives of the participants in the ritual. The ritual references important events in life - equinox, planting, harvest, etc. The shift from one use of a word or gesture is 'natural' and reflects what happens in everyday speech but its power is revealed in the ritual setting.

As Rhees puts it: 'The *formal* character is one of the marks of ritual – nobody is telling anyone anything or asking to be informed of anything'. The gestures and words are not being used as they are in everyday matters such as conversation. 'It is as though… the words had power themselves…as though there might be a *performance* in which the people who made or uttered them were stage hands or altar servants'. Rhees

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[479] Rhees, *On Certainty,* p.40.

[480] Ibid., p.41.

connects the above comments with Wittgenstein's pointing to the common confusion in philosophy of thinking that the meaning of a sentence lies in the physical marks, sounds or movements, a magical understanding instead of logical. It is use that determines meaning. The one who treats as magical 'misunderstands what "being a symbol" or "having meaning" is'.[481]

Further light can be shed on Rhees's position through Peter Winch and D.Z. Phillips writings on culture and religion/myth who both hold views similar to Rhees. When looking at a 'primitive' culture and its rites it is common for anthropologists to take up a stance where the other culture is regarded as holding 'mistaken' religious beliefs. Our scientific methods of investigation, and indeed what we consider common sense, show no cause-and-effect relationship between their rites and what happens to the group and thus the rites and attached beliefs must be wrongly held.[482] This leads to an understanding that our society, with its modern, scientific viewpoint, is superior. What Winch stresses, however, is that we are not intellectually superior to more primitive people but are just as conditioned by our 'scientific' culture as they are by their alternative conditioning. In Rhees's terms our reality differs from theirs as it is based upon differing hinge propositions, differing habitual and customary ways of understanding reality. We accept what society accepts without understanding the scientific basis of, for example, predictions such as weather forecasts, etc. and we also accept that jet planes will fly, bombs will explode etc. without a grasp of complex engineering. We soak up what society in general accepts with our heritage and learning. The 'savage' does the same and accepts the culture of his society by being born into it. At the heart of the problem of understanding between the two groups is the mistake of wanting to apply a conception of reality from outside the society in which the beliefs operate. Such beliefs may produce an entirely workable and comprehensible way of life which has an internal consistency and practical day to day effectiveness without corresponding to scientific understandings of verifiable truth. The check of belief against an independent reality, where one exists, is crucial but science should not be considered the paradigm of reality, it is not necessarily the only respectable independent measure of reality.

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[481] Rhees, *On Religion,* p.69.

[482] Phillips, *Religion and understanding*, p.10.

Phillips comments that a ritual is not performed *in order* to express anything: it is the expression of something itself, awe, fear wonder etc. These can only be explained in terms of the belief system in which they arise. Rites may arise from emotions and/or be the producers of the emotions. There may be something to learn in a ritual but early on, e.g., in childhood, one learns to participate, learns the format, prior to emotional response or emotional motivation. The religious belief/significance may be attained in the same way. One does not first seek solace, emotional outlet etc. and then come to the rite or belief. We do not believe in Christ to attain solace; solace comes from the belief.[483] He further states that ritual may be the expression of a wish without involving a confused view that a thwarted purpose (thwarted by nature) has somehow been achieved by other means. Wishes and desires may be expressed, for example, in and through ritual, confession, and prayer in order to 'work them into' one's relationship with God. One may not expect the wish to be fulfilled or even hope that in a way it is not.[484]

Religious understandings, rituals, myths and historical or foundational stories do not arise in a systematic way. They do not contribute to or constitute a theoretical system; they do not function as evidence supporting a scientific understanding of God, man or the world and thus cannot be derided or devalued on that basis. Their logical coherence and rationality are expressed within the reality of the tribe or people. In a similar way the coherence of the beliefs of religion is bound up intimately with the practice of the religion. We cannot pre-suppose a conception of reality or rationality (scientific) and then apply this criterion to practices and beliefs which do not share its preconceptions/preconditions.

Bound up with criticisms of the rationality of religious belief are questions regarding what the 'point' of religion is, what it is expected to provide or facilitate. Questions of rationality tend to look for justifications for belief in terms of some sort of better result or outcome but for the religious believer the situation is far more complex. They may consider achieving the afterlife as their main motive in religious belief, but they may want to believe in order to come to terms with their present life, to understand its meaning, to cope with loss, illness, etc. They may come to belief through inspiration,

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[483] Phillips, *Religion Without Explanation,* p.52.

[484] Ibid.*,* p.87.

revelation, or pain. They may also believe despite not wishing to do so, hating God and religion for its effects on their life. Important for most Christians is the sense of depending on God, giving everything up for God and losing self in the love for God and neighbour. The 'point' of religious belief is not in these ways like the point of, or justification for, scientifically based beliefs. Religious belief is, at its core, concerned with what Winch calls[485] 'limiting notions', the fundamentals of human life which deeply interact with ethics and morals – birth, death, sexual relations; those which underpin what we understand by human life.

The understandings, misunderstandings and controversies that arise out of liturgy, doctrine and tradition, the contents of theology, arise from, or develop with, the language of religion. Views, attitudes and even beliefs can change with time and these theological changes go with changes in the language, the grammar of religion. They do not precede or follow it. Interpretations 'develop' with time but what constitutes worship of God, what is a 'mistake' in belief about God or in worship? In the objective world we can be reasonably certain that gardening is gardening, and swimming is swimming but where does worship begin and cease to be worship? When can belief be said to mistaken or wrong. The only criterion seems to be tradition, community cohesive understandings and orthodox biblical interpretation.

The depth of the problem can be seen by looking at the argument from revelation. Revelation of divine truth is carried in bible, tradition, theology, etc. and depends fundamentally on human witness. Here, however, trust in a witness is dissimilar to trusting, for example, historical accounts or writings about the Wars of the Roses or the historical development of chemistry. Trustworthiness of the witness and an acceptance of their competence is paramount here but in religious revelation there is no sense for Rhees in talking about degrees of religious certainty or degrees of acceptance nor can one talk of independence, objectivity or greater knowledge or competence in revelatory matters. The revelation is an integral part of what it shows, it is not something apart from what it reveals. Questions of probability make no sense here.

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[485] Phillips, *Religion and Understanding,* p.38.

6.4 Chapter summary

We have seen that Rhees regards religious language and theology as integral to, and inseparable from, faith. It is the 'grammar of God'. Religious concepts, such as God, to be spoken *of* rather than *about* require the world-picture of the believer.

Rhees argues that mentalistic understandings lead to 'metaphysical' confusions about belief. 'God' has meaning as a concept embedded in the matrix of religious practice. The objectification of God leads also to errors in causation and attempting to validate God's existence has similarities to validating science in its most profound depths or validating the existence of morals or artistic appreciation. Religious understanding relates to wonderment at the existence of self and world not causal arguments. Belief in him is seen in commitment to a religious world-picture.

He stresses that the unity that the world has is not that of a collection and our language cannot maintain traction when we talk of 'everything' in contrast to nothing. God is not a part of everything, and creation *ex-nihilo* cannot logically be a matter of making. 'Why anything rather than nothing' governs the use of the term God and His existence cannot be put into sensible terms. Talking of God having agency in the world outside the timeless holding of all in being puts God in an alternative reality, outside the universe not central to our reality.

The *nature* of the reality of God is the crucial issue for Rhees and perceptions of evidence and error depend upon one's world-picture, one's reality. Rationality depends on reality and religious reality is not grounded in God in the sense of above reason. Religion has a rationality of its own though interlacing with others.

Rhees extensively explores the scientific world-picture, centred on things and what makes something a thing, i.e., reality and illusion. He argues that God, religion, morals, logic, and aesthetics also have reality but not objective reality. They are vindicated within lives and central to human existence. Belief in God lies at the level of belief in the reality of physical objects *per se* and discussions of truth and falsity in religion differ conceptually from those relating to the objective. Truth has a different basis, no guarantees exist, experience is all important. The reality of religious concepts

is recognized by their importance, depth, profundity in a life lived and in the sense of duty to act in accordance with them.

He says that religion concerns itself with the very fact of the gift of life and the relationship between death and the life lived. To believe in God's goodness, in some good in life, is to believe in God and is an expression of gratitude for all life, its importance, holiness. Science cannot contribute to such understandings; it cannot perceive the profundity. The 'finding out' fundamentally differs in science and religion. The conceptions of reality differ. Profundity exists at the level of the very nature of science, what can be taken as an answer here, what shows itself through the whole of scientific endeavour, what separates serious and trivial.

What is profound, so important for Rhees, speaks universally but what is learned from it cannot be verbally expressed. Religion, art, music, morality all deal with the profound and religious profundity to be recognized must, like the other types, be recognized against a background of the mundane. It can only be prepared for by immersion in the life of the committed community, within the community with a common world-picture.

Our lives are transformed, not dominated, by religion. Devotion here is not like devotion to art, etc. It should be neither selfish nor selfless but be an abandonment of pride and sacrifice of life to God. The depth and profundity of life relates to its persistence in God's eternal love, not in an eternity outside time. Coming to understand this eternal love is coming to belief in God. Even religious challenges and perplexities arise from such love and cannot be understood outside belief.

Rhees argues that religious scepticism relates to not being able to imagine what it would be like if there were a God, not having the concept of a God to whom worship should be addressed. The extension of the effects of belief throughout one's daily life is what separates true faith from sham. The believer is not indulging in a theory or speculative act for gain. The acts, prayers, etc. arise with the coherent world-picture, in a particular spirit and gain their power and depth from their place in that life as expressions of it.

7. Criticism of Rhees's views on Religious Belief

7.1 Introduction

Direct criticism of Rhees's views on religion in the literature is limited, possibly because most of his ideas were published after his death and at a time when criticisms of the 'Swansea School' overall were well established, particularly those on religion espoused by D.Z. Phillips. The most widespread criticism of Rhees's views relates to his strictures regarding what religious belief must be. It is argued that Christian religious belief encompasses, for many adherents, specific understandings, often fundamental ones, which he rules out. This will be commented on in the next section, but we must firmly bear in mind that Rhees's writings, published by Phillips and co-workers since his death, comprise in large part personal letters to friends, professional contacts and interlocuters rather than papers being offered to a professional, wider audience for critical appraisal. The writings cover many years during which time Rhees's own views clearly change. His letters, notes, and other writings, as collated and arranged by Phillips, do not follow a chronological order, though where possible dates are given. It is therefore unclear, based purely upon this published work, whether the modification of his thoughts over the years progress towards personal belief or whether his opinions remained fluctuant and unfixed. These provisos must be born permanently in mind in the following review concerning direct criticisms of, or problems with acceptance of, Rhees's work.

A further problem, directly impacted by the above, relates to the potential contradiction between Rhees's own personal position regarding faith and his insight into the beliefs of others. Can he comment with sufficient understanding of the world-picture of the faithful? Section 7.3 of this chapter deals with this problem. The question of Wittgensteinian 'fideism' touches on this matter but, in itself, fideism will not be discussed as it has already been widely discussed in the literature without conclusions being reached.[486]

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[486] For overview see: Kai Nielsen and D.Z. Phillips, *Wittgensteinian Fideism?* (London: SCM Press, 2005).

The next two sections of this chapter (7.4 and 7.5) deal with issues fundamental to the whole thesis – the understanding of the 'foundations' of language and belief. How secure can one be in regarding religious belief as a 'hinge commitment' in the world-picture of the Christian and what is the relationship between Moore's certainties and religious belief? These sections do not deal directly with criticisms of Rhees but with purported deviations from Wittgenstein's position, which impact on instinct, intuition, and action in relation to language formation. Such concepts interrelate with Pascal's ideas of 'habit' as foundational in human nature and the acquisition of beliefs. The major question is whether Rhees's position is deficient here in terms of offering insight into the origin of religious belief when compared to that of Wittgenstein.

7.2 Rhees's view on the limits of sensible belief

As has been pointed out above, one of the most persistent criticisms of Rhees's views on religion relates to his restrictive comments regarding what religious belief can be.[487] Critics argue that belief in God takes many different forms with radically different opinions on the nature of God, the necessary forms of worship, etc., even within the Christian tradition. This makes discussion of whether belief is 'reasonable' almost meaningless without a prior definition of exactly what belief is being examined. Rhees, however, makes firm statements about what religion *must* be and on the effects of belief without considering what believers themselves say they actually adhere to. This failing is made more serious by the purported Wittgensteinian position which argues that philosophy should be centred on language and act, rather than interpretation of what is reasonable or has intellectual probity. How can these clearly serious criticisms be addressed as Rhees himself does not specifically do so? How can he avoid the damning criticism that in the end he argues that believers cannot legitimately believe what they say they say they do, that he knows better than they what belief amounts to, that he rejects their own understanding?

Perhaps the first point to make is that, as alluded to earlier, Rhees's published writings on religion are, in large part, letters to friends and interlocutors and clearly represent shifting personal views. They are nonetheless addressing very serious philosophical issues concerning religion and reflect what Rhees as a philosopher feels

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[487] See for example, Rhees, *On Religion*, pp.13-15 and pp.50-63.

can be sensibly said about belief and the nature of God. One might argue that his 'can only be' would be better expressed as 'can only be for me as a philosopher'. This could raise the counterargument that if that is the case, *belief* for Rhees, as a Wittgensteinian, should not depend upon philosophical reasoning. The giving of reasons for beliefs, for Wittgenstein, comes to an end and our most fundamental beliefs are underpinned by certainties which are not questioned or, indeed, are those certainties.[488] Rhees, however, addresses predominantly the nature of reality, the reality that includes belief in God rather than any philosophical analysis of the validity or erroneousness of religious belief.

It is important to understand that Rhees clearly uses his caveats over what religious belief really must be to clarify the question of what is meant by 'God' and thus what belief in God might be. He reacts against what he sees as thoroughly confused positions both by philosophers and theologians on what their roles are in discussions of religion and God. He seeks to attempt to narrow the field of what it is sensible to say by arguing that God is not an *explanation* and if one takes the position that He is, then one falls into the trap of making discussion centre on whether belief can be justified based upon reason alone (a position that Pascal also denies). There is, in Rhees's work, a clear resistance to statements propounding 'God as the cause of all' and the arguments from natural theology for God's existence, particularly science-based arguments for the reasonableness of belief.[489] Reasoning about God, in the sense of interpretative analysis of 'facts' about the world and its origin or nature, are, for Rhees, wrong-headed. If one considers the whole array of arguments for and against religion based on natural theology, creation of the world, etc., philosophically misguided, then one can see where his 'can only be' takes origin.

It is of particular interest to follow the trajectory of Rhees's thought when laying down what can be said of belief. It is hardly as innovative or distant from accepted belief as it might at first seem. He argues from the position that God cannot be talked of as an object within the world, a fact among facts; that His reality is not that of the reality of tangible objects and that religious language reflects these views. As God is not within

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[488]Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, §160ff.

[489] See for example: Rush Rhees, *On Religion*, pp. 122-145. This is seen clearly in D. Z. Phillips work also. See: Brian Davies, 'D.Z. Phillips on Belief in God'. *Philosophical Investigations,* 30 (2007), pp. 219-244.

the world and eternity for Rhees cannot be thought of in terms of eternal temporal existence, God cannot be described as modifying or 'acting upon' creation[490] He must be arguably seen as the changeless reason why there is anything at all rather than the 'entity' which brings about a created world (if world means everything that is). Such a view is very close to a God who 'holds all in existence'. God's reality is not that of one being amongst beings; His reality cannot be understood in terms of the reality of the objective world. As Davies points out[491] such views relate essentially to God's atemporality, namelessness, objectification (God has no attributes but 'is' goodness, love, etc.), creativity *ex nihilo* without alteration in His essence, His omnipresence in all creation, timelessness etc. All are present in Aquinas and medieval scholasticism and doctrinally accepted by the Roman Catholic Church. They would have been well understood by Pascal.

The above argument that Rhees's position on the nature of God is, for the greater part at least, commensurate with Roman Catholic Church teaching does not, of course, apply to his position across the board, e.g. on miracles, and, although it 'legitimizes' much of his position from an 'orthodox Christian' viewpoint it does not exonerate him from the essence of the criticism that his strictures, however explained, would exclude from 'the religious belief in God' those who sincerely hold to God as an individual, a person, acting in history and portrayed as such in the Bible, evident in His created universe by its order as comprehended by reason, etc. One imagines, however, that modern theologians, for the most part, would not hold to the understandings of the nature of God, etc., espoused by less analytical believers and it is difficult to see how the gulf between them and more 'fundamentalist' believers could be altered without a common acceptance of what defines 'reasonable' belief.

7.3 The Limits of Rhees's own position

There is within the overall criticism given in the previous section perhaps a more trenchant one concerning Rhees's own understanding of what faith actually consists of for the religious believer. He comments that he feels religious faith for most may really be a search for faith and at times he clearly felt that he neither had faith nor a religious

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[490] See also section 6.2.1.

[491] Davies, p.229.

world-picture.[492] He does not see himself as 'a religious man'.[493] Rhees seems to be in the common position of a man of deep understanding seeking faith rather than the position of a theologian. He recognizes this and sees his position as deeply unsatisfactory. He accepts a role for philosophical analysis in meaningful comment on what can be said about God but for him religious *faith* is not analysable and although it may not conflict with reason, nor is it amenable to philosophical investigation. It is clear in some sections of *Rush Rhees on Religion and Philosophy* that he has attempted to follow those who do believe by church attendance, prayer, religious music, etc., coming close to but apparently not fully achieving persisting faith.[494] In the end, based on the evidence of his published work, he falls at Pascal's fence between reason and 'the machine' on one hand and the heart on the other.

This problem of Rhees's personal religious position can be well illustrated by comparing section A in chapter 25 of *Rush Rhees on Religion and Philosophy* and his writings in the following section B[495] or by contrasting his use of religious language in writing on the death of his dog[496] compared to his comments earlier in his correspondence with Drury, professional scientists and philosophers and Fr. O'Keefe.[497] These sections make abundantly clear his desire for religious faith, but they also seem to indicate fluctuating ability to adhere to religious beliefs. All the difficulties he has are, at root, he admits, because he cannot make sense of, for example, resurrection, atonement, Christ as God, etc. Certainly, in many of his writings he sees himself as not *misunderstanding*, in Wittgenstein's sense, religious beliefs, but as standing outside the world-picture that allows their comprehension in the way believers do. From this position he essentially finds that the mystical, when subjected to reflection and discussion, leaves him with 'nothing on which I can fasten'.[498] By his own comments

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[492] For clear evidence of this from 1957 see: Rhees, *On Religion*, pp.345-361.

[493] Ibid., p.126; Mounce states that in the 1950's Rhees's position changed from previous 'militant atheism', considering religion facile and servile, to an entirely different one. See: Howard Mounce, 'On the differences between Rush Rhees and Simone Weil', *Philosophical Investigations,* 43 (2019), pp.71-75.

[494] See for example: Rhees, *On Religion*, p.346.

[495] Ibid.*,* pp.166-191.

[496] Rush Rhees, *Moral Questions*, ed. by D.Z. Phillips (Basingstoke: MacMillan, 1999), pp.197-227.

[497] Rhees, *On Religion*, pp.345-361.

[498] Ibid., p.336.

therefore Rhees cannot fully comprehend or grasp the essence of the grammar of many Christian concepts. The concepts seem empty or problematic as they depend not only on familiarity with grammar and usage but with their place in a believer's life.

The concepts Rhees crashes into, the descriptive things said which appear to treat of God as personal and objective, to offer theological support for redemption, life after death etc., are not self-contradictory or illogical but *mysterious* and held as truths by faith alone. One might cogently argue therefore that Rhees's problems are to be expected and have no solution based on his own religious position. How far then can one accept his analysis of religious belief, the religious form of life, when he states at times himself that he does not inhabit it?

I think that there are two major defences to the above criticism of Rhees. The first is based in his understanding of Wittgenstein's position on language and ritual.[499] Language bewitches us all and nonsense can be found in all discourse and opinion thus, for the religious person, what he states he believes must be borne out in his life – actual use may differ from an account given of it.[500] A philosophical account is not a theory and does not change differing beliefs or attempt to do so – disagreements will persist. What Rhees attempts to deal with is 'conceptual confusions' in the accounts given. We distort the meaning of the grammar of an account. What all believe is seen in the form of life but accounts of this may be confused – hence Rhees's 'can only mean'; it is a philosophical clarificatory statement. Rhees may legitimately try to clarify conceptual confusions by philosophical analysis, but this does not alter belief. The relationship between religion and superstition is also important here. Rhees sees his views on 'the magical conception of a sign' as very important in such conceptual religious or ritual confusions, where the sign (word) may be thought to carry the meaning 'all at once' like an accompanying power.[501] Religious beliefs and practices may produce this conceptual confusion, indeed that may be their attraction, and Rhees wants to separate genuine religious belief from superstitious ritualistic attraction.

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[499]Ibid., pp. 65-96.

[500]Timo Koistinen, 'The vantage point of disinterested enquiry' *Studia Theologica – Nordic Journal of Theology,* 66 (2012), p.134.

[501] This is dealt with in depth in section 8.21.

The second defence operates at a more fundamental level where misunderstanding also exists in the previously discussed criticism of Rhees and Phillips comments on what religious beliefs 'must be'. The whole basis of their arguments on religious belief (and that of Wittgenstein's later writings) is that one must resist the assumption that an essential form lies behind key philosophical concepts.[502] What counts as a reason, what counts as evidence, depends upon situation. Good judgement, good reasons, are not generalizable and not all beliefs can be supported by evidence. All knowledge is not justified true belief[503] and truth claims may not be based on external realities or generally acceptable logical claims. Logic itself is heterogenous. This is well brought out by Rhees's analysis of Wittgenstein's comments on primitive beliefs. Because we cannot agree with the beliefs of primitive peoples regarding their gods, astrology, etc. we should not regard them as *mistaken*, their rational standards are different, their background assumptions as to what constitutes good judgement differ from ours, their world-picture, based on differing certainties, differs, as do the accompanying judgements on what is reasonable. They cannot imagine being mistaken in these views and their critical thinking emphasizes this. Thus, Rhees only transgresses his own basic philosophy if, speaking from his own world-picture, he does not realize that the beliefs he is commenting on differ 'in logical kind'[504] from other beliefs because of the particular role they play in the other's belief system, the working of their reason. This does not mean that he will take their beliefs as sensible or rational. They should not be considered mistaken in having their beliefs, but others have no reason to accept them or their way of thinking and can legitimately offer a critique of them.

An error of thinking can be *told*, one can identify a point or points where a person went wrong in the logic of their thinking – provided we share a similar process of reasoning on matters generally. Rhees comments on the religious statements of Christians who co-exist in the same cultural milieu, who share a similar logical process on non-religious matters, and this underpins the validity of his strictures. In cultural or conceptual differences neither side has the logical power to win over the other.[505] No way of objectively convincing the other exists, the training and life of the two

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[502]John H. Whittaker, 'D.Z. Phillips and Reasonable Belief,' *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, 63 (2008), pp.103-129.

[503]Ibid., p.104.

[504]Ibid., p.107.

[505]Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, §611.

protagonists differs. But when Rhees comments that something in the religious sphere 'can only be' he is stressing his logical understanding of what must reasonably follow if the other's position is to be 'internally consistent'. There is no attempt at pragmatic justification here (my view is of the greater utility), nor does he attempt persuasion or alteration of the world-picture of the other by retraining, etc. He appeals to the logic of the belief because he sees the claim as a claim that presents itself as logically held when it cannot be.

If an individual argues that the world is supported on the back of a tortoise and challenging this world-picture by questioning what supports the tortoise produces the response that 'it is tortoises all the way down' then one has an insurmountable problem as the logical functioning of the propounder of this view is incommensurate with our logic. By contrast, the modern Christian shares many fundamental understandings with the non-believer, including understandings of what is scientifically and or logically possible. He has common definitions of terms such as world, universe, everything, nothing, object, subject, etc., which can be criticized and analysed on the same base of commonly accepted logic and language (grammar). There are proper, meaningful usages of terms shared by believer and non-believer which are open to analysis and criticism.

'Grammar' in the normative Wittgensteinian sense, gives words their meaning as concepts[506] and this conceptual meaning is shared in the areas Rhees comments on. He is generally not criticizing the fundamental assumptions underpinning the world-picture of various Christians but criticizing where they appear to be extending beliefs into the remit of physics, etc. They are then open to the charge of illogicality as their ground is common to them and Rhees. They are mistaken in his view in this overextension of religious world-picture into scientific matters. What counts as a reason here is shared with the scientific world-picture. Evidence is needed to counter doubts where one is talking of the interface of knowledge and belief. The interlocutors share what 'thinking well' is in these areas. The problem is that there is no standardized picture of what makes a belief rational and no clear dividing line between Moore's certainties for one world-picture and another.

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[506]Whittaker, p.107.

What can one do to change the firmly held world-picture of a person? Wittgenstein argues for persuasion or conversion[507] but pragmatic reasoning and persuasion lie outside logic. The major problem must be that of the extent to which belief in God, with its associated change in the whole of life and outlook, can be said to alter what the believer sees as reasonable. Where, for example, a scientific and a revelational understanding of the universe clash the 'revelationist' might carry their understanding of what is 'true' far further into non-religious aspects of their life without the tension that many Christians in the modern world may feel.

Another aspect of this problem can be illuminated using Rhees's repeated point that God is not an object – a grammatical claim when used in religious discussion. The term object differs in meaning dependent upon circumstance - a mathematical number, a structure we point to, our understanding of God as a reality, etc. When a religious believer talks of God as objectively existing, he or she must accept the difference between a common worldly object and God; this is expressed through the religious grammar used. The problem for Rhees is to make clear what is meant by objective reality and where its limits must lie – some believers extend the understanding of object without due regard to what it can mean in that particular grammatical situation, that language-game – here Rhees tries to draw out the 'limits'. He understands that religion needs the 'new conceptual understanding' manifest in religious grammar, this is essentially an understanding or knowledge of faith and is acquired not by rational learning but by 'wisdom'. It does not have an evidential confirmation, but it still has limits of consistency to avoid *mis*understanding.[508]

This 'grammatical' interpretation is well seen in Wittgenstein's own writings on religious language.[509] Wittgenstein makes clear his understanding, which is also clearly Rhees's, that religious believer's statements surrounding belief arise from within a life on an 'entirely different plane' from that of non-believers.[510] They arise out of a different 'form of life'. On such matters believers and non-believers do not simply

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[507]Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, §612 – as when missionaries convert natives.

[508]Rhees, *On Religion*, p.85.

[509]I am grateful here for the insights provided by: Genia Schonbaumsfeld, 'Worlds or words apart? Wittgenstein on understanding religious language'. *Ratio*, XX (2007), pp.422-441.

[510] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Lectures and Conversations,* §53, §55.

differ in opinion; an opinion 'does not regulate for all in one's life'.[511] Wittgenstein talks of the statement 'God's eye sees everything' as using a picture, having a use associated with a particular picture.[512] The phrase could not be simply replaced by another making the same point, expressing the same meaning, this could not have produced the same picture. He also makes clear that *meaning* of words comes down to understanding the use to which they are put.[513] Practice gives sense to expressions and words[514] and there is no separate mental process which can be defined or examined separate from the word and its meaning in action and life. Such views are all clearly contained and stressed in Rhees's work as is the understanding that just as thinking (or imagining) is not an accompaniment of words as spoken or in the sense of the word itself plus an accompanying mental image or thought, nor is it an act, accompanied by an image or a thought. The picturing referred to by Wittgenstein regarding the believer's utterance 'God's eye sees everything' is not associating a particular use with a particular picture, reading off a particular meaning from a picture or a particular picture from a meaning, in this religious situation all is in the picture (or word or phrase), the picture, like a genre picture, tells itself.[515]

A picture, a word, or a sentence can tell me something in a way that a historical picture or representation or portrait does, a substitutable way that could be described as well in another picture or phrase, or it may offer a representation which can only be given in that one picture or phrase – hence the phrase may be 'essential', irreplaceable. It is not that 'usual' language has pictures, words, their usage, and something beyond them, an 'essential meaning', etc. but, in contrast, religious language has only the picture or word and its use. The difference in the religious phrase *used as such* is that the picture (the phrase) cannot be done without, the phrase or picture cannot be substituted whereas in 'usual' language another phrase or picture may be put in its place. There is an 'essential' and 'inessential' use of pictures and phrases[516]or an

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[511]Schonbaumsfeld, p.423.

[512] Wittgenstein, *Lectures and Conversations*, §71.

[513] Wittgenstein. *Culture and Value,* §85e.

[514] Wittgenstein, *Investigations*,§43.

[515]Ibid., §522-523.

[516]Schonbaumsfeld, p.430.

'internal' and 'external' understanding.[517] Religious phrases must be understood 'internally' and to use them in a truly religious sense it is not sufficient to understand the meaning of the words in other circumstances; one must have the whole set of associated beliefs and the form of life of the believer. In one sense the words and phrases are understandable by non-believers, but this is not the religious sense to the phrase. A re-orientation of one's view of the world is needed to understand the religious sense, a conceptual re-orientation with similarities to the changes needed to deeply appreciate music, poetry, etc. There is no suggestion by Rhees or Wittgenstein that religion has no 'external' or 'paraphraseable' content, only that many core religious statements do not, and it is not possible to separate belief and practice in these cases and retain meaning. When one asks to what a religious phrase or belief 'refers' this cannot be answered without resort to religious understanding of the practices in which they are embedded.

It is the false dichotomy between doctrine/theology and a religious life as lived, between the 'external' and 'internal' meaning of pictures/words which is of the essence here and this is what Rhees regularly investigates. The grammar of faith is manifest in the 'internal', non-substitutable meaning embedded in a religious form of life and only truly understood from this vantage point. On the other hand, without the 'external' inter-reacting understanding of how the words and phrases are used no fully fledged comprehension could occur, for such 'external' elements allow the concepts and beliefs of Christianity to be organized into a framework interdigitating with secular beliefs and understandings. Rhees works at this interface. Religious beliefs do not occur in an isolated 'bottle'; religious people hold identical beliefs to non-religious on much of life, if not they would be incomprehensible to the non-believer in all aspects of life. It is important to stress that the believer's religious 'internal' grammar must have a complex relationship with belief. When a religious belief is lost, what happens to the understanding?

Can we accept, in fact, despite any apparent purported contradiction between Wittgenstein's understanding of what philosophy is and Rhees's writings on religion, that Rhees has been true to Wittgenstein throughout – is all his exposition in fact directly related to attempting to elucidate the 'grammar of God'? Because of the nature

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[517] Wittgenstein, *Investigations*, §531, §533.

of the material available and its personal character this is difficult to assess but I feel this is the case, hence his lengthy and repeated expositions on what it is to say something concerning religious belief – what do worship, prayer, belief, reality, truth, falsity, evidence, person, creator, etc. mean when used in a religious setting. How do they differ from elsewhere and what ways do these differences manifest in a life? The difficulty that Rhees does not adequately address is that the grammar of God is not the same for a Dominican theologian and a fundamentalist Christian let alone a Muslim and a Jew; indeed, in what sense can one therefore talk of the 'grammar of God', can it be said to have any content?

7.4 God, Reality, and Human Nature.

Most important for the present thesis, is the question raised regarding Rhees's views of what has been called the 'autonomy' problem. This relates essentially to what Mounce has argued is a divergence of opinion between Rhees and Wittgenstein related to Wittgenstein's later writings, one in which he finds Rhees's views wanting.[518]

At the root of Rhees's writings on religion is the investigation of the *kind* of reality God has or is[519] through a careful investigation of the role religion plays in the lives of believers and particularly the role talk of God has here. This is at core a philosophical undertaking rather than a study in apologetics and it is at least in part a defence of religious belief against the religious sceptic. Religious language and action provide the contexts within which the distinction between truth and falsity can be examined, within which truth and falsity manifest themselves. There is no 'a priori' measure of reality and belief in God's reality is not a reason for engaging in religious practices and living a Christian life. Similarly, the use of physical object language cannot be said to depend on the acceptance of a prior belief in the reality of physical objects. The practices and language used themselves constitute what that reality is.[520]

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[518]Zachery A. Carter, 'Wittgenstein, Rush Rhees and the Measure of Language', *New Blackfriars,* 87 (2006), pp. 288-301.

[519]Richard Amesbury. 'The truth of religion and religious truths', *International Journal for the Philosophy of Religion*, 52 (2002), pp.159-173, (p.162).

[520] Ibid., p.163

One might argue that if what is real and unreal shows itself in the sense language has (as Winch argued and Rhees concurred with[521]) then 'reality' is made relative to language and different languages, different understandings of language, constitute different realities, different worlds. But Winch and Rhees take the position that, in fact, different languages neither describe the same reality differently nor describe different realities; in truth they describe nothing at all.[522] Language is not a description *of* the world; we describe the world *in* this or that language. Denying the reality of physical objects is to deny the intelligibility of this language together with the criteria within the language for distinguishing truth from lie. Physical objects do not exist because we talk about them and the same is true of God's existence. The *kind* of reality they have is manifest in the language. The grammar of language is not a theory about reality. If we say we are in pain that is not a claim about the reality of pain or about whether reality itself contains pain, or indeed about anything else. We, as humans, speaking a language in which the word pain is used, agree on what it refers to. Religious language is used and *within that context* we can look at truth and falsehood. There can be no such thing as a general defence of religious belief or a general attack on belief. There are particular beliefs, particular understandings, particular truth claims and denials which are open to criticism within a linguistic and practical framework.

So how do the words we use in religion gain meaning and sense, how does the reality of religion link to the language, or indeed all reality link to language. This is at root the problem that concerned Wittgenstein throughout his professional life and the same is true for Rhees with his oft-repeated question of 'what it is to say something'. How do words connect to and have meaning within the world? Do Wittgenstein and Rhees have a common view on this? Does Rhees correctly interpret Wittgenstein and if not which viewpoint, if either, illuminates what Pascal seems to understand regarding habit, intuition, and religious belief?

Carter,[523] in presenting his interpretation of Mounce's views, argues that Wittgenstein, by the time of the *Philosophical Investigations*, understands that a rule itself is a symbol, another sign which does not determine meaning in language. A

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[521]Peter Winch, 'Understanding a Primitive Society', *American Philosophical Quarterly* 1 (1964), pp.307-324.

[522]Peter Winch, *Trying to Make Sense* (Oxford: Blackwell,1987), p.195.

person may not carry on applying a rule correctly. Meaning does not come before application[523], it is found in application. 'Going on' with meaningful language depends on agreement in judgements, not pointing to a sample or applying a rule.[524] Underlying this conclusion, however, lies the very important point that using a word is dependent not on language itself, or its rules of use; it comes from nature, human nature. It is dependent on behaviour which is not the product of language but of the 'animal'.

Rhees, drawing on Plato, argues that growth in understanding depends upon conversation and essentially argues that a rule is only a rule in the context of practice. He avoids talk of any pre-linguistic behaviour underlying language. Growth in understanding depends upon development and alteration of viewpoint and language by interaction. Meaning relates to context and the life of the person overall and it is here that form of life/world-picture becomes central and it is conversation between people where 'internal connections' and understandings occur – the unity of language is like a hubbub of different conversations all at the same time. The whole of life and the whole of language together provide the possibility of sense.[525]

Carter sees a clear divergence here between Wittgenstein and Rhees which is evident in Wittgenstein's later writings – for Wittgenstein the question is really 'how do words have meaning', where does sense come from, what is the measure of the real. For Rhees, however, Wittgenstein's question becomes 'what does it mean to say something' and he regards sense as 'internal' in that it arises *within* discourse and no common measure of the real is needed. Both Rhees and Wittgenstein attack scepticism, as does Pascal, but for Rhees there is a sense in which language and reality are also 'external' in that we make the connections between meanings in our lives and interactive speech. For Wittgenstein, Carter argues, we are related in essence to the world through something deeper - natural reactions, products of our intrinsic nature, 'animal' potentials. Knowledge is not at the basis of our language-games; our language has its essential origin, as Malcolm also argues,[526] in instinct – in the beginning was the deed and the deed arises out of natural tendencies or reactions, intrinsic to being human. For

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[523]Carter, p.289.

[524] Wittgenstein, *Investigations*, §242.

[525] See section 5.3.

[526] Norman Malcolm, 'Wittgenstein: The Relation of Language to Instinctive Behaviour', *Philosophical Investigations,* 15 (1982), pp.3-22.

Malcolm's interpretation of Wittgenstein these natural reactions are *at* the foundation of our language, but he does not make clear whether he means that they are a precursor/prototype of the linguistic expression of, for example, pain or whether they are precursors of the concept of pain.[527] For Rhees, whilst he accepts that agreement in reactions underlies our ability to have a conversation, he does not accept that language emerges *from* instinct, it emerges *in* form of life. Reactions are not the determinant of 'how we go on'. Reactions can be taken in different ways.

What then happens when a child learns a language? – on Rhees's picture the child learns the sense of language by living the life of others around and speaking with them but then if there is no possibility of the learning of speech the child must be separated from all discussion and understanding – there is a separation that learning to speak bridges. Malcolm reads Wittgenstein as arguing that the child is already related to the world through primitive reactions which are rooted in human nature and how the world is. Unlike other animals, man is intrinsically capable of speech, has a natural tendency and ability to use speech. Anyone who has reared children knows this to be the case. The child learns and relates to others far more effectively than it can express verbally in its early months and years. I have to say that I see Malcolm's interpretation here as fundamentally sound and clearly expressed in Wittgenstein's later writings.[528] To quote from Carter:

> …Malcolm claims: 'Something resembling the primitive reactions that underlie the first learning of words pervades all human action…natural forms of life.[529]

There are for Wittgenstein even unfounded beliefs by gift of nature.[530]

The importance of these criticisms for any understanding of religious belief as a form of life must be clear, as it must for all understanding of forms of life. If language arises out of natural instinct, then belief itself may also be rooted here. Belief for Wittgenstein is groundless, it is not the same as conviction. Belief is groundless not in the sense of a groundless opinion but in the sense of something simply accepted and

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[527] Hugh Knott, 'Beyond Language and After', *Philosophical Investigations,* 21 (1998), pp.44-54.

[528] See: Wittgenstein, *Zettel,* §541, §545; *Investigations,* §242, §244; *On Certainty,* §204

[529] Carter, p.295.

[530] Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, §253,505

lived. It is important not to suggest that Wittgenstein argued for instinctive reactions as *explanations* for language or language-games nor suggested some 'mentalistic' process prior to the actual practice of language. It is behaviour that gives sense to the words.[531] In religion, knowledge, in the sense of something being brought into consciousness, must logically come before belief. Justification of that belief comes with a life lived but you cannot have opinion intervening and being tested rationally prior to belief because there are no testable, rational 'facts' prior to the belief. Belief *in* God makes *religious* sense, belief in the existence of God really does not. Compare the difference it would make if you believed in the existence of God but did not act out that belief in contrast to believing in the existence of God and living out that commitment as intrinsic to belief (or at least having a conscience in not doing so).[532]

As Mounce points out, for Wittgenstein, unlike Russell, there is no immediate or intuitive awareness of causation.[533] When we react to a sudden shift in what we experience, e.g., the collapse of a chair, tug on a rope, etc., we do so by instinct not intuition. He seems to regard the outcome as a reaction but there seems something wrong here, we both react and experience the collapse of the chair and immediately search for a cause – this is not a simple reflex reaction but a purposeful activity; what Mounce regards as an intuitive response. Wittgenstein does, however, hold that reasoned activity and doubt are certainly founded not in reasoning but in Moore's propositions.

Can we talk of a foundation here for language? Rhees argues that there is no foundation and takes this to be Wittgenstein's view also – language is, like our life, simply there, unfounded. He argues for Wittgenstein's 'primitive behaviour' simply meaning a primitive language-game. Mounce is clear that this is wrong – 'our language-game is itself a form of behaviour, there can be no difficulty in seeing it as an extension or transformation of behaviour in a more primitive form'. This he feels is borne out by several passages in Wittgenstein's works. Primitive behaviour does not and does not

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[531]Howard O. Mounce. *Metaphysics and the End of Philosophy*, (London: Continuum, 2007), p.186.

[532] See: Norman Malcolm, 'The Groundlessness of Religious Belief'. In: *Philosophy of Religion. A Guide and Anthology,* ed. by Brian Davies, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp.115-122.

[533]Howard O. Mounce, 'Moore's Propositions'. *Philosophical Investigations*, 39 (2016), pp. 385-390, (p.388).

need to explain the whole of language but is its foundation in the sense of the cause of its stability. Use logically precedes speaking – we use our limbs prior to referring to them in speech. No doubt of the existence of our limbs is present prior to speaking of them. We doubt on the background of not doubting.[534] Intrinsic skills such as memory, feel, touch, etc. must precede speech developmentally, even though humans clearly have an innate disposition to use language. In essence Mounce argues that language develops from a wider context than itself and non-linguistic behaviour is foundational and gives language its sense.[535]

Mounce's argument around intuition rather than instinct as foundational for language has been criticized on the grounds that it 'obliterates the distinction between factual and conceptual investigations'.[536] Essentially, he is accused of developing a philosophical concept, intuition, extended beyond its logical usage in its characteristic contexts.[537] Intuition itself is not clearly defined and what is it for language to be 'rooted in' or 'founded on' it? It is a psychological concept not a linguistic understanding and Mounce seems to use it outside its normal everyday sense. But without the use of intuition or a similar concept how does one account for the connections between 'behaviour, cognition, knowledge, concept formation and language use'?[538] This references the age-old dichotomy between empiricist and realist metaphysical understandings and Mounce argues for the metaphysical which he sees reflected in Wittgenstein's late work. Should one take Mounce's essentially foundational or an anti-foundational stance to Wittgenstein's work? Rhees certainly holds that language is rooted in our forms of behaviour, but he really holds that this is not a logical dependence in the sense that there is no clear process philosophically describable that explains the production of language.

If we begin to understand language as 'arising from' in the sense of 'derived from' animal or primitive behaviour, one falls into the understanding of a 'process' of formation of language which Rhees wished to avoid. Here we can see Rhees's

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[534]Ibid., p.389.

[535] Mounce, *Metaphysics*, p.186.

[536] Wittgenstein, *Zettel,* §458

[537]See: Hugh A Knott, 'Intuition, Foundationalism and Explanation – A Response to Mounce'. *Philosophical Investigations* 40 (2017), 282-293 (p.283).

[538] Ibid., p.285.

resistance to the understanding of language as a practical technique or skill that we then put to use in our lives – the complexity of language is simply a collection of language-games, intertwining, interweaving, and built upon a series of basic techniques or operations.[539] This for him is simplistic and likely to prevent a more complete and inclusive understanding of the use of language and 'what it is to say something'. What is foundational does not necessarily describe the whole of the edifice of language; as Knott argues, it does not explain the foundation of concepts.

The question of the nature of intuition here and its relation to the 'natural' and 'instinctive' is clearly of great importance in that Pascal argues for intuition as the 'power' of the heart, the mode or point of entry of faith – faith is intuited by the heart by the grace of God and the 'animal' is the basis of habit. But what is intuition? Wittgenstein reacts against an understanding of the role of intuition as a hidden inner process. What controls intuition? Mounce feels that it is a psychological process important to the 'origins' of language. We could argue that intuition in Mounce's understanding must 'antedate' habit. If it is against the background of what is not doubted that we learn, what is reasonable to doubt (Wittgenstein), what is the basis of our lack of doubt – instinct (animal), intuition or habit/custom (acquired behaviour, taught or practiced mimetically)?

Intuition, generally used, refers to understanding which does not result from ratiocination but examining rationally what one intuits is not ruled out logically. But what does such examination produce? Evidence might be available but doesn't seem necessary for our intuited opinion or conclusion; as Mounce says 'we can marshal evidence because we have knowledge that does not depend on evidence' and this he calls intuitive, but is that knowledge itself the result of action, primitive behaviour learned through habit (our second nature which may be our first - Pascal). We have a habit of using our hands and later talk about hands and their use, their existence is not intuited but habitual use removes the need for doubt. Habit for Pascal is the basis of our beliefs about the world and is irrational. It prepares us for intuition and makes intuitive faith easier. It lies 'beneath', prior to, reason. So, what is habit? If Rhees's acceptance of the primitive includes habit, then where does that leave us? Malcolm's instinct, Mounce's intuition, natural innate capacity as humans – how do they relate to habit?

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[539]Ibid., p.287.

Repetition reinforces our belief; repetition induces belief that what consistently happens will happen again. Habit is integral to the child learning and interweaves in all aspects of its development and life, Words give meaning by repetitive use. Our reality, the world as we see it, is in a sense constituted by habit.

Finally, it is important, I feel, to understand that when one talks of intuition it is in the understanding that it acts with immediacy. This view is generally accepted but seems at variance with the practical experience of language acquisition. Language is painstakingly learnt. The meaning of words does not come in a flash. Its accurate use is developed and expanded in human interaction and conversation. Rhees seems therefore to be wise not to accept any ideas of a foundational, intuitive process based upon his demand for the primacy of examining linguistic usage in the examination of meaning. To argue for an instinctive foundation is to argue for no more than the innate ability or tendency to vocalization of our species. It offers no insight into how meaning is attached to words or into concept formation.

7.5 The Limits of Forms of Life

Rhees clearly has a contextualist understanding of religious (and all other) language. Words do not exist *in vacuo*. Meaning depends upon context, whether the context is religious, cultural, political, social, etc. In essence, whilst Rhees does not dwell on the terms, meaning arises within 'forms of life' or 'world-pictures'. If one argues, as some do, that religious adherents inhabit a particular world-picture then we must ask what the limits of such a world-picture are for Rhees. In particular, regarding a putative religious form of life, do the differing theologies of Luther, Aquinas, Augustine, etc. constitute differing forms of life? How many shared views or conceptions in religious matters are needed to make up a recognizable form of life? To argue, as Rhees does, that form of life shows itself in the life of a group or is evident in the shared use and applied meaning of their language seems inadequate when one understands the diversity of individual belief and viewpoint even within an apparently cohesive religious denomination. Do all Christians even have a separate form of life from all Muslims? Is simply holding a belief in the metaphysical a delimited form of life? Do those who move from one faith to another also change forms of life or have they never truly inhabited the original religion's form of life? Reverting to Wittgenstein's own

comments on form of life and religion as such really offers no clarity in view of their brevity.

There is, at present, no clear answer to these questions but Rhees, with his emphasis on language development through conversation, his acceptance of the interaction/interpenetration of language-games and his references to the acquisition of world-picture through a life lived, accepts that forms of life are not defined clearly or delimited. His use of the term world-picture and apparent unwillingness to consider world-picture and form of life as conceptually distinct suggests that he considers world-picture/form of life as all-encompassing for the individual, though, in common with Wittgenstein he sees the associated 'certainties' as subject to change and development. How does development occur and is it typical of a group or an individual matter?[540]

As Rhees makes clear that the change and development in 'Moore's certainties' over time is situational and contextual, it surely follows that, as these underpin world-picture, the world-picture too must change. Change occurs through dialogue and development of opinions and ideas as well as through changes in language use and action. If there is, as it were, not just an imbibition of language, act, or belief but change associated with interaction then isn't it reasonable to suppose that there must at some point be a process or act of assent or acceptance of world-picture or form of life. If not, form of life and reason will not interact.

If Moore's certainties are not questioned and are just accepted as 'bedrock', thereby constituting the presuppositions of a world-picture then, if in the case of religion the whole religion can be rejected, the presuppositions, which underpin a religious form of life, must presumably be rejected by some form of assent or act of will. They cannot be blindly followed as members of a community or group as religion can clearly be individually rejected. This perhaps shows itself most clearly in what must be the central, perhaps the only, 'certainty' in the Abrahamic religions – that there is a God. No one can sensibly argue that a believer cannot come to reject this belief on rational grounds. This relationship between will/assent and belief constitutes an area of dispute generally in criticisms also of D Z Phillips work.

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[540] Anselm K. Min, 'D.Z.Phillips on the Grammar of 'God''. *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion,* 63 (2008), 131-146 (p.139).

In my opinion Rhees would consider the above objections wrong-headed, largely for the following reason: for him religious belief is not assent plus a way of life. There is no separated mental process of assent in true religious belief – the assent and way of living are inseparable, and their association is, as he says, 'internal'. A change in Moore's certainties or 'hinge propositions' regarding religion would unreflectively therefore lead to belief and action together. By definition the certainties are not reflected upon. The content of belief is not information or facts to be assented to, it is 'believing in' not 'believing that'. One believes by faith through thick and thin.[541] It would therefore seem that the certainties underpinning a religious form of life relate to 'being religious' not to specifics of dogma or even perhaps specific religions *per se*.

Another way of looking at this is through Rhees's concentration on pointing to the dangers of bringing statements about God, all that is, etc. into debate as if they were scientific concepts, facts, or adducible propositions. Belief in God and the religious beliefs attendant on a religious form of life cannot be epistemically supported; belief is lost when they are subjected to unwarranted attempts to 'prove' their truth. Questioning and rejecting the existence of God brings down the religious form of life because such belief is fundamental to the form of life of the religious person, but what leads to this is an unwarranted acceptance of such belief being in the category of epistemically or logically provable 'facts' rather than a hinge proposition or Moore's certainty.

There is a second, perhaps more cogent, potential solution for the problem of belief in God as hinge proposition versus personally challengeable and rejectable belief. This lies in the potential for hinge propositions (as Moore's certainties) being both understood as unchallengeable certainties and empirical propositions dependent on context and circumstance. This will be discussed in depth in the next chapter.

Discussing Moore's certainties or hinge commitments with regard to religious belief is made difficult by the fact that neither Rhees nor Wittgenstein lay down clear rules as to what constitutes them. As Pritchard points out[542] the fundamental 'hinge' is

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[541] Michael P. Hodges, 'Faith: Themes from Wittgenstein, Kierkegaard and Nietzsche', in *Wittgenstein and Philosophy of Religion,* ed. by Mark Addis and Robert Arrington. (Abingdon: Taylor and Francis, 2001), p.69.

[542] Pritchard, *Faith and Reason,* p.111.

that 'we are not fundamentally and radically in error' and these commitments are in essence not beliefs but *commitments*. The individual commitments may change over time, but the fundamental commitment remains intact.

If religious belief in the sense of dogma falls within such certainties, then it is difficult to see how a change to, for example, the acceptance that God is absolute reality, the only true end to worship, etc. could alter without religious belief in the Christian sense losing all meaning. This comment, in itself, however, raises questions about what constitutes Moore's certainties regarding religion? It is only in the context of worship and faith that the 'grammar of God' can have any meaning or be appreciated but the language does 'refer'; it refers to the transcendent creator, the source of life, etc. Form of life, world-picture relate to the reality of the individual and community; God for Rhees clearly has reality but it is a 'mystical' reality only accessible in worship and prayer.

Perhaps the most direct comment Rhees makes on the matter of world-picture/form of life and religious doubt (one which chimes strikingly with Pascal's 'Orders') is given below:

> *Sursum Corda.* If the religious doubt has gone far, then that is not possible. And that is not an external consequence. It is part of what is meant by religious doubt. The main point is that one has begun to change from being religious to not being religious; call this a different way of looking at the world if you like….It means that one can no longer worship or pray, or that one's heart has gone out of these things.[543]

7.6 Chapter summary

Direct criticism of Rhees's views on religion is limited and, in part, relates to a misunderstanding of what Rhees is attempting, i.e., a philosophically cogent analysis of the nature of religious belief and reality, not a description of the common understanding of what constitutes faith.

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[543]Rhees, *On Religion*, p.288.

The most important criticism relates to Rhees's personal belief, which appears to put him outside the world-picture of the religious believer.[544] This, however, does not detract from his analysis of the importance of an accurate understanding of the grammar of religion, its relationship to non-religious use of certain words and phrases, the clearing away of conceptual confusions. Elucidating the logic of religious belief and the nature of its reality, revealing its internal coherence does not necessarily depend on personal faith. Where Rhees falls down is in his lack of analysis of the consistency and persistence of any 'grammar of God' between religions and between differing theologies within a religion.

In most areas Rhees can be seen to consistently propound Wittgenstein's views on language and grammar. There is, however, an important area for debate regarding any possible foundation for language that may mark a difference between Wittgenstein and Rhees's views and which is relevant to Pascal's presentation of the role of intuition. Here, *apropos* Pascal's understanding of intuition and the heart, we cannot argue for Rhees supporting intuition as in any way foundational for belief.

8. Synthesis

8.1 Introduction

So far in this thesis a summary and critique of Pascal's views on the nature of man and the modes of attaining faith has been given. An overview of Rush Rhees's position on philosophy and religion has been provided, together with Rhees's views on the nature of belief, including religious belief. Whilst the depth, ordering, and presentation is novel, what has been presented has, in large part, direct support from the literature. The purpose of this synthesis is to now directly compare Pascal's views on knowledge, certainty, religious belief, and reality with those of Rush Rhees in a new and theologically insightful way, which can provide apologetically valuable new understandings.

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[544] What Rhees's final position on his own faith was, however, is unclear.

Pascal's overarching explanation of man's unfortunate, paradoxical state lying in the Fall and its only resolution in conversion to Christianity, underpinned partly by biblical historical facts and biblical typological and anagogical interpretations, will fail to convince many. The immediately following sections, however, intend to show that there are central areas of Pascal's apologetics which are strikingly 'modern' and, when looked at in conjunction with Rhees's writings, offer real insight into the process and nature of belief, particularly religious belief. Pascal's writings on principles, *finesse*, *sentiment*, first and second nature, habitual learning and behaviour, the limits of reason and the role of the 'heart' all interconnect with Rhees's writings on knowledge and certainty, the basis of belief, language acquisition, the errors of scientism and the reality of the religious form of life. Central to both accounts is the challenge of radical scepticism and the role of philosophy, together with the fundamental grounding of knowledge and understanding, not on evidence, but on trust. The chapter will begin by expanding the previous analysis of Pascal's writings on certainty and 'principles'[545] and proceed to comparison with Rhees's opinions on Moore's propositions, 'hinges' and belief. To avoid the constant need for the reader to refer to preceding chapters of the thesis to verify comparisons, a degree of repetition has been allowed between the synthesis and earlier chapters.

8.2 What comes first? The epistemology of Blaise Pascal

As we have seen, certainty for Wittgenstein and Rhees is not associated with any direct or indirect apprehension, any mental or physical 'seeing', but with acting in a life, in a community, amongst those who communicate and converse. Knowledge is contextualized and requires evidence, justification within its context of use. The claim to knowledge must *make sense* in the context of the claim. These differences are all, in essence, pertinent to the empiricist/behaviourist debate regarding the basis of knowledge and, of course, to the central debates in Wittgenstein, Rhees and Pascal regarding scepticism.

From the time of Aristotle's first principles and *nous* there has been endless debate about what man innately comprehends; what is innate and what acquired in our knowledge. Usually nowadays talk of first principles refers to fundamental laws

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[545] See section 4.8.

underpinning logic (e.g., lack of contradiction in statements), mathematics and physics. They are the underpinnings upon which we build our rational and scientific understandings. They are not themselves reason-based but provide certitude and by their use we expand our knowledge and insight.

Pascal does not use the term principle in the limited way discussed above. He considers them accepted unconditionally but not rationally based as we 'fall into the body and find them there'.[546] His discussion of them begins in his treatises on persuading people; methodological approaches to convincing them of the truth. Two main methods are offered, that of geometry (associated with the intellect) and that of *finesse* (associated with the will). Whilst the method of geometry is seen as the only method of potentially providing perfect demonstrations,[547] it is obscure for most. Pascal argues in *Of the Geometrical Spirit* that it is the best method available to man.[548] The ideal method requires the proof of all demonstrations by known truths and is impossible.[549] The mind of man in its fallen state is not up to this task. Geometry defines what is obscure and does not define that which is obvious to all – first principles. This is a fault, but it nonetheless produces certainty (proofs) though not the best *persuasion*.[550] The primitive terms and principles that it depends upon are so clear that no clearer principles are available to prove them and are certain and clear by the 'light of nature'[551] and through the heart (by which we experience *sentiments* [feelings], emotions). This group of 'geometric principles' are universally held to be true. Attempting to prove principles is futile. They are understood by all who speak the language.[552]

The principles associated with *finesse* or the will are not universal[553] but are widely held basic beliefs, which vary with the desires and goals of individuals. They are perceived through the same route, the heart (intuition), but are more subtle. They may

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[546] F418

[547] Pascal, *Persuasion,* §65-66

[548] Pascal, *Geometrical,* §22.

[549] Ibid*.,* §7, §17-19

[550] Pascal, *Persuasion,* §15-16.

[551] Pascal, *Geometrical*, §52

[552] Ibid*.,* §23.

[553] Pascal, *Persuasion,* §17.

relate to the desire to achieve fulfilment, happiness or to other life goals of importance. They are very numerous but culturally dependent and their acceptance is dependent on 'the innermost spirit of the man'.[554] They are concerned with the *intelligibility* of our everyday lives.

As previously discussed,[555] Pascal argues that there are also two general types of mind, the 'geometrical' and that of '*esprit de finesse*'. Those of a geometric 'tendency' perceive clearly and in depth the nature of mathematical, scientific, more abstract reasoned proofs whereas those with *esprit de finesse* grasp intuitively and immediately those subtle, numerous perceptions which one meets in everyday life. These are difficult to explain to others, easily missed.[556] They are not 'scientifically' deduced or logically derived like those grasped by the geometric mind. Ideally a person would have a balanced mind exhibiting both types in the optimum ratio, but Pascal does not see this as being the case. The intuitive *esprit de finesse* mind has an association with the intuitive heart and the geometric with discursive reason.

These principles are naturally simply there, 'seen', not reasoned to or accepted after deliberation. We do not consider their truth value; they are a necessary part of our thinking. The understanding of Pascal's view of the principles is central to an understanding of his whole theology. As Gilson argues, prior to and including Newton God is seen as the author of the world, the supreme principle of intelligibility, but we now inhabit a world where the *why* of the world has moved under science's influence to *how things happen*.[557] The metaphysical cause of all has lost its importance. If one accepts the God of the Bible in the manner Pascal does (the God of Abraham etc.[558]), God as author of intelligibility, then one can make the argument that, if the principles are part of the God-given order of the world, then the unreflective acceptance of the

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[554] Ibid*.,* §16.

[555] See section 4.8.

[556] F512

[557] Etienne Gilson, *God and philosophy,* 2nd ed. (New Haven Yale University Press, 2002), p.314.

[558] F449.

existence of first principles and the obvious meaning of their terms is enough to prove the existence of God. God is the end of the regression of evidence, principles, truth.[559]

Gilson says that these principles (presumably both types) are 'an impossibility of thinking otherwise'[560]and a distinct order of intelligibility which must be accepted for the light it sheds. He sees Pascal's philosophy as an extension of his scientific viewpoint, whereby all knowledge, all understanding can be rendered intelligible by the mind except the 'principles' from which intelligibility itself is derived. The 'natural evidence' of these principles is seen to be true intuitively/instinctively by the heart. They are true but not demonstrably so.

8.3 Radical scepticism, reality, and God

Pascal really seems to feel that pyrrhonism cannot be fully disproven and that the problem must be dissolved in submission to God's will, but this accepted reality of the external world and its principles is the basis of his rejection of it. Fallen humanity is dominated by the animal/habitual/automatic and the emotional aspect of the heart. Our rational minds cannot now come to an understanding of the fundamental nature of the reality we inhabit. Pascal makes clear that radical scepticism fails in purporting that, for example, we cannot know whether we are dreaming or whether the world is a reality – intuition of first principles can produce certainty, firm belief, but without 'proofs', i.e., discursive knowledge.[561] But what if one's principles themselves are untrue?[562] Where are they when we sleep? Are our intuitions illusions? Common sense comes to our aid in that, for Pascal, no-one can in practice be a full-blown sceptic (nature steps in to help) but in essence Pascal cannot conclude that full knowledge of the deep truths of existence lies in man's grasp, neither through reason nor principles because truth lies in the lap of God,[546] all truth emanates from God, from Faith. The duality of man's position leads in essence to the crisis of scepticism versus dogmatism and is solved in God, through submission in faith.

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[559] See: Richard Farfara, 'Is Philosophical Atheism Possible?' *Christian Apologetics Journal,* 14 (2016), 71-87 (pp. 81-85).

[560] Etienne Gilson, *The Arts of the Beautiful* (New York: Scribners, 1965) pp.76-77.

[561] F110

[562] F131

For Pascal there are two pathways to certainty, propositional belief dependent upon reason and will and belief instinctively or intuitively felt by the heart.[563] The beliefs apprehended by the heart, those based upon principles, are never formulated and analysed – they are just there for us in our lives. We 'feel' that these things are that way without challenging them – 'all our reasoning comes down to feeling.[564] The heart[565] is associated with *finesse*, immediate intuition and arguably instinct but it is also the originating source of pleasure and desire and acts itself through the will, disposing it to its perceived 'goods'.

Pascal argues that the reason that the principles are necessary is that nature has 'refused the blessing' of knowing all by instinct and feeling (sentiment)[566] and has left 'only very little knowledge of this kind' open to us intuitively. The rest comes through faulty fallen reasoning.[567] This is alloyed in the same section of the *Pensées* with the achievement of religious faith via the heart, imparted by God. Pascal puts 'legitimate proof' and salvation into opposition with 'human faith' through reason and habit, which is 'useless for salvation'. The truth of God's existence is for Pascal accessed in the same manner as a principle, not as a conclusion, indeed God is in a sense the principle of all principles (see below). The heart senses, for example, that numbers are infinite and that there are three dimensions in space – these things are *felt* to be so by instinct or intuition (not consistently separated in Pascal's writings). The rational mind can then work based on these principles to expand knowledge e.g., dimension can be felt instinctively but also approached mathematically.[568] Because the principles are the foundation of our rational, discursive thought; they are the 'cannot be otherwise' of our embodied lives. In a sense the heart/instinct/intuition presents our experience of reality in a particular way because it is the doorway to the fundament of reality.

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[563] Michael Moriarty, *Pascal- Reasoning and Belief* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), p.149.

[564] F530

[565] See section 4.8.

[566] Pascal, *Persuasion,* §110.

[567] F110

[568] Moriarty, p149

The 'principles so clear that we can find no others that can serve as proof of them' have verbal equivalents in the primitive words which can no longer be defined[569] i.e., which have no verbal description possible to us. Interestingly Pascal seems to hold that words indicating mathematical concepts, such as 'even', are derived rationally from principles but arbitrarily chosen.[570] If the truth of God's existence is a principle for Pascal, then the word 'God" would seem to be such a word, a representative of an undefinable 'concept', one on which we can reflect and rationally build but which we cannot meaningfully analyse.

8.4 Confusions

The relationship between principles, heart and habit/custom in Pascal's writings is a very complex and somewhat tortuous one and he is by no means consistent in his use of the term 'principle'. We depend upon untested, blindly accepted principles which, in some comments on 'natural principles', Pascal regards as animal instincts or natural urges but also indicates that they are habits[571] and elsewhere he concludes that what seems instinctive such as 'natural love' can be no more than acquired habit.[572] 'Natural principles' are habitual principles in that they are given to the child by following the parent.[571] Whilst arguing that we are sure of our principles, he also implies that they are not grounded in nature.[573] Pascal also talks of the infinite variety of principles and the inability of man to comprehend 'ultimate principles'[574] but does not define these further.

The 'ultimate principles' all meet in God[575] but principles are used by reason, though apprehended by the heart.[576] It seems that the heart intuits their truth and general applicability[577] but the principles themselves of the 'natural' sort are subject to habit/custom. Even the degree of certainty we have intuitively of our principles is

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[569] Pascal, *Geometrical,* §8.

[570] Ibid., §8-12.

[571] F125

[572] F126

[573] Moriarty, p.58.

[574] F199

[575] F199, F205

[576] F298

[577] F131

subject to the possibility, unless we have faith in a good God's providence, that they may be false or uncertain.[562] Our principles may also be argued away as habitual impressions or imaginations and if one tries to 'get back' to their ultimate origin they disappear.[578] What seems the case, however, is that first principles (clear-cut and obvious) are related directly to the geometrical mind and natural/unnatural principles relate to those of *finesse* and the practical life as lived every day. The first group very importantly, whilst underpinning all knowledge, seem to be associated with the fundamental, spiritual, incorporeal, e.g., the depths of infinity, the laws of mathematics, and the second with the corporeal world.[579] The essential point that Pascal makes is that our divided nature, part in the image of God, evident through our reason (sharing the gift of the intellect), and the other part physical, precludes our understanding the essence of principles. It also, however, lies at the heart of the failure of philosophy to comprehend the depths of man's reality – philosophy confuses the spiritual with the physical.[580] In a deeper sense, things of science and things of God are not seen in their simplicity but conflated due to our hybrid natures.

8.5 Faith, Reality, and the Fall

For Pascal, reflecting Augustine, man's will is divided between two conflicting pathways, which Pascal confusingly also calls principles – cupidity and charity.[581] The heart has both an intuitional and cognitive power, an ability to move the will towards a goal, a goal achievable with certainty though it is not rational.[582] The whole basic direction of heart and will is either towards selfish, self-centred love, fantasy, and the pursuit of a false eudaemonia or, alternatively, the pursuit of the true goal of oneness with God in charity. In a sense the heart is a source of the fundamental direction of the will, its ultimate purpose,[583] as well as the route of access to the foundational principles

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[578] F206

[579] F512

[580] F199

[581] F502

[582] F110

[583] F502

of our reality. In achieving faith God must be the first principle of man's pleasure rather than the 'objects of passion'.[584]

One can see here how Pascal sees the solution to the paradox of man and the incomprehensibility of the universe. It is dissolved in the intuitive certainty of faith. For Pascal biblical revelation and true faith operate at this level of the principles, bringing in a new reality; this is true wisdom's source – the eyes of the heart opened by God and altering reality.[585]

It can be seen therefore that, for Pascal, whilst faith is not the same as knowledge, knowledge itself, demonstrable knowledge, which we see as founded in evidence, is based upon a set of beliefs that cannot be proven – the reality of time, space, movement, dimensions, common perceptual experience.[586] The relationship between principles and nature is affected by our fallen state,[587] which means that we cannot now have proof that first principles, the basis of reason, are true. The Fall puts us in this uncertain position because it limits our view of our true position in the universe. If we can come through true, God-given religious faith to a new understanding of the world, a new reality, then this crisis of the loss of understanding of our nature is removed by our utter dependence on God.

There is a sense in which our whole discussion of principles is the result of Original Sin. They are seen to be part of the necessity of our lives in our fallen state as we must live it.[588] They are fundamental to our sinful lives, but this is because our faculties are so reduced that we cannot see their origin, their true foundation. Such deeper understanding of the universe and our place in it, its immensity, the scope of its infinitely great and infinitely small extensions cannot be open to us.[589] Faith alone can open a deeper understanding. For Pascal the necessity of acceptance of basic principles such as number, time, infinity, odd and even numbers, all unprovable but accepted of

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[584] Force, p.233.

[585] F308

[586] F110, F109

[587] F124, F125

[588] F199

[589] F199

necessity, supports the rational acceptance of the existence of God. His unprovability is not unique but shared by many beliefs fundamental to our functioning lives. Just as in the 'order' of mathematics and science the finite disappears in the face of the infinite, so our reason is annihilated in the face of God's immensity.[590]

Pascal nowhere indicates that faith provides insight into principles *per se* but the dissolution of the problem of our limited grasp of reality can only come through God given faith, not 'human faith'. The heart is the point of entry of God into man and the acquisition of faith involves a new view of reality which has new certainties regarding our place in the universe, our reason for living, etc. There is a dramatic widening of our intuitive understanding of the world and of the underlying patterns in it. We see the work of the hidden God everywhere but also see our own true destiny.[591] We achieve a new world view, a greater alternative world-picture. This clearly suggests that Pascal is thinking of the acquisition of understanding deeper than rationality as usually understood but he makes clear that it is not easily accommodated and marks the beginning of a potentially painful journey.[592]

This new reality is intuitive, felt, and certain or unchallenged. The whole change of aspect comes 'as a package' with religious faith; it is a wholly new understanding. One can see the association here with Rhees's comments on the connection between human love, art, and music; the understanding 'feels right' as, for example, one musical piece or work of art is sensed deeply as fitting and superior to another. Through the heart here we gain a new, radically changed insight but also a change in our purpose in life, our will is redirected. Our world-picture is renewed and deepened but our lives achieve a new direction towards God, a fundamental re-orientation of our disposition. The new perspective of God given faith is radically alterative in a way that 'human faith' is not.

We might see faith here operating at the level in a sense of mathematical truths and principles, not the more changeable, numerous principles of the will, associated

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[590] F418

[591]F781 and Blaise Pascal, *On the Conversion of the Sinner,* trans. by O.W.Wright, §8-16. <https://www.bartleby.com/48/3/5.html> [accessed 22/3/2018].

[592] Pascal, *Conversion,* §13.

with everyday life and subject to will and habit but this would be an unwise conclusion. Habit reinforces virtue and stabilizes 'human' faith by repetitive good action; it paves the way for the intuitive acceptance of true faith. Unlike first principles of the geometric kind, faith can also be lost through sin and the changeable will. Another problem with considering faith in God a principle of this fixed kind is that belief in God is commonly questioned even by the faithful and is not 'found in the body' without exposure to the beliefs of others.

8.6 Certainty, conviction, and faith

Pascal's argument is essentially that reason and the heart can both bring certainty in their own fields[593] but that rational 'worldly' proofs cannot bring *conviction* as to our nature, our origin and destiny.[594] True conviction is imparted as a gift by God. Reasoned proofs can only bring limited certainty[595] because our fallen reason cannot retain a settled position, much of what we have on evidence is no more than the effect of habit and custom and our access to the underlying foundation of our principles is blocked to us by our sinful natures since the Fall. The effects of imagination seem to further muddy our view of the truth and the overall effect is to produce a false reality, a dichotomous existence with our natures divided between the God-given possibilities of our enlightened selves and our sinfulness. Recognizing this divided nature is the first step towards accepting it. It is also reason's ultimate step to recognize its own limitations, but reason works with what imagination, habit, custom and all the faulty senses present as the real and this is a fluctuating, inconsistent, faulty reality. The best that reason and the senses can do is to apply themselves to work with what is within their domain, e.g., physical phenomena and things of the physical world. It is only through true, supernatural religious faith and in particular belief in Christ, finding God in man, that man can arrive at a true view of his nature and the reality he inhabits (hence Pascal's debate regarding the vacuum[596]).

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[593] F73

[594] F400, F401

[595] F837

[596] F44, F63

8.7 The interrelationship of body, mind, and 'heart'.

There is a definite sense in the *Pensées* and *De l'art de persuader* that principles of both main types are dependent on the body. It is the heart that perceives them and our inability to perceive them is related to our bodily limitations – the principles cannot be seen because they are too large or infinitely small (two infinities), i.e., outside our rational understanding. This brings us back to the interdependence of reason, heart, and habit. Our 'natural principles' are linked to our first nature, which seems, like some instincts (e.g., hunting), to be acquired by the passing of habits generationally.[597] The 'natural' and the instinctive are not separable from the habitually acquired. Our nature is based on custom, and the soul is *accustomed* to see first principles.[598] Custom and habit do not produce stable beliefs but alter with time, place, associations. Reason depends on the heart for first principles and the embodied heart is associated with physical emotion and feeling (*sentiment).*

Habit/custom and heart influence the will. Custom directly affects the acceptance of principles ('what are our natural principles…'[599]) and when feeling (the realm of the heart) acts on mathematical propositions then by habitual repetition they may become principles.[600] All our fallen reasoning is therefore in flux and unstable, limited by our bodies and desires. The centrality of fragment 530 of the *Pensées* here comes to the fore – all reasoning comes down to sentiment/feeling because reason depends on the sentimental heart's unreasoning, immediate acceptance of principles.[601] The role of habit acts here in *training* reason to allow it to fall into one pattern of belief[602] and feeling and habit may act together to stabilize fluctuating reason with its excess of conflicting information, but *sentiment* is easily confused with fantasy.[603]

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[597] F125, F126

[598] F419

[599] F125, F419

[600] F646

[601] F110

[602] F821

[603] F530

Sentiment (feeling), for Pascal, means not emotional feelings but a personal perception of the first principles[604] When Pascal uses '*sentir*' and *'sentiment'* he alludes to a non-rational cognitive power related to the heart.[605] Knowledge, certainty, feeling, belief all interact but knowledge of first principles is really a form of unquestioning knowledge. It is certainty but not *known* certainty.[606] Sentiment is feeling and intuiting – both feeling and *a* feeling. It is not reasoning but even propositional knowledge can over time become a sentiment.[607]

The principles underpinning reality and knowledge (reason) result in belief before knowledge (built on principles). Augustine and Pascal hold that truth precedes reason, and that the incarnation is the only means of coming to true faith and understanding ourselves. The God of Faith is so much more than the God of reason and the difference between 'I know' and 'I believe' lies at the heart of all Pascal's apologetics and much of his discussion of science in the *Pensées*.

8.8 Stabilizing our principles

Clearly the principles which are associated with the will are not fixed, they are subject to habit, emotions, etc. Is there any way one can escape this problem? Pascal offers one solution, which inter-relates with the use of habit in faith. Minds and feelings (the realm of the heart) are 'trained' by repeated social interactions.[608] Good and bad company perverts or improves both mind and heart. Unfortunately, we need a well-trained mind and good sentiments to choose the company we keep – hence a vicious circle pertains. Again, the Fall produces this situation[609] and it is a part of the paradox of our human lives, our potential compared to our reality. All truth, as Pascal sees it, 'lies in the lap of God', in heaven, and truth comes through God alone. Faith allows access to the fullness of what can be believed by us in this life but those who do not attain faith through the heart must fall back on habit. They must use the body, the machine, training

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[604] Force, p.226.

[605] Burford Norman quoted in Moriarty, p.146.

[606] F110

[607] F646

[608] F814

[609] F131

of the body and the mind, to attain the faith that ultimately comes through sentiment/feeling/the heart. In this way habit facilitates achieving the conviction we need, an easier route to faith and through this new vision in both worldly and spiritual matters. Essentially a practical exercise, of mind and body,[610] persistently applied in good company, in the presence of exemplars,[611] can lead to virtue and thence to faith. The link with Rhees's comments on extending insight and understanding through human interaction and conversation are clear.

There is also a further side to this understanding of gaining from exemplars in that they, of course, may offer enlightenment as well as example. This is only tangentially indicated by Pascal and forms part of his understanding of man's comprehension of infinity and indivisibility and the paradox of some aspects of science. Infinity and indivisibility are of course 'aspects' of God's nature[612] but man's insight into this is incomplete and limited. It can, however, be approached mathematically but also practically; here Pascal gives the example of the use of lenses to aid vision of the great and small, practical aids to insight into division and resolution.[613] Thus, the practical aids the essentially incomprehensible. In the same treatise, however, he also points to how the ignorant can be brought to understanding by expert example; mathematical and geometrical particularly.[614] Such a discussion can be seen as pertinent in relation to Pascal's comments on greatness and smallness and infinities in the *Pensées* and his association of such attributes with God's nature.[615] Demonstration and practical aids can allow insight into the apparently paradoxical; an example of Pascal carrying his science into theology.

8.9 Embodied Creatures

Principles are, then, features of embodied, limited, earthly lives. The sense of the practical necessity of principles and the links to embodiment (or the universally fallen,

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[610] Pascal, *Geometrical,* §67-69

[611] F418

[612] F418

[613] Pascal, *Geometrical,* §67-9.

[614] Ibid.' §44-66.

[615] F199

human, bodily state, as all inherit Original Sin) is also reflected in Pascal's discussions of habit/custom. It is fundamental to the understanding of habit as associated with the automatic, inflective, physiological. Habit conditions and modifies bodily responses etc. and the body acts upon the soul. Habit inclines the will and affects reason, which then follows desire. In fragment 821 it is habit/custom which convinces us of the unquestioned facts of life, that the sun will continue to rise, that worldly life is not eternal – it produces the firmest beliefs and stabilizes rational belief by resisting reason's capricious changeability. Custom, not rational proof, provides the certainties derived from experience, but it also can convert those understandings we derive by reason into sentiments (feelings) by leading the will and preparing the ground for the heart's action. Such sentiments are for Pascal immediately accepted intuitions, but he seems to regard them as attitudinal – related to the disposition of the will, which is under the influence of habit. The acceptance of the logic of faith that reason can produce can, by habit, be converted to an intuitive belief, a 'human faith' which is 'felt' to be fitting and 'numinous', not just a rational belief, but this still falls far short of God-given faith. The acceptance of human faith is achieved through a combination of reason and custom/habit but even here God is acting in the individual achieving this limited belief through prevenient grace.[616]

8.10 Summary of Pascal's principles

We can summarize Pascal's writings on principles as they relate to the purpose of this thesis in the following points:

1. Pascal's discussion is essentially about *intelligibility.* Firstly, the intelligibility of creation and thus about our perception of reality and secondly the intelligibility of our fallen lives, in the sense of the meaning of life.
2. The principles are foundational for reason but are themselves accepted through intuition without analysis or ratiocination.
3. Principles of the will are not fixed and vary with culture and habit.
4. Pascal's discussion of principles is convoluted and the full role of habit and custom in accessing them is unclear but clearly very important.
5. Our inability to 'see into' the origin and nature of principles is linked to our fallen state and its dependence on habit/custom, imagination, and faulty reason.

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[616] F172

6. All principles are from God as the originating principle of His creation and the giver of its intelligibility.

8.11 Intelligibility, reality and being – the rational human and God

Both Pascal and Rhees essentially eschew reason alone in the search for faith. For Pascal reason in the end can only find its own limits and recognize its incapacity. Natural theology is not the answer for either thinker. The situation for Rhees is, however, more complex; 'scientific', objective reasoning, proofs and theories cannot provide a foundation for belief, faith is an integral part of a 'world-picture' but the major difference between them lies in their treatment of intelligibility. The intelligibility of one's life, its reality, is central to understanding the claims made for religious faith. Here Pascal is happy to present a 'system' of dependence on a cascade of principles, scientific/mathematical and everyday, emanating from the ultimate first principle, God. Reason, habit, and heart, but in particular the latter two, then provide his understanding of the reality of life and religious belief but the fundamental links here are not made clear. Rhees must take a stonier route, the 'hard way' through analysis of the nature of the relationships between intelligibility, reality, being, belief and language. We must understand what we are saying when we speak of the reality of religious belief, God, the eternal. As Rhees says:

> I want to know how the question of what it means to talk of the reality of anything is relative to the kind of language in which that anything enters.[617]

And:

> …what we mean by reality is determined by the character of a language, and the notion of a *single* reality would seem to be replaced by the conception of ways of living.[618]

Rhees sees that there are puzzles in religion which are philosophical puzzles in the same way as may be the case in science. The role of philosophy is to make clear what is being done and said, to avoid confusions in ways of speaking, confusions which come into religious belief from other areas of discourse.[619] Puzzlement in religion relates to 'questionings of the heart'; philosophy might help to understand what that is.

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[617] Rhees, *On Religion,* p.24.

[618] Ibid*.,* p.24.

[619] Ibid*.,* p.30.

Pascal's discussion of 'principles' antedates by 200 years Newman's writings on the illative sense, which themselves contribute to Wittgenstein's and thus Rhees's insights into Moore's propositions, form of life, world-picture. It is nonetheless clear from the previous sections of this synthesis that Pascal's principles of the everyday, non-geometrical kind share numerous characteristics with Rhees's interpretation of Moore's propositions viz:

1. They are unquestioned and are not subject to doubt in everyday life.

2. They are part of our method of enquiring and do not depend on there being grounds for believing in them or evidence for regarding the principles themselves as knowledge.

3. Our belief in the principles is stronger than anything they themselves are meant to justify.

4. They are believed, not 'known' on evidence.

5. There is no 'mistaking' in one's belief in principles, this would lie outside rational behaviour.

6. They are not learnt but simply accepted.

7. We develop our understanding and knowledge using the principles which support all our thinking and reasoning.

8. The principles are part of the 'framework' of intelligibility and language.

9. They are highly variable in type, not fixed over time or culture and are contextualized in their application (the riverbed may move).

We must accept, however, that Pascal's presentation of principles is somewhat underdeveloped and contradictory. A fully worked out understanding of the difference between principles of the 'geometrical' type and the everyday principles of 'finesse' is not evident. One might argue that the geometrical principles are in fact logical concepts rather than principles in the same sense as the numerous, everyday ones but Pascal himself states that this is not his understanding.[620]

Pascal also seems to have a problem in the development of his understanding of God as the originating principle of all others. Such an argument is in tension with his deeply and emotionally held understanding as to the nature of the living, Christian God.

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[620] F282

He argues for God as fundamental principle, a position close to the classical Greek philosophical understanding of 'god', an understanding carrying an element of intellectual abstraction or metaphysical theorizing, a 'god of the philosophers'. This position is then directly rejected by Pascal in his response to his own personal revelation where God is emphatically 'the God of Abraham…'; an intensely personal, living presence in his life, love personified. One sees intimations here of a presentation of God comprehended by 'human faith' as principle contrasted with the God of true faith, living, personal and overwhelming or, similarly, the 'geometrical God' of a world such as Descartes' where all is accounted for by geometrical and mathematical laws[621] versus the God of the Bible. Pascal clearly sees the two sides to the problem here, but no dissolution of the tension is offered.

8.12 Pascal's subjective self – illusory or real?

The basic elements of the roles of Pascal's principles and Rhees's interpretation of Moore's principles are similar, as is their centrality to rational, everyday life. When one takes the intelligibility of the life they underpin, however, Rhees's presentation differs greatly from Pascal's. Pascal's principles have a definite 'metaphysics' associated with them; they arise from God and answer the question of 'why things are as they are'. There is a 'created reality' underpinned by God's gift of intelligibility. Subjectivity is a different concern for Pascal. Our self, our understanding of reality and relationship to it, is a false self, created by distorted desire.[622] We are 'hollow men'[623] made up of borrowed qualities. Human relationships in our fallen state are based on falsity, flattery, and illusion.[624] To become and love our own true selves comes with true faith. Pascal accepts that our subjective selves, both enlightened and unenlightened, are lived out in social interaction, our selves are imitative, but he does not see positive development of selfhood outside religious belief. We both see and don't see,[625] constantly reality evades us. We are now separated from our true reality by the Fall and can see only a sinful

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[621] Gilson, *God and Philosophy,* p.86.

[622] F806

[623] F688

[624] F978

[625] F236

worldview, what is left of our pre-Fall understanding is just a deep, inchoate desire for faith.

In this life 'All things cover some mystery; all things are the veils which cover God'.[626] Pascal does not directly deal with 'reality' as such but his understanding of the origin of intelligibility and his comments relating to selfhood, soul and self, all point to a false reality based upon imagination, custom and pride.

Our nature is no more than custom[627] and custom can produce unshakeable views of reality.[628] Imagination produces an alternative reality, and the heart perceives reality[629] – it finds elements of reality. There is a 'reasoned reality', a sensual reality, a reality produced by custom and habit and a reality perceived by the heart (dimensions, etc.). They all come together in our overall view of reality. Through the heart, its intuitive sense, we have opened to us in faith a new reality, perceived with certainty but not with knowledge. One comes to an appreciation of the possibility of embracing the reality of God through the acquisition of 'human faith', through habit/custom and Christian community but, to the extent that we can have a comprehension of God's reality in this life, that in its fullness comes only through salvific faith – the acceptance of the gift of salvation. It is, however, through the potentiality, the conditionality of the promise of everlasting blissful life that self-reproach and pain arise. Pascal's understanding of this new reality and this sense of unworthiness before God is best revealed in *Ecrits sur la conversion du pecheur*.[630] Via the heart of faith, we obtain 'a most extraordinary insight' but with this comes a deep need to cast off the old perception of reality and in the turmoil of conversion reorientate all to God.

Intelligibility for Pascal is obviously not 'in the round' simply a matter of faith. God is the source of intelligibility but within God's intelligible creation the interplay of reason, habit, and intuition (heart) provides the basis for the reality of the fallen lives we lead. There is a clear sense also that this reality is affected by interaction with others via

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[626] Blaise Pascal, *Letter II to Mlle de Roannez*. <https://www.bartleby.com/48/2/11.html> [accessed 13/4/18].

[627] F419

[628] F821, F25

[629] F539

[630] Pascal, *On the conversion, §5-16.*

custom and community – understanding and feeling (intuition) are moulded by intercourse, interaction, and example.[631] The reality of God is the true reality of life and the essential question of the meaning of life is found only in true faith. All meaning rests in our end in God.

8.13 Rhees on the language of reality

We might simplify Pascal's 'orders' of coming to faith as – reason ends in 'the wager', the acceptance of the option for faith proceeds through habitual speech and act leading to a 'human faith' and by intuition to true faith. Rhees's discussion of intelligibility and reality takes its origin, as it were, from the other end of the God-man relationship. The meaning of life is central to much of Rhees's writing on religion and God. He points to the difference between 'sense' and life's meaning. Intelligibility is all about 'what it is to say something' and this arises out of life and language. He discusses intelligibility in association with reality and being, they are intertwined conceptually. Philosophy itself is concerned for him primarily with the intelligibility of language, the possibility of understanding. Discussion, conversation, human interaction that is understood means that understanding is possible. Living makes sense if language makes sense (and *vice versa)* but this cannot be taken as evidence that life has meaning. I think that he would say that faith relates to what gives meaning to life rather than to intelligibility.

The intelligibility of life is essentially the intelligibility of language, but the meaning of life relates to what one's life is *for.* For Rhees reality is co-constituted with language and different language means different world-picture and therefore different reality. Reality is in this sense personalized, as language differs reality differs, but this does not mean that each man has his own reality. The idea of a false reality, for him, relates to misunderstandings, falsities and sham in communication and the personal appropriation and use of language, not in imagination. Imagination is positively presented as a useful component of man's mental abilities. Pascal's negative attitude to imagination seems, to the modern mind, too close to arguing for mental restriction; unnecessarily restricting a God-given capacity. He would certainly concur, however in regarding religious faith as the achievement of a new reality, mediated through habituation/enculturation to the life and language of the believing community.

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[631] F814

The centrality of a discussion of reality for understanding religion is evident in Rhees's comments:

> …unless some reality corresponds to our idea of God, religion is not important. It cannot be just a matter of the practices people happen to follow. For then you could not say that everything depends on it. But neither can you say that different ideas of God and God's will are each of them all right. For then the attempt to know God and to do God's will would not be terribly important.[632]

God's reality means that you can be mistaken in what you say of God, in what you say within a religious context. Moral questions and questions of religion are not vindicated in a way that corresponds to scientific validation, if they were they would lose their importance. No investigation helps.

For Rhees 'hinges', Moore's propositions, provide the architecture on which reality stands, just as 'principles' do for Pascal, but the development of language *is* the development of one's reality and reality is *shown* in language and act. When Pascal talks of the effect of faith, perceived by the heart, and the new reality of religious belief he argues for a third mode of perception, but this interacts with habit and reason. Habit and custom, the machine, play out their role in a religious community – doing things, saying masses, conversing, etc. Rhees, however, goes much further; religious reality, the reality of the life of the faithful, *cannot be separated* from the lives, language, and ritual of the faithful. Rhees argues that religious faith lived out fully *is* the religious form of life or world-picture and constitutes our reality. Faith is *shown* but to philosophize about it is a move into metaphysics where language loses its traction.

Rhees discusses reality, intelligibility and language arising together in a life lived and changing with interaction with others as life goes on. The commonality of our lives together and the altered reality provided by a life of faith arises in living out that faith in a faith community and in interaction with the general community outside the faith. This interaction between believer and non-believer is the basis for the common understanding the non-believer has with those of religious faith. For Pascal we cannot comprehend the true nature of our fallen selves without faith, we hold an illusory or mistaken viewpoint following the primary error of the Fall. For Rhees one cannot even

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[632] Rhees, *On Religion,* p.7.

talk of any mistake in our world-picture, its underpinning in Moore's propositions and its development in a life and community exclude this.

8.14 Rhees and the Greeks

Rhees points out that the concept of reality, the reality of life, religious or otherwise, is not that of a thing, an entity. He also would not accept that we can live in a false reality in Pascal's sense, one deriving from the Fall and imagination. There is a conceptual difference here between the authors. For Rhees, falsity would arise through sham discourse, from a deterioration in language, in its misapplication. Sham discourse may produce 'illusion', a distorted view of 'how things are', and sham discourse about God can thus produce an 'illusory' God. Rhees, as always, wants to investigate reality and intelligibility by close investigation of the meaning and use of those words and by the avoidance of rhetoric and sophism. What unity can reality be said to have?[633] Our understanding of reality and its relation to language and logic is a major concern and to elucidate his process of thought we need to extract this from his comments which derive from his very personal interpretation of Greek classical philosophy. The meaning of those terms lies at the heart of his understanding of what faith can (must) be. Rhees's interpretation of the Greeks should not be considered in isolation from his position on Wittgenstein. He essentially offers a Wittgensteinian interpretation of the development of Greek philosophy.

Rhees argues that when one talks of investigating reality it is not like a description of anything or any state of affairs. This applies equally to general reality and the reality of religious belief/God. There are deep connections between our attempts to say anything sensible concerning reality and our 'God-talk'. Reality has no opposite, no sensible non-reality can be imagined or investigated, 'nothing' is not its alternative and neither can we look for correlates of meaning between reality and no-reality. Reality cannot be made up of necessary constituent parts like any object can; no cascade of necessity exists such as wood, tree, seed, etc. for a table. No physical constituents of reality are necessary to account for the intelligibility of things. All these statements

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[633] Rush Rhees, *In Dialogue with the Greeks, vol 1.* Ed. by D.Z.Phillips, (London: Routledge, 2004), p.ix.

apply also to the concept of God. 'A sense of Living', as Rhees puts it,[634] cannot be examined in a mathematical or purely physical account. We might say 'well things go on that way and that is all to the good' – this is an improvement in that it offers a judgement, but it is without an explanation. What would be meant by a change in reality?[635] Would it be a change in the content of the world, a change in the logical structure of reality? 'The world' is a difficult concept, it cannot mean 'all things'.

Pascal has no difficulty in accepting God as creator of all, the source of all principles. He simply argues biblically for the factuality of creation and flood[636] and applies his scientific understandings apologetically.[637] For him eternal life has an opposite in eternal wretchedness. Rhees doubts that there is sense in saying 'the world exists' or 'everything exists' because these are not collections of things and the same applies to 'the world has come to be'. Everything has come to be would only hold sense as 'every single thing'. What would saying 'there is nothing' amount to? One can say what there is might not exist but not sensibly say 'there is nothing'. When we speak of the nature of reality, we are not discussing any class of observable things. He also comments that the sense of the world lies outside the world[638] and reality lies in example.

For Rhees scientific explanations, however deep, do not necessarily reveal insight into reality, they find out about reality what scientists are interested in. Rhees argues that the coming to understand, the seeking, the development of understanding is of great importance in any debate on reality. This is about the overcoming of ignorance, the examination of our use of language, our reflections on how we use words, not by any empirical means. This confusion extends into talk of God's 'reality' and 'existence' – a grammatical confusion. The bible offers language intrinsic to the concept of God but not *evidence* valuable in understanding the reality of belief in God. One needs to examine what is said to allow the differentiation of illusion (not error) induced by faulty grammar in discussions of the generality in metaphysical as opposed to scientific

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[634] Ibid., p.xvii.

[635] Ibid., p.1.

[636] e.g., F292

[637] F199

[638] Wittgenstein, *Tractatus,* §6.41.

theories – seek reality in the reality of discourse. In discussing God, the tendency to anthropomorphize must be seen for what it is. God is not an object in the world. When looking for the nature of reality are we seeking a definition at all? When we talk of God's reality can we offer any knowledge of God beyond language?

To ask about first principles of things is, for Rhees, to ask about the nature of things or the nature of reality.[639] It deals with 'all things', not with any group or class of objects. This is not a scientific enquiry. It does not deal with proofs or demonstrations. 'All things', like 'the world', is a difficult term - anything we discuss falls within its enclosure, it is not a matter of cosmology. 'All things' relates to the nature of reality but is not a general account of things that exist. It is not a matter of how general a group is; there is a difference in kind here. The separate and the boundless cannot be discussed in the same terms – as Rhees puts it 'grammar can be mistaken for a description of things'. Principles in this sense are orientated towards the eternal, the permanent. Clearly Rhees's understanding of principles differs from Pascal's use of the term.

Philosophy is not concerned with first principles *per se*, discovering the principles of intelligibility or fundamental first principles of science for example. It is concerned with differentiating between genuine and sham discourse.[640] Philosophy is concerned with the difference between recognizing something is said and understanding the meaning of a sentence. It is not concerned with the notion of all truth coming from God.[641] Here Rhees would concur with Pascal; the god of the philosophers is no God. The difference between a thing and its existence is being *in time*. Logic, ethics, talk of God must assume existence, being. They can only be shown through a life lived.

You cannot say anything *about* reality, in discussing it you are not examining anything. 'This is what there is' – that is what 'being' means. 'You cannot think or speak of being without giving an account of the world'[642] and God is not encompassed by the world. There is no distinction between 'this' and 'being'. One thing is not an *instance* of being – there is no 'it' and 'is' separate in regard to being. You cannot

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[639] Rhees, *In Dialogue, vol I,* p.5.

[640] Rush Rhees, *In Dialogue with the Greeks,* Vol II, ed. by D.Z. Phillips, (London: Routledge, 2004), p.216.

[641] Ibid*.,* p.216.

[642] Rhees, *In Dialogue,* vol.1, p.27.

contrast reality with something else – this would be to admit 'non-being' into 'being'. You cannot say anything about reality except that 'it is' and even then what is the status of 'it'? What is the sense of 'it is not' here? Reality cannot be contrasted with 'there might have been nothing at all' nor with other 'things'. Saying 'there might have been nothing at all' is not the same as supposing there were nothing when there is something now.[643] This comes down to a difference between being a thing and its properties. We can know what a thing is without knowing whether it exists, but we cannot remove it from existence and keep it the thing that it is. If we say that there is a difference between the properties of a thing and its existence, we can say that it exists if we can say that other like things exist. What is like God?

Regarding essence and existence and the difference between 'it' and 'is', when we are dealing with mathematical and logical propositions there is no difference between essence and existence, nor between truth and meaning. To say that something is not true would be to say that it is meaningless or absurd. In other words, you cannot distinguish between what it says and whether it is so. They are necessarily so. This difference between the logical and the empirical has importance regarding Pascal's principles in that, despite Pascal's denial, his geometrical principles in most cases do seem to be logical propositions whereas his principles in the 'feelings' category are empirical.

8.15 God's developing reality for the Christian – habit or conversation?

When one comes to an understanding of God's reality, a belief in God's 'presence', following on from the above, it is clear that God's existence is absolute and not relative. It is not like accepting a theory, hypothesis or opinion that could simply be thrown out after clarification or obtaining further knowledge. The change would have to be a change in one's whole reality. Both Pascal and Rhees agree on this. The non-existence of God is not conceivable to the true believer, it has no sense within their world-picture. Questions relating to causality, how God came to be etc. also lack sense. No external criteria can relate to God; no facts can be verified; no cosmological arguments can be applied.

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[643] Ibid., p.17.

Pascal does offer support for the existence of God from the immenseness and infinities of the world, which produce silent wonder[644] and a sense of their origin in God. For Rhees, however, natural theology has no purchase and the role of the rational is to determine the 'deep meaning' of the 'language of God'. The only cosmology that has relevance is that relating to 'why anything', God as other than the world. This connects deeply with the understanding of God in that it is by contemplation of human existence and the world in itself that we come to see God as other than the world. This does not mean that this offers proofs of the 'existence' of God.

When one considers how belief in God arises then, as previously discussed,[645] one needs to look to the earliest stages of the child imbibing the world. Within a Christian community 'God' is one of the earliest terms we encounter through simple prayer, bible stories, religious images, and objects. For Rhees, it is a 'picturing' that occurs, a picture is drawn but this picture is not an objective image, such as an image of a family member or another child, the picture is that of God's reality as integral to our developing overall reality. The divine is presented to us in simplified but not erroneous form, it is undeveloped and will later deepen and change with custom, habit, culture, conversation, etc. The reality will deepen as the picture develops. The picture is not a reference point for something external and objective, but it is no less real. It determines our attitude; it carries the weight of the reality of God.[646] One can see similarities here to Pascal's habit and custom; both explanations of coming to belief involve non-reflective, not rationally determined processes, achieved within a community or family sharing the same world-picture. Persistent reinforcement is important, but Rhees's understanding is more 'holistic' and natural, less formulaic, than Pascal's.

There is also a further, very important, difference regarding the role of habit compared to conversation/interaction in movement towards faith. Habit requires, in most cases, repetition. Conversation, as Rhees uses the term, is always unique and its utility in developing one's understanding is dependent upon this. It can produce, not just re-enforcement, but also the development of friendship and the integration of reason and emotion. You imbibe the emotional content of religion with the instruction.

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[644] F199

[645] See section 5.3.

[646] Wittgenstein, *Lectures and Conversations*, §72.

You do not learn, for example, a science by simply being put through your paces in it. Simple habituation or rote learning is not enough. You 'catch a spirit' of the science.[647] 'That's the way we do it', 'That's how we speak" are not statements about custom, habit, or tradition. They call for explanation in other terms.[648] If a scientist understands what he or she is doing in science, they understand it because of its relationship to other aspects of their life.[649] The same applies to religious understanding.

In talking of the acquisition of language, Rhees does directly address the role of habit and custom in learning to speak and this relates to his criticisms of Wittgenstein's use of the 'game' analogy. Rhees stresses that learning to speak is not just reacting in a programmed or mechanical way to signals or instructions. You learn to tell something to others at the same time. For habit to be the dominant factor you would have to presume that all the community had the same habits or customs in their use of words. Rhees can see this being the case for many phrases such as 'good morning' but, leaving aside such simple situations, one is led to ask of a word or phrase 'what are the circumstances of its use'. There is not then a habitual or customary response. For example, if one's friend has died one might say 'my friend is dead' but the circumstances must take into account one's state of mind, the nature of the friendship, how devastated one might be. It might prove too upsetting to speak so directly. It might be argued that it is *appropriate* to use one phrase or another but then one is following a rule, not simply acting out of custom or habit.

All theorizing must also consider the interpretative, predictive, investigative, nature of language in its everyday use – 'You could say he was a bully, and you would be right, he really was' – how does habit produce that? How can habit account for all the information one derives from a conversation which does not directly relate to the words used – the state of mind of the interlocutor, his country of origin, his degree of control, etc. Imagination also plays a very important and positive role in interpreting another's meaning. It does not have the negative connotation for Rhees of underpinning a false reality. As Rhees says '"That's how we speak" is not a reference to what people

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[647] Rhees, *In Dialogue,* vol. I, p.85.

[648] Ibid., p.87

[649] Ibid., p.88.

always do'.[650] These comments he sees as clearly having connections with 'learning about' God – being taught about God is like learning a language, keeping to simple things, simple conversations, and understandings at first.[651]

Rhees also has comment to make on ideas of the 'machine' or 'automaton'. He argues that it does not make sense to talk of the body's thinking, any more than a machine's thinking. Thinking interrelates with life with others, conversation, understanding. There is no growth or maturity in a machine,[652] no education, only regulation. No becoming and no being. In discussing Greek philosophy Rhees seems to be supporting the argument that it is the soul which partakes in discussion, conversation, becoming, growing.[653] Intelligibility exists in time – things need to come to be, to develop. "Intelligibility belongs to the life of the soul'.[654] A physiological account of the body cannot relate to sense and meaning. The life of the soul is the life of thought/language, the hope of immortality.

Rhees argues that language has no 'meta-theory' to give a general grammar and language cannot be considered just a collection of habits and customs regarding how we say things, how speech relates to reality. Our speaking, our discussing, conversing is far too fluid, variable, and complex for that. On the other hand, it seems unsatisfactory philosophically to simply conclude that meaning, language, understanding varies between different circumstances of use. If that were the case how would one separate real from sham discourse. If language deteriorates, understanding deteriorates. To avoid sophism there must be a difference between accurate, truthful language and sham discourse devoid of real meaning. It is discussion, conversation, holding to grammatical 'rules', using examples and 'going on' in ways that perpetuate the grammar learned. Grammar 'rules' given us are not laws but by employing them in context they show what a true discussion or description is. Dialogue, not dialectic, is the basis of growth in understanding:

> If we ask what makes discussion possible, or what makes it sensible to say
> things and ask about them in the way that we do – it is all the multitude of

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[650] Ibid., p.93.

[651] Rhees, *On Religion,* p.5.

[652] Rhees, *In Dialogue,* vol.II, p.141.

[653] Ibid., p.142.

[654] Ibid., introduction.

things that makes the growth of understanding possible and makes it possible to learn; it is what makes us able to learn from friendship and from art, from laws and customs, as well as from science. What these things mean to us enters what we say and what we understand; just as it is because of what we say and hear said that the remark made now may make us pause or may be trivial. Discussion cannot be something external which men can make use of, as they may use a type of strategy in warfare, or a special technique in building.[655]

For progression, therefore, in a real sense, for a deeper understanding of what faith is, Rhees offers a much richer sense of what this entails than Pascal. Dialogue, real conversation in good faith, avoiding sham, with those who believe is imperative. Custom and habit have their place in the faith community and are very important but the seeking, the felt necessity of analysis, the desire for a comprehension of life's meaning is always present in Rhees's discussions of religious belief.

8.16 The limits of language and reason. The freedom of act.

Rhees says that language must refer to something which cannot be destroyed, otherwise you could never say that something had been destroyed.[656] Without this language has no reality. It is the meaning of language which persists and with this intelligibility and reality persists. This is a statement about the nature of the world. There is a need for something to remain the same for intelligibility in the world. There must be a persisting difference between truth and error if a mistake is to be recognized but in other cases a mistake is not a possibility, would not make sense - if things were to turn out differently to expected one would be 'going crazy'. There are limits to possibility; the limits are, in a sense, set by that which is accepted without questioning, hinges, Moore's propositions, Pascal's principles.

This understanding of language and the objective is clearly very important in relation to Rhees's comments on mistaken talk about God as an object.[657] It harks back to the *Tractatu*s and Wittgenstein's comments on the metaphysical, aesthetic, and ethical. Rhees clearly shares these views and his discussions of God's reality, the world and the moral/ethical reflect this, as do his comments on love, art, music, and 'wonder'.

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[655] Rhees, *In Dialogue,* vol.I, p.xxiii.

[656] Ibid*.,* p.3.

[657] See section 6.2.1.

We can analyse our use of language to clarify, exclude false possibilities, illusions, sham speech but the basic understanding is that language deals with states of affairs 'in the world'. The limits of the world are the limits of logic - 'The sense of the world lies outside the world'.[658] Reality is about what makes an intelligible discourse or intelligible discussion.[659] As Rhees says you must decide for yourself if you wish to come to a conclusion about reality and illusion, no-one can help you. God, for Rhees, is not part of 'the world'.

Pascal offers a critique of the limits of reason and its vacillation in the search for faith. Rhees argues that language (the fundament of reason) is the source of order or method and is necessary to allow proofs and demonstrations (necessary relations). Proof belongs to the relation of language and symbols.[660] The 'objective', to be discussed, requires language. In being able to talk about things the possibility then exists of the independence from them that reasoning allows. Reasoning is independent of things but has a necessary relation to them. It also follows that there are grammatical differences between what Rhees calls 'the order of reasoning' in acts and speech. One can talk of 1000 miles without consideration of individual miles but walking the distance shows the difference between thought and act. Despite the importance of ritual action, doing as believers do, etc. in Pascal's apology, he does not directly address the relationship between the differential effect of language and action in developing belief. For him, reason is limited and vacillates ineffectually; habit acts through ritual language and action, both working presumably through disposition, i.e., the will. Action, however, Rhees argues, also brings in the matter of the unforeseen happening; it does not necessarily need inference; habit would seem by nature to stifle the unexpected.

The unforeseen is a mark of the reality of action. In a somewhat analogous way, there is a difference between the measure (the system of units, for example) and given measurements of a thing. We can extend this to the confusion between a general account of intelligibility and a general account of what is said – the difference between 'what it is to say something' and 'what is said'. Or what things are and what a banana is. We can go further still to think of the relationship between 'the one' and 'the many'.

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[658] Wittgenstein, *Tractatus,* §4.5, §5.61, §6.41

[659] Rhees, *In Dialogue,* vol. I, p.105.

[660] Ibid., p.9.

The one as 'first principle' (primary or prior, 'what really is') and the derived many, also the intelligible and what comes to be and passes away.[661]

This insight into thought (reason) and act throws light on habitual acts of piety; all follow rote and repetition, habitual reinforcement, but that is not all. All acts are open to the unexpected and differ from language in that respect. All acts are open to reason, even if unreasonable or habitual. The unexpected, arising from an act, ritual or pietistic, may itself be illuminating, even transformative. Acts, in a religious, symbolic setting may represent and carry the wonder of the numinous in a way language cannot and this may increase the likelihood of enlightenment.

The above comments on the unexpectedness inherent in action may not seem to be applicable to ritual with its fixed set of words and actions but there are often two sets of people involved. One is the individual or individuals performing the rite and the other the collective group participating by attending and taking part in a less structured way (e.g., the congregation at Mass). This second group are open to personal interaction, acts of support and kindness occurring around the event. Equally important may be the act of attending the ritual in the first place, opening the way to new experience.

8.17 Waiting for faith

Pascal wants to argue that one moves beyond reason and habit after their preparatory effects by an act of God in which we utterly consent to God's action via the heart's intuition. We wait on God's action. Faith is our access to God's reality, but God's presence can very occasionally be evident in the world through miracles and the truth of the claims of faith can be seen in the revelatory character of the Bible, particularly prophecy. This waiting on God's offer has resonances both with Rhees's interpretation of Simone Weil (1909-43) and his reading of Greek philosophy.

For Rhees (who draws on Sophocles) how one waits or 'how one ought to live', in the absence of committed faith, is a central and live question. This lies also at the heart of the need for God and the achievement of faith. One needs to see the importance of acting on moral insights – seeing a meaning and purpose to life – seeing the need and

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[661] Ibid., p.13-15.

keeping one's purpose to achieve it.[662] One needs to learn how this is done – dialogue helps here, increases understanding. One must desire to increase one's understanding in questions of virtue and morals just as one must have a desire for faith. The spirit of the search is all important – in humility, like the search for beauty. Rhees argues that one needs respect, humility, avoiding corruption of thought and worldly concerns. We do not learn a method or technique but need respect, common customs, common literature, and an understanding of the importance of the goal and a need to grow, as with love answering to something of fixed importance. The difference between sham and real is critically important in matters of aesthetics and religion. The worst thing for Rhees is not to care about the search, to accept the sham, a striking similarity to Pascal's views, not only on those who accept the false reality of life compared to those who seek honestly for faith,[663] but also in his discussions of the value of true humility and the danger of false.[664]

Rhees wants to point to the insight offered into religion and faith by wonder, human love, aesthetics, and morality. These are numinous but inexpressible and their inexpressible character offers the insight. They share an *existence* in our lives, a *reality,* but are beyond language. They seem to arise beyond what can be said and they manifest not in terms of "what' or 'how' but *show* themselves in the occurrence, the event – the inexpressible *that* of reality[665]. These inexpressible feelings, events, 'eternals' do not exist 'beyond', outside the world but 'happen'. Ethics, aesthetics, and religion occupy 'the other of discourse'.[666]

8.18 Picturing God

There is perhaps a natural desire when looking into Wittgenstein's comments on 'picturing' to posit an application to understanding the kind of reality God has – if

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[662]Rhees, *In Dialogue,* vol II, introduction.

[663] F418

[664] F176, 222, 382, 408, 543,572.

[665] Mersch, Dieter, "There Are Indeed Things That Cannot Be Put Into Words" (TLP 6.522). Wittgenstein's Ethics of Showing, in *In Search of Meaning,* ed. by Ulrich Arnswald, (Karlsruhe: Universitatsverlage Karlsrue, 2009), pp.25-50 (p29). http://books.openedition.org/ksp/1847 [accessed 9 January 2017]

[666] Ibid., p.33.

propositions are a picture of reality,[667] can the propositions used in religious discourse be said to offer a 'picture' of God? This is a complex issue and one that did not concern Pascal, whose interest in pictures relates to what is hidden and revealed in scripture.[668]

Rhees's interpretation of Wittgenstein's comments is laid out in his discussion of Anscombe's views on the *Tractatus*.[669] He argues that the use of *Bild* (translated as 'picture') connects for Wittgenstein with *abbilden* which carries a sense of 'inner similarity' between picture and pictured in the sense of finding a model for one system in another (e.g., finding a connection for non-Euclidean geometry in Euclidean). Wittgenstein's picturing of reality by propositions is meant to bring out their association with logic. Rhees quotes Wittgenstein's example of the connection between a musical score, the music, and a record – they are widely separated individually but carry an 'internal' connection, a proposition 'pictures' because of what it says and the essential element in the proposition is whatever it has in common with all propositions that can express the same sense.[670] *This* 'stands in the internal picturing relation with reality'.[671]

This is an extremely important point for Rhees as it underpins the centrality of looking at philosophical conundrums by examining the use of language, the alternative phrases, the applied and implied meanings. The importance for religious belief is therefore not a diffuse idea of religious language offering pictures of God, etc. It is rather that it is in deeply examining and cross-referencing the multiple words and phrases used by the faithful in prayer, worship, ritual, etc. that we find the picture of the reality of that faith. Alter the language and you alter the faith.

Supplanting religious language alters the 'faith in'. Interconnected language produces a *Bild*; this is not a representation of reality; the reality is in the interconnected propositions. What one can say about 'picturing' and the reality of God is that in the developing our understanding of God's reality, in learning about God, we use words, phrases, pictures, catechesis, bible, and all of these, through their interconnectedness,

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[667] See sections 7.3 and 8.15

[668] F260

[669] Rhees, *Discussions,* chapter 1.

[670] Wittgenstein, *Tractatus* §3.341, Rhees, *Discussions,* p.7.

[671] Rhees, *Discussions,* p.40.

provide the 'picture' and the picture does not offer any image of God, it pictures *divinity* and divinity *is* the reality of God.

8.19 Ethics, aesthetics and the mystical

Blaise Pascal experience his own 'night of fire' and a miraculous cure of a niece's eye disease; he also explicitly states his belief in miracles.[672] He would have undoubtedly accepted general Church attitudes to the mystical. Rhees must proceed by a more mundane route in investigating religious metaphysics. We have previously referred to Rhees's comments on the insight into religious belief that can be gained from human love, ethics, aesthetics, etc. and the limits of such insights. They have their origin clearly in Wittgenstein's comments in the *Tractatus* on ethics, aesthetics, and the mystical. It should first be noted that Rhees does not talk in terms of religion, ethics, and aesthetics as 'metaphysical' or in some way outside the world. He does, however, talk of them in terms of 'what goes deep' and argues for some 'internal' connection between these and language. These subjects all begin where language ends in the sense that they cannot be directly put into language. Rhees clearly indicates that when Wittgenstein says 'What is mystical is not the *character* of the world, but *that* there is a world – i.e., that there is anything at all'.[673] This must be taken in conjunction with:

> The 'experience' that we need in order to understand logic is not that something is in such and such a state, but that something *is*: and this is not an experience.[674]

And:

> No doubt there is what cannot be expressed. This shows itself, it is what is mystical.

For Rhees this means that the mystical is not something that cannot be actually seen, 'it shows itself precisely in the rigorous use of language'.[675] So, the mystical, the 'deep', in so far that it can be grasped, is grasped when language, grammar, is used with rigour, without sham.

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[672] F180

[673] Wittgenstein, *Tractatus* §6.44.

[674] Ibid,. §5.52.

[675] Rhees, *Discussions,* p.102.

If we accept the similarities between the ethical and the religious, we can gain insight into Rhees's position. For example, he says:

> 'The Ethical', which cannot be expressed, is that whereby I am able to think of good and evil at all, even in the impure and nonsensical expressions I have to use.[676]

And quoting Wittgenstein:

> If you look through the list of synonyms which I will put before you, you will, I hope, be able to see the characteristic features which they all have in common and these are the characteristic features of ethics.[677]

So, the showing that comes through of ethics, beauty, love, religion comes through the variety of 'forms'; this does not mean through examining different ways of saying the same thing but through accepting the variety as a whole, taking an unfixed, unfocussed view.[678] In terms of religion this variety shows itself in conversation, but I think one cannot escape the conclusion that it also shows in the non-discursive, non-propositional, non-objective; in what does not relate to possible states of affairs in the world, in prayer, worship and ritual.

We should recognize that in religious discourse there is often a very striking difference in the meaning of the words and phrases common to both 'secular' and religious speech. The depth of this difference is difficult to comprehend because it goes directly into the mystery of faith. Wittgenstein puts this well in his reply to Drury regarding his acting as a godparent:

> To renounce the pomp and vanity of this wicked world. Just think what that would really involve. Who of us today ever think of such a thing?[679]

Thought and sense are deeply rooted in a form of life, a world-picture, and this agreement in 'form of life' is all important in religious understanding. One must experience the practical and the theoretical/theological of religion to partake in the

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[676] Ibid., p.102.

[677] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Lecture on Ethics,* ed. by E. Zamuner, E.V. Di Lascio and D.K.Levy (Oxford: Blackwell, 2014), p.126. <https://cominsitu.files.wordpress.com/2019/07/ludwig-wittgenstein-lecture-on-ethics.pdf> [accessed 17/3/2020]

[678] Rhees, *Discussions,* p.102.

[679] Wittgenstein, *Lectures and Conversations*, §34.

meaning of sin, shame, wonder, gratitude to God, safety in God's providential love. Rhees comments on all of these in various contexts but the key point must be that practice, picture, ceremonial act all go together in the 'showing' related to religious faith and reality. This goes far deeper than the surface grammar of our everyday lives. Religious speech 'says what it says' but speaks out of all the depth of experience of life with its inseparable secular and religious fusion.

8.20 Acting out belief – the nature of ritual

When Pascal argues for observing ritual in the habitual achievement of 'human faith' he does not go into the nature of ritual itself. Ritual is simply integral to his understanding of what religious belief entails – having masses said, doing as others before you have done. Rhees clearly sees the importance of habit, and particularly custom, in developing language and understanding. The unquestioned propositions, Pascal's principles, are passed to us in community, not learnt or formally taught. The regular use of language is in one sense a habit or custom and practice underpins it. Practice in community is custom. It is not through in some way wordlessly accessing our own minds that we come to understand the world or gain what understanding we have of the divine; this must come through language, communication, conversation, shared custom, etc. Custom 'fills the gap' between following a rule and the existence or embodiment of the rule.

When we look to what brings about reason, Rhees sees that this lies in language-games but also in other interactions with the community, in custom and habit, in acts and rituals as well as speech – out in the open, lived environment. What we are permitted to say sensibly about things, including God and religious belief, relates to the grammar of that word or phrase but also to what goes with that world-picture, including action, images, music, etc. We want and need to understand all of these when we search for belief. The 'showing' here lies not in ostensive definitions but in interconnections. We cannot retreat from the world in a search for faith, faith must be understood through all that is said and done by those who believe and, importantly, by those who have believed, otherwise its permanency is threatened. For both Pascal and Rhees commitment is at the heart of religious faith. For Pascal throwing oneself into the actions, habits, and customs of believers; for Rhees through immersion in the language, acts and rituals of the religious form of life. One cannot enter into a new form of life

without the whole panoply of changes that go with the new aspect on life. Introspection about faith, about whether one believes, really must usually consist for Rhees, as for Wittgenstein, in reviewing and reflecting on numinous feelings, conversations, etc. about religion and in imaginings about alternatives.[680]

It is of particular interest that no-one seems to commit to saying that Rhees was a member of a religious faith group or organized religion, but he attended Mass[681] and in later life used Christian terms and expressions in the manner of a believer (interspersed with discussions about the death of his dog for instance[682]). The ritualistic elements of religion clearly had importance for him, a man with very high moral principles, seeking truth. What then was the importance for him of such rituals? We can shed light here from his comments on Wittgenstein's views of ritual.

Firstly, for Rhees, ritual can be neither simply emotivist nor expressionist in nature in most cases.[683] Rhees, however, does indicate that involvement in the Mass is performative.[684] He sees ritual as imitative, as is custom, and as a form of active piety.[685] Ritual, he argues, widely quoting Wittgenstein, cannot be considered a mistake nor, whilst wide variations are likely, is it in most cases an attempt to bring about the process enacted, e.g., fertility in a sexually explicit rite. When one reads Wittgenstein's views on magic and rituals it is easy to conclude that they are too proscriptive, ignoring the evidence that some rituals do seem clearly to express a desire for immediate rain, pregnancy, etc., but Rhees argues that one needs to understand that Wittgenstein's interest here is in the relation of the rites to reality and language. He has no interest in any theory of ritual or magic.[686] He also rejects any therapeutic or cathartic role generally for the rituals. In religion also one must beware offering causes and reasons that of themselves offer no insight – for example if one says that religion arises out of

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[680] Wittgenstein, *Investigations,* §587.

[681] Rhees, *On Religion,* p.346 and p.381

[682] Rhees, *Moral Questions*, pp.198-200.

[683] D.Z. Phillips, 'Wittgenstein, Wittgensteinianism and magic', *Religious Studies,* 39 (2003), 185-201.

[684] Rhees, *On Religion,* p.83.

[685] Rhees's views on ritual are expressed predominantly in a single chapter of *On Religion,* pp.65-94.

[686] Phillips, *Wittgensteinianism and Magic,* p.188.

fear or ennui what must be clear is what that fear is *of*. It is the *of* that is the cause not the fear, e.g., fear of spiders, guns, flying etc. does not lead to religion.

For Wittgenstein and Rhees what makes the ritual important is deep and in itself mysterious. The ritual may be the only way of *experiencing* the emotions evident in its acting out. Also, in performing the ritual we might suggest that the interconnectedness of language is extended or expanded to action and aesthetics (e.g., music, associated ritual art, etc.) in the production of the overall 'showing' or 'perspicuous view' needed for understanding. The effect of such ritual on believing is therefore not just the strengthening or fixing of nascent belief, nor the facilitating of induction into a community. It is the experience of the nature of belief in a fuller, deeper way; one not achievable by other means. Ritual and traditional acts of piety may do what language can't. They are integral to the new form of life/world-picture attained with religious belief.

One might (with Drury) suggest that the rituals themselves are a form of language, even a 'form of life'[687] (see below) but Rhees would resist their connection with everyday life being a 'means to an end' relationship. When one kisses the picture of a loved one, touches a statue or image of a saint, carries an image in a procession, the whole is in the act, it is not an emotional *response* nor a substitution of the image for the real. We do not anticipate or desire that the represented in any way *experience* our act or that it is effectual in producing some emotion or outcome in us – the act is in a sense self-contained.

The above comments are very important in that they apply in part also to other 'metaphysical' matters – ethics and aesthetics in particular. One cannot generalize in matters of the depth and variability of religion, ethics, and aesthetics but it is important not to artificially separate 'fact and value', affective and emotive, cognitive, and non-cognitive. The ritual itself may contain everything in an 'internal relationship' between rite and life; this argues against Rhees accepting religious ritual as, in itself, a form of life. An example might be the Divine Office – it is tied to time and dates and its 'employment' may alter attitude to the day, the season, life, prayer, and God, but how does one separate the whole of the ritual from the life lived? It includes worship, duty,

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[687] M. O'C. Drury, *The Danger of Words* (London: Routledge, 1973), p.x.

attitudes to daily life, without restriction. There is no clear separation between belief and practice here and the daily prayer can simply become an intrinsic element of the world-picture. One does not proffer the Office to produce an effect, the ritual itself and any effect it has are 'internal'; the following of the prayer cycle says something of itself:

> I should like to say 'what the picture tells me is itself'. That is, its telling me something consists in its own structure, in *its* own lines and colours…[688]

We do not see what the rituals picture as no object exists to allow comparison; the pictures say themselves to those open in faith to the content. In a sense, religious rituals are expressive, emotive, and factual to different degrees in different cases, but they defy fitting into any inclusive classification. Their depth and mystery remain unchallenged.

There is a tendency to put rituals, including religious rituals, into the metaphorical or symbolic category. This is done without analysis of what that categorization invents or destroys. To call something symbolic, metaphorical or metaphysical also tends to mitigate against it being 'real' – an expression or acting-out in practice of the concept. It is difficult for us today to see the validity of the 'picture' produced by dance, music, and liturgy because we are so welded to the scientific understanding of evidence and proof, objectivity. An expression directly of the spiritual seems primitive and alien. There is a need to perceive the interconnectedness of all the elements of the ritual and this requires goodwill, lack of sham and openness to mystery. The whole person must respond, not just intellect and reason. Wittgenstein's and Rhees's interest is not in anthropology but in language and philosophy here but language covers a very broad area, essentially all reflective life.

It is clear from the above discussion that Rhees offers a route to understanding the role of habit/custom in the whole 'dawning' that occurs in religious conversion. It militates against any contention that Pascal's 'acting as if' must be seen as arguing for acting without conviction to 'brain wash' oneself into belief. Rather habit/custom/ritual acting together with ritual language, community interaction and conversation can be seen as indispensable for achieving the full reality of religious faith. They are all irreplaceable elements and without them all the depth and mystery of religion is not attained. This is not in any way to deny the absolute need for practical virtue in faith.

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[688] Wittgenstein, *Investigations,* §523.

8.21 What ritual is about

In explaining Wittgenstein's views,[689] Rhees points to the interconnection of the language and gestures of ritual, both of which show the same shifts of meaning as in everyday language (metonymy, personification, etc.). The gestures of the rites seem to have a more 'general' role than individual words and phrases but are themselves a 'language' and for Rhees have been learned in daily life as language is learned. Even gestures only used in ritual have meaning because of *interconnection* with everyday gestures used, for example, in hand working, fighting, etc. The *power* of the gesture is carried as is the power of the words from the power of connected words and gestures in everyday life – without this they would not even be gestures or words. Such power is deeply encultured and habitually re-enforced. They 'move' into ritual and gesture with retention of the meanings used in the important areas of living. Their shifts of meaning are 'natural shifts'. It is the formal character, the repetition, the *usage* that makes it a ritual – there is a sense of performance. The major difficulty here, however, is in understanding the difference between magical rituals and religious rituals. What is a religious ritual about achieving, if anything? We have clearly intimated that the whole may be included in the event.

Rhees makes much of Wittgenstein's comments on the 'misunderstanding' of the logic of language rather than 'mistakes' in understanding and these have been discussed previously[690] but in the case of ritual the importance lies in how this relates to the difference between the magical and logical use of language. Essentially a proposition *does* something in the sense that, for example, if one curses someone then the understanding of who the curse is meant for and the severity of the curse, its extremeness, is determined by the connections to one's life and that of the community, what occurs around the curse being given. One might however argue that the 'meaning him', the actual 'how' of meaning a particular individual and the efficacy of the curse lies within the words and gestures (e.g., pointing) used – for Wittgenstein, Rhees argues, this is the invented, 'mythical' use of 'meaning him', a misunderstanding of the logic (grammar) of the sentence – it is a magical use of the curse.[691] It is the type of

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[689] Rhees, *Wittgenstein on Language and Ritual,* p.65.

[690] See section 5.7.

[691] Rhees, *On Religion,* pp.70-71.

misunderstanding that gives rise for Wittgenstein to 'metaphysics'. A similar misunderstanding would be to think that the efficacy of a sign (word, sentence, etc.) lay in the physical marks on the paper rather than the connection with language and life *in-toto*. Signs, symbols, gestures, words in ritual, prayer etc. are in themselves a language or languages, inter-related as words are in language. We have an 'urge to misunderstand' this language in a similar way.[692] Superstition is not a mistake but a falling into this misunderstanding, into thinking that the power of words lay in a direct connection with the ritual, actions, images, etc. rather than in their connection with language and life. Pascal escapes the pitfall of falling into superstition with his exhortation to employ ritual and emulation specifically by his emphasis on the employment of habit and custom. He also makes clear that the result of this operates through the increase in virtue (a reduction in passion and increase in faithfulness, etc.).

In ritual and magic there may be in a sense as Wittgenstein says 'the expression or portrayal of a wish',[693] perhaps the desire for the ritual's effectiveness or success, and this is bound up with the ritualistic acts, the performance, the rigid structure of the ritual, prayer, etc. but for Rhees it is a misunderstanding if the sequence of actions, the careful adherence to the ritual were considered to produce a desired effect as a consequence. There is, however, a more subtle misunderstanding if one thinks that the ritual itself is the *experience* of the wish (which seems to be what Wittgenstein says[694]). Rhees questions whether we are not then confusing the symbolism, the ritualistic words, acts, etc. with what they describe or portray? This, he feels, can be a fundamental misunderstanding of the logic of language, deeper than that of 'meaning who is cursed'. Religious ritual does not, of itself, produce faith; it opens understanding to the depth of faith and its reality, expresses the depth of the 'myth'. For Pascal the same is true in that habit and custom applied to religious ritual and acts do not produce true faith, they change the seeker by strengthening resolve, facilitating virtue and docility/humility. The difference between Rhees and Pascal lies, in large part, regarding the motivation for faith. Rhees makes abundantly clear that a religious belief that puts a personal advantage in the afterlife at its core is degraded. He also argues that a God proffering damnation is

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[692] Wittgenstein, *Investigations,* §109.

[693] Rhees, *On Religion,* p.76.

[694] Rush Rhees, 'The Tree of Nebuchadnezzar', *The Human World,* 4, (1971), p.31. Reprinted in; Rhees, *Moral Questions*, pp. 151-158.

not worthy of worship whatever the cost. It is also very clear that any idea of attempting to induce docility into a search for understanding or accepting faith would be anathema to Rhees. One must go 'the hard way' to understanding.

The above confusion of what belongs to the symbolism with what the symbolism expresses (e.g., a desire for an outcome, the expression of a wish) is very important and relates to confusion between the name and the bearer of a name, wishing, intention, etc. in Wittgenstein's writings. In the ritual Rhees argues that the ritual may give representation to a wish, but the *interpretation* of this representation/portrayal/picture remains open and undecided unless we can see and interpret the equivalent of a move in our language in the move or shift in the symbolism – how that community 'reads' the symbols used, their substitutions (e.g., darkness for sin, light for God), how it all relates to their everyday lives. The particular fulfilment the ritual provides is dependent upon the particular ways of living, the reality of the people. Ritual expresses the myths, desires, beliefs of that community. Hence for Rhees 'ritual gives expression to a myth' is more to the point than 'gives expression to a wish' though he sees wish and myth as closely related.[695] The wish/myth of the community is fulfilled in its enactment. You perform the ritual because of itself it is a religious language, a picturing, a move to the edge of wonder, to open oneself to the experience of faith.

Although Rhees does not further develop this idea he sees associations here between the 'language' of ritual and its expressiveness with the idea of religious architecture 'giving visible form' to religious ideas – the architecture and the ritual are analogous to a language.

The depth of Rhees's understanding of ritual's importance is clear:

> …if someone said that *all* that matters is purity of heart, or the pure love of God, and that traditional forms of worship and prayer don't matter – then the phrase 'pure love of God' may become as empty as any 'dead' ceremony is.[696]

And:

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695 Rhees, *On Religion,* p.83.

696 Ibid., p.116.

> …the worship of God is the devotion to something in comparison with which my life is nothing at all.[697]

The central importance is that the ritual *may* be an act of pure devotion, pure love of God. So ritual is not primarily additive, instructional, preparative, it is utterly integral to religious belief:

> To worship God is to pray to God; to worship God is to glorify God. And what I pray for is to offer my life to God.
>
> So the worship of God has something important to do with the reality of life. The belief in God has something to do with the reality of life.[698]

What ritual and its language expresses is devotion and the pure love of God. The language expresses the true reality of a life of self-negation before God. Worship is the relation of the creature to God.[699] As Rhees says, the glorification of God has all the reality anything could have.[700] A corollary of all this is that ritual, worship, prayer do not come about because we believe in God. We come to have our concept of God through worship, ritual, prayer, song in a community setting. One might argue that 'wonder' comes at the end of human understanding ('human faith' in Pascal's terms) derived through reason and religious ritual, prayer, and worship. Wonder is the openness to faith which proceeds from religious practice not the other way around. The *purpose* of ritual is not belief but the concept of God that we have arises out of our way of life and our ritual ways of action (which are based on habit and custom). There is no sense that ritual has any significant mechanical, automatic or Pavlovian element. Pascal's use of the term machine and associations with Descartes' animal capabilities are a stumbling block to modern acceptance of his apology for many; Rhees's analysis of religious belief is free of such ideas.

Rhees obviously feels deeply the need for the Catholic Church (he usually talks in terms of Catholicism when he talks of religion) to concentrate on the Mass and for its churches to be places concentrating on *worship* not exhortation or inspirational talks. Concentration should be on understanding the basis of worship and devotion and contemplating moral questions that relate to it. As he says, 'devotion is nourished from

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[697] Ibid., p.175

[698] Ibid., p.177.

[699] Ibid., p.181.

[700] Ibid., p.177.

coming into contact with it'[701] – clear echoes of Pascal's 'doing as those who now believe have done'. We need help from the Church in deepening our devotion when we cannot escape a life steeped in temporal matters.

Ritual observance etc. is, for Rhees, not a *precondition* of belief in God, our whole concept of God arises with community teaching, community life and the formalization and recollection involved in partaking in rituals etc. The depth and connection they bring, the picturing and aspect association they provide, opens us to the wonder of the possibility of faith.

8.22 Wonder and Religion

The above section chimes with Rhees's comments on our approach to the numinous in our lives – the deep connections between wonder at elements in our world and the totality of our experience, our reality. Pascal also speaks of the importance of wonder in teaching us our natural limits, our inability to comprehend the nature of principles. Such a sense of wonder can also allow us some sense of peace in a world of flux.[702] Rhees has written little directly on wonder but his comments on it reflect its importance for him. Wonder and contemplation of the world for him go to the heart of philosophy:

> …*wonder* at the possibility of understanding. Wonder is characteristic of philosophy anyway..…Wonder at any natural scene that is beautiful…Wonder at the beauty of human actions and characters when it appears in them. And in the same way, wonder at what is terrible and what is evil…treating what is terrible as a sacrament….
>
> To do philosophy a man must be able not only to see questions where those not given to philosophy see none, but also to look on these questions in a certain way…Trying rather to understand these questions…to understand human thinking and human investigation and human life; to understand how they arise in, and in one sense belong to, our thinking about other questions that we ask and answer: this goes with *contemplation* of the ways people think and enquire…
>
> I have been trying to paraphrase certain of Wittgenstein's ideas. Simone Weil often spoke in ways that were analogous…In *analogy* with what I have just been saying about *contemplation*, compare what she says of 'attention'...[703]

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[701] Ibid., p.171.

[702] F199.

[703] Rhees, *Possibility of Discourse*, pp.xii-xiii.

Teasing out the meaning here is complex as it relates to Wittgenstein's comments on the world as miracle and wonder at the existence of the world (including the problem that the same word in German can be taken to mean both miracle and wonder) together with Rhees's comment that he can make nothing of miracles (presumably he means as a concept). Wonder seems to lie, for both philosophers, at the edge of intelligibility, it is what remains when language is exhausted when dealing with the deep, the ethical, the aesthetic, and religious. The list of examples of wonder that Rhees gives in his writings include wonder at death, wonder at madness, wonder at the problems that there are and the solutions that may be found, wonder at the beauty of nature, at human characters and actions, at the terrible and evil, at treating what is terrible as terrible.

Wonder is 'wordless', beyond language but nonetheless real. The wonder, for Rhees, all comes back to an origin in 'the wonder in there being anything at all'[704] and this is for him the heart of religious seeking and belief. But what is the nature of the wonder that we feel at long established rituals and religious practices; what gives them their sense of 'force' with us? Pascal seems to see their importance prior to achieving true faith in terms of habit/custom re-enforcing or producing 'human faith'; as a preparation for true faith offered by God's grace, by revelation. Is there more to glean from Rhees's presentation of the nature of religious ritual and ancient rites?

We can gain some insight into Rhees's views from his reading of Weil, but it is difficult in Rhees's writings on Weil to be sure how much of what he discusses he holds as true and how far he simply offers his reading of her as her own position. In discussing beauty, and wonder at it, he argues that for her there can be no true, full appreciation of beauty and equally no appreciation of the wonder of God or the wonder of the lives of saints without realizing our own worthlessness, a position close to Pascal's. He states that this sense of humility is an important understanding though very difficult to explicate.[705] He connects it with singlemindedness, a 'serious' outlook on one's life. The humility necessary for the appreciation of beauty and the wonder at it and at the concept of God is not a humility that one can wish oneself into having[706]; it is not an

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[704] Rhees, *On Religion,* p.16.

[705] Rush Rhees, *Discussions of Simone Weil,* ed. by D.Z. Phillips, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999), p.148.

[706] Ibid., p.156.

achievement nor is it a posture or frame of mind. Humility is a necessity for wonder and for compassion (and not a separate idea from compassion). It is closely allied to charity. Rhees reads Weil as not distinguishing between humility and the Grace of God. Humility offers illumination, insight into suffering, a form of compassion allowing us to contemplate affliction and beauty – 'the love that holds us in the contemplation of beauty'[707]. The sense of wonder at birth, death, etc. is close to the praise of God, supplication, religious rites, and there is beauty also in the fragility of life, human and natural, viewing one's life in relation to its end.[708]

In one sense wonder replaces metaphysics and is central to Rhees's 'point of entry' into religious faith. This wonder is absolutely and directly associated with the 'that it is at all' of the world, gratitude, and humility. For Wittgenstein this wonder is a way of 'seeing' not an emotive response[709] and there is a definite association here with art and aesthetics, as there is for Rhees. Wonder at human capability, the existence of language, the presence of beauty in nature all go deep and as in the case of art, music, and great literature it *shows* us something, even instructs us in deepening our understanding. Wonder may contribute to our understanding of what religion *is.* The examples Rhees gives are wondrous (miraculous) because their depth and power cannot be described or spoken of and they can even, when concerning religious themes, be considered a 'sacred gesture'.[710] Rhees seems to think that the spirit of our age, the scientific spirit, hinders access to wonder. Wonder is characteristic of philosophical investigation (or should be) but is also a feature of the *thinking* of 'less corrupted people'. It is for him, where religious rites are concerned, also associated with 'reverence' and 'treating what is important as a sacrament'.[711] It is wonder at the sheer inexplicability of the 'thatness' of life and the world, of reality.

Art, music, dance etc., which deal with religious themes or are used in religious practice and ritual, if they are wonderful, 'go deep',[712] but also, in the case of language

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[707] Ibid., p.159.

[708] Ibid., p.169.

[709] Thomas L. Tam, 'On Wonder, Appreciation, and the Tremendous in Wittgenstein's Aesthetics, *British Journal of Aesthetics* 42 (2002), pp.310-322 (p.315).

[710] Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value,* p.57e.

[711] Rhees, *Possibility of Discourse,* pp.xii-xiii.

[712] Rhees, *Without Answers,* p.138.

and poetry, interconnect deeply with everyday life and its problems. If the depth and seriousness is there then art does not derive from the ritual and religion, it directly contributes to it, offers new points of view (aspects), deepens the wonder and sense of value that the ritual or religious practice has.[713] There is a two-way traffic here, religious 'stories' provide the themes for the art and music, and all exist because there is religious *life* which is one with and inseparable from its stories, myths, and rituals. The art, music etc. reflect and deepen what has meaning in life, alter the reality of life. The symbols, music etc. in ritual must be as deep, wondrous, and terrible as the 'story', the 'inner nature' of the ritual which has roots in the history, religious and secular, of the society in which they occur.

8.23 Spirit, depth, and ritual

Any real understanding of what brings us to the sense of wonder as presented by Rhees and Wittgenstein must be complex and nuanced. Clearly, however, it is very important to what Rhees offers to Pascal's presentation of habit, custom and the coming to the 'point of action' of saving faith.[714] These concern 'depth' and 'spirit' in ritual and belief.

An undoubtedly weak area of Pascal's apologetics is his stress on the end that follows from true faith, i.e., salvation and eternal life. The problem here is that such a stress, a reason, end, or 'ought' to belief, seems to present a relative good; God as worshipped for the best outcome. Would we then worship the devil if the devil proffered eternal life and happiness? Such reasoning is absent from Rhees's opinion of what Christian religion really is (or better, what it can be). The depth and profundity of religion lies in its interconnectedness with all of our lives, loves and traumas. Its depth depends to some extent on what lies 'outside' religion in 'the sense of reality has' and the contrast in our collective reality with and without religion. There is also, however, a contrast between our experience within ritual and the everyday and this contrast is reflected in the shifts in meaning between everyday phrases, actions and symbols and the use of such in religious ritual, prayer, etc. What makes ritual 'deeper' than the everyday? What creates the deep sense of wonder that may accompany 'effective' ritual.

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[713] Ibid*.,* p.140.

[714] The central issues here are best laid out in Rhees's chapter on language and ritual in *On Religion* (essay 8) and in some sections of *Without Answers* (predominantly chapter 14).

When Wittgenstein and Rhees talk of the spirit of a ritual, particularly one representing human sacrifice or death, they stress the experience of a deep and sinister, unsettling 'feeling'. This seems to apply to rituals with a long historical presence in society; the age of the ritual is important. This chimes well with Pascal's argument around the importance of long-established custom in many important areas of life. Explanations of why a ritual occurs, what the external features represent, e.g., birth, harvest, etc. are not fully to the point; they do not explain the sense of upset we feel. Explication of the rites does not explain their depth.[715] There is 'evidence' to us of the deep importance of what is represented, separate to any explanation in historical practices and events but in part dependent on the deep sense of tradition and history behind them. Our deep response to, for example, age old ritual sacrifice seems deeper than repugnance at taking a life.

Wittgenstein and Rhees argue that what we all 'see' (internally) in ourselves and in our connection with our ancestors, the 'strangeness' of the deep sense of the ritual – the connection with the death of an individual in the lost past, provides a background to our deep response but Rhees argues this is an 'external' connection and not the concept which forms our deeper response. In a sense we could have the deep response even if the purported historical background were absent or erroneously understood. We see an aspect to the ritual which brings alive to us the unsettling response. The 'seeing' and the 'thinking' run together here[716] as they do in 'seeing-as' in other non-ritual situations (see later). We sense deep connections between the ritual and other deeply felt things.

Rhees sees connections here with the depth a proposition acquires in understanding it, the picture that emerges from the proposition. The broadening of viewpoint and interconnections in language in a ritual are important but the depth also depends on the *impression* of age not the *evidence* of it or assumed evidence. It is not an invented or individual event, there is an interconnected spirit with similar rituals with perhaps a different cultural base – an association of practices with a common spirit, a common 'inner nature', a common element in the nature of the peoples involved.[717] This

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[715] Rhees, *On Religion,* p.89.

[716] Ibid*.,* p.91.

[717] See also section 5.7.

common spirit seems to arise in us and those who practice all similar rituals – an experience in ourselves related to reflection on our past, that of our predecessors – an inner sense of depth, power, importance felt by the whole group, tribe, culture – we might say they all share the same 'seeing-as' (i.e., deep and meaningful) when outsiders see only error and naivety.

This common spirit is necessary to the understanding of rituals such as the Mass. It inter-relates for Rhees with Wittgenstein's comments on the understanding and presentation of the *Tractatus*, the spirit of the work and its relationship to its understanding. Those without the spirit lack this understanding – they 'misunderstand', not fail to understand, that is they may thoroughly understand the text but not its motivating spirit, the interconnectedness of its substance and structure with the deep intentions of its author. One can see associations here with the concepts of superficial and depth grammar. The spirit of the age must be amenable to the spirit of the book. We can see also how the spirit of the scientific age might not allow the 'spirit of the Mass' to be imbibed.[718] Without the common spirit of the community the deep, numinous sense of the ritual cannot be accessed. To sense the 'terrible', the 'wondrous', the 'miraculous' requires the community spirit as well as the 'common spirit of man' to it bring fully alive.

The above comments on the spirit of the age, etc. might seem to have no direct parallels in Pascal's writings but it is important to remember that the geometric and intuitive minds are for Pascal e*sprits*.[719] Thus one can argue that they represent respectively the scientific (modern) spirit of the age and the intuitive spirit (*finesse)* associated with the deeper, unreasoned understanding of music, art, religion and with the principles underpinning everyday life and belief. There is also a link here regarding the association of Wittgenstein's spirit with depth grammar, if one accepts the position that depth grammar is associated with the deeper interconnections of language with social interaction, circumstance, and intention. Depth grammar covers the integration of language with other aspects of life and deeper contexts. Pascal talks of the 'spiritual meaning' (c.f. depth grammar) of biblical passages, miracles, etc. and of interpreting

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[718] *Rhees,* On Religion, pp.86-87.

[719] F21

them falsely in a material or carnal sense rather than using the heart's intuition.[720] By doing this he associates the spirit of finesse with the spirit of the believing community of Christians.

8.24 The aspect of God

Wittgenstein's comments on 'aspect seeing' or 'seeing-as' (seeing something *as* something),[721] particularly in Part II of the *Philosophical Investigations*, have inspired several recent studies regarding their application to religious belief. In his *Introduction to the Blue and Brown Books* Rhees makes clear his opinion that aspect seeing is central to Wittgenstein's later writings , indeed he told D Z Phillips that 'seeing and thinking' might be a good title for part II of the *Investigations*.[722] The problem with the employment of Wittgenstein's writings on this topic, which stretches from the *Tractatus* to his final writings, is in determining the meaning of a very heterogenous set of comments, It is clear that aspect-seeing can involve everything from the famous duck-rabbit example to changes in extended aspects of life or even world-pictures.

This topic is of considerable importance to us because it inter-relates directly with Pascal's writings on human and God-given faith, i.e., on the 'final stage' of his understanding of the acquisition of faith, but it also relates to the role of habit and custom in the process. Religious rituals and forms of worship are habits and customs of the Church and faithful. Their effect is embedded by continual habitual usage. They also persist in usage because they are habitually reinforced. In this way a 'second language' of the Church deepens preparatory 'human faith'. The questions to be asked of aspect seeing are whether it offers insight into the acquisition of true faith, God's own offer, and how it relates to faith acquisition in comparison to world-picture/form of life.

We should at the outset stress that Rhees's comments on aspect seeing do not relate directly to religious belief, but they nonetheless indirectly impact on it. His primary interest is in what 'seeing-as' means for understanding of the relationship between seeing (both visual and picturing in relation to propositions and language-

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[720] F199, F502

[721] See also section 5.9.

[722] Rhees, *On Certainty,* p.140.

games) and thinking/recognizing. 'Seeing-as' addresses the suggestion of a separation of meaning and sign in language, mentalistic understandings of language, how one operates with signs, what 'thinking with signs' would be. It covers the difference between 'reacting with words' versus 'saying something'. Does meaning fall within language? Rhees argues that explicating 'seeing something as something' is a distinct alteration in approach, an area where previous use of language-games as an analogy cannot successfully operate.[723]

In the process of aspect-seeing what is seen in one sense remains the same, whilst in another senses it changes (e.g., duck to rabbit). Wittgenstein argues that this is one, not two, processes (seeing and thinking). The perceptual change relates to *connections* we draw 'internally' between, for example, the line drawing and other depictions of rabbits or ducks – the change of aspect just calls to attention the fact that we always see in terms of these relations.[724] We continually 'see-as' or 'take-for' and develop the ability to interpret our world in this way. We communicate through common concepts to the degree that we *share* capacities for aspect recognition of the same aspects.[725] Just as the meaning of a proposition occurs in a flash[726] so we recognize objects in a flash, but the flash does not include all the future occasions where we encounter or employ the proposition or image. The 'rule-following', the 'application of a rule' in the use of words or propositions is, according to *Philosophical Investigations* §198-202, loose and not subject to an interpretative formula for all occasions or circumstances and this is also true of images. It is simply practice that underpins the rule-following – how 'one goes on' determines the sense of the rules. Rule following itself may be considered a form of aspect recognition. – the flash of recognition in using propositions is the dawning of an aspect as is the sense that a particular word is a satisfying 'fit'. Regular use, habits and custom determine usage.

For Wittgenstein in his *Lectures on Religious Belief* (drawn from contemporaneous notes by Rhees and others) he is 'on a different plane' to the religious

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[723] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Preliminary Studies for the 'Philosophical Investigations'. Generally Known as the Blue and Brown Books, ed. by Rush Rhees* (London: Blackwell 1958), pp.xiii-xiv.

[724] John Churchill, 'Rat and Mole's Epiphany of Pan: Wittgenstein on Seeing Aspects and Religious Belief', *Philosophical Investigations* 21, pp.152-172, (p.154).

[725] Churchill, p.165.

[726] Wittgenstein, *Investigations,* §197.

believer because he cannot *employ* the images and propositions with the sense that religious believers do. He can neither agree nor disagree with them. This viewpoint seems to be shared by Rhees in much of his writings. They have not mastered the technique and thus the religious form of life cannot be fully understood by them. They can try to empathize, put themselves in the shoes of the religious believer but the sayings and pictures do not have the same regulatory function in their lives.[727] For Wittgenstein what constitutes a genuine religious belief is found in his understanding of aspect recognition – it depends on *attitude* to the belief, not an opinion on fact, data, etc. For Wittgenstein attitude comes before opinion in the sense that belief in God is an orientation of one's whole life – this is what religious belief is. Rhees holds the same view. We might see Wittgenstein and Rhees having a dispositional understanding of religious belief, as Pascal has a dispositional account of 'human faith'. Attitude and orientation here chime with Pascal's understanding of disposition of the will and this is under the influence of habit and custom, which must act to alter attitude/disposition. They underpin 'how one goes on' in using and understanding propositions and images. Attitude and disposition are deeply similar, if not the same. What counts as relevant is contained or held within how the picture is employed, on the function of the proposition, picture, ritual, prayer (hence the eyebrows don't matter when talking of the eye of God[728]).

In Wittgenstein's *Notebooks* and the *Tractatus* the close connection between meaning-dawning and aspect-seeing is brought out and meaning-dawning is associated in religious terms with accepting God's creation and our place in it, not rebelling against God, using renunciation to come to a position of acceptance and achieving through this meaning to life and joy.[729] One's attitude as a whole to working and life is changed, life's whole *aspect* is changed. A whole new capacity to see the world is attained with change of aspect – the world has not changed but it is a new world as an expression of God's will. Such a change is inexpressible in language, a radical re-orientation and self-

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[727] Churchill p.162.

[728] Wittgenstein, *Lectures and Conversations,* §71.

[729] For a full discussion of this topic see: Genia Schonbaumsfeldt, '"Meaning-Dawning" in Wittgenstein's Notebooks: a Kierkegaardian reading and Critique', *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 26 (2018), pp.540-556.

abnegation.[730] When discussing belief from the viewpoint of world-picture and Moore's propositions Rhees comes essentially to the same views. Happiness is for Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus* a way of seeing the world, a different reality, picture of the world, to the unhappy.[731]

There is no special, or fixed, relation between subject and image or proposition which determines the particular sense of the image or proposition. The aspect seen does not determine the information in the image/proposition – seeing as a duck does not make it into a picture of a duck. An image or proposition carries its sense by virtue of having a particular relation to the world and by the fact that its content is used meaningfully in other circumstances or propositions, i.e., it can be taken in more than one way. Religious images, words such as worship, God, prayer, etc. do not derive their meanings solely from use by believers. They also carry meaning for non-believers and the meanings perceived interpenetrate each other but this does not mean that all perceive the same meaning.

The common reactions to images and words (when used in both religious and secular settings), their common connections with the life of the whole community, affects their meanings for religious believers and atheists (differing forms of life) though the *ways of seeing* differ. This applies also to aesthetics, music, art, and all deep and profound aspects of life, just as it does to the everyday and mundane. The *aspects seen,* the images appreciated, differ between believer and non-believer but this does not alter the actual image or proposition – the religious language, art, ritual etc. One's way of looking is altered. It is thus that the world of the happy person, the religious person, the atheist differs – the limits of their world differ but the 'facts' remain the same. The world is sublime, filled with grace, for those who see it that way, under that aspect. The 'showing' of the world differs, the facts, the words, the pictures remain the same. The sublime is shown in the world and the aspect viewed is expressed in one's attitude to the facts of the world.[732] Ethics, logic, religion can only show themselves in the attitude, behaviour, and manner of the speech of the individuals involved. This is a matter of the will – religious belief is a

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[730] Stephen Mulhall, *The Great Riddle: Wittgenstein and Nonsense, Theology and Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p.34.

[731] Wittgenstein, *Tractatus,* § 6.43

[732] N.K.Verbin, 'Religious Beliefs and Aspect-Seeing', *Religious Studies,* 36 (2000), 1-23, (p.8).

matter of 'work on oneself', as is philosophy. Miracles, to be seen as such, must be *seen* in a particular way and in the case of the religious person this relates to wonder,[733] wonder at God's creation, that anything exists, even seeing wonder in the mundane.[734]

It is in this light that we must see religious exclamations such as 'The Lord has given, the Lord taketh away' and similar. They are expressions showing the realization of an aspect, the religious aspect, one of wonder. In a sense every picture, every phrase, every action is seen under a new aspect but interrelated to the whole of the community, the common language, the substratum of general experience. The seeing of an aspect seems in some way to involve immediate *judgement,*[735] but not deliberation. This is true whether of the simple duck-rabbit type or a complex alteration of life's orientation, but it relies on habit and training, shared understanding, and experience (custom) and interconnections with other religious and non-religious aspects of life. The kind of certainty varies between complex and simple changes of aspect,[736] e.g., aesthetic and religious aspects compared to the duck-rabbit type, but both are attitudes related to comparison. The recognition of aspect is seen in the resulting immediate behaviour ('Praise the Lord', 'it's a duck', 'what a moving piece of music') and the attitude and actions of the proceeding life.

It should now be evident that there are three interrelated 'orders' in Rhees and Wittgenstein's writings that can be seen as fruitful in understanding the acquisition of faith. These are firstly, world-picture/form of life, secondly, the spirit of the community, age, or individual approaching faith and, thirdly, aspect seeing. Pascal's writings on habit/custom and disposition interconnect with all three.

The immediacy of noting an aspect is clear and the understanding is 'direct' (between thinking and seeing). The change in aspect also has duration but this duration may be momentary or life-long. It differs in this respect from thinking, knowing, understanding.[737] This is very important for addressing the previously raised problem in that the whole concept of religious belief as form of life/world-picture does not seem to

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[733] Verbin, p.10.

[734] Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, p.5, p.179.

[735] Wittgenstein, *Investigations,* §242.

[736] Ibid*.,* §77, Ibid., Part II, §222-224, Verbin, p.13.

[737] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Last Writings on the Philosophy of Psychology 1*, ed. by Heikki Nyman, tr. by C.G. Luckhardt (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), §707.

adequately deal with the loss of belief.[738] If we consider aspect seeing important in achieving faith this offers additional insight. When our attention leaves the aspect seen its immediacy is lost. Re-enforcement is necessary here. Long periods of absence from a religious setting, community or ritual may lead to periods of doubt, loss of the intensity of belief, questioning. We might see similarities here to mystical experience. The mystical experience passes and the sense of the immediate presence of God is perhaps lost. Such an experience may be repeated or lost forever.[739] The subject may then feel an outsider in the world they inhabit. In one sense the experience is lost but the change it brings about may persist lifelong; life may never seem the same again. Although the immediate change of aspect is lost there is a permanent and persisting change brought about by the aspect dawning – one aspect change may also change other aspects too. Aspect seeing therefore offers a way to understand loss of faith that world-picture does not.

Seeing an aspect is at least to some extent voluntary,[740] though one cannot force oneself to see the aspect. One can try to see it when its existence is suggested, but no more than that. Training and exposure to the life in which others have access to the aspect facilitates the seeing and here custom and habit are inseparable from instruction. One can discuss ethics, music, art, religion and try to open the door to the other perspective, to prompt the seeing having painted the picture. This is not to offer a metaphysical or mystical account which can be assimilated but it offers the assimilated experience others have had – it trains in this sense.

Rhees argues against attempts to justify religion on the basis of objective evidence or to consider religious belief as in any way a 'mistake'. Religious belief is not a matter of facts, nor the result of rational debate. Despite this, attempts at conversion are frequent and commonplace on both sides of the atheist/Christian argument, indeed fundamental to the exhortation to spread the gospel. Why debate, why argue if the basis of belief is not open to rational argument. Aspect seeing as a fundamental component of religious belief offers some understanding here in view of its unique position, part thinking and willing, part direct experience.

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[738] See also section 7.5.

[739] Rhees, *On Religion,* p.339.

[740] Ibid., p.899.

The will is involved both in any primary experience of aspect seeing and in re-enforcing the aspect seen, which may fail as its duration may be limited. It is necessary to reveal the picture; for those who already accept the aspect to reveal the full image of the life of believers, including the pointers to its mystical content to those who seek. Only then can others follow Pascal's advice to do as others have done. One can point to the religious aspects of the world and life in it, offer a life of dedication that merits mimicking, provide habitual re-enforcement to make the change of aspect living and real, train the individual to see again the aspect lost. As Rhees says:

> Certainly man may come to a deeper knowledge of God by ways which he cannot explain and it may be fairly suddenly and the fact that he cannot explain it, need not keep others from learning from him or 'following' him. It might seem no more sensible to ask why he thought his experience was a revelation, than it would to ask a musician why he thought his way of taking a piece was the right one.[741]

The question of change of aspect and religious *revelation* is an interesting one – Rhees argues that in religious revelation what is revealed is not something apart from the revelation itself.[742] The showing and the revelation are one, also the case for a change of aspect. There is no clear separation of thought and experience here – the new understanding just 'comes to one', though circumstances are clearly important. Aspect-seeing might be seen as revelation of the type Dulles calls 'revelation as new awareness'.[743]

There is also a close connection for Rhees between aspect seeing and the feeling we have of something having depth, profundity, a sinister or troubling sense to it. This sense is one 'internal' to the relationship between, for example, ritual and its sense of the profound, numinous or even terrible.[744] We see an aspect of a ritual which interconnects with other deep impressions we have – again thinking and seeing run together here conceptually – what is *meant* by seeing and what is *meant* by thinking are the same. One might see this as the depth and profundity of life now becoming fully engaged with the

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[741] Ibid., p.6.

[742] Ibid., p.11.

[743] Avery Dulles, *Models of Revelation* (New York: Orbis, 1992), pp.98-114.

[744] Rhees, *On Religion,* p.91.

creativity of God or the sense of historical revelation, the religious 'spirit' of a community through tradition engaging fully with our own linked lives – the cogs suddenly mesh.[745]

The connection between Rhees's comments on the religious significance of wonder and aspect seeing is not directly commented on by him but connections exist.[746] Wonder at the world, that there is anything at all is, Rhees argues, associated with reflection on existence and on 'awakening' to gratitude, and gratitude is for him central to religious feeling. This can again be seen as a change of aspect – the world 'seen-as' created, wondrous, perhaps an awakening from negativity and bitterness into gratitude for existence. There are interrelationships here also with the comments by Wittgenstein and Rhees on the spirit of the age and the spirit in which one approaches a work. We must approach the world in the right spirit and the spirit makes easier the dawning of the religious aspect of the world.

8.25 Chapter summary

The preceding synthesis, taken as a whole, provides a new, integrated approach to the apologetics of Blaise Pascal and Rush Rhees. Its purpose is to offer a modern apologetic against the inroads of scientism into religious belief.

For Pascal the basis of the intelligibility of our world is founded in 'principles' which finally originate in God as first principle. Full understanding is prevented by sinfulness and the effects of the Fall. Our divided nature (the paradox of humanity) limits our comprehension, and this can only be overcome by the certainty of faith. Faith provides a new world view, a fundamental re-ordering of our lives. Habit accustoms us to principles and, in the milieu of the faithful community, prepares us for true faith.

For Rhees, as for Pascal, objective reasoning cannot lead to religious faith; it is as an integral part of one's world-picture, again founded on unchallenged certainties – Moore's certainties/hinge propositions. These propositions can fulfil essentially the same apologetic function as Pascal's principles in showing that religious belief cannot be criticized based on lack of rational evidence when the very foundations of our reality

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[745] Ibid., p.92.

[746] Ibid., p.134.

also depend on unchallenged, unproven beliefs. They offer the major advantage that, unlike Pascal's principles, no prior commitment to the existence of God as originator is necessary for their acceptance. The whole intelligibility of our lives is founded on these certainties and intelligibility, reality and being are closely intertwined concepts. Faith gives meaning to life not intelligibility – sense and meaning differ. Faith provides a new reality based in a new 'grammar'; God's reality is evident through what can be said of God in a religious context.

Pascal sees true faith, perceived by the heart, as a new mode of perception and habit/custom and reason play an essentially preparative role, but Rhees sees religious language, ritual, worship, and the religious lives led as inseparable from religious reality, the reality of God. Faith is not apprehended as a metaphysical concept; it shows itself in a world-picture. There can be no false reality in Pascal's sense. Illusion is produced by uncommitted or sham discourse, misuse of language. The reality of a life accepting of God's fundamental underpinning of all in it does not exist in an objective sense (non-reality is not imaginable and no opposite to reality exists; it is boundless and eternal). God's existence is absolute not relative, and His reality is approached through what can be logically said of God, how 'God-talk' operates, its 'grammar'.

Pascal offers habit as the route to 'human faith' and in the preparation for God-given faith but offers no deeper insight into the process. Rhees accepts the major role of habit and custom in developing the religious world-picture but also gives considerable insight into the process of coming to faith. Within the faith community shared discussion, true conversation, friendship, reasoning, imagination, and worship all come together. Automaton/machine and the physiological can never for Rhees explain intelligibility – the soul's life and bringer of meaning.

Pascal tends to ignore the potentially limiting action of habit on inspiration, on the unforeseen 'breaking through. Rhees's view on the difference between act and thought stresses how the inexpressible 'happens', shows itself, arises from the 'other of discourse'. This offers insight into the process of development of faith that goes beyond Pascal's presentation. 'What goes deep' has a reality revealed in accurate, sham-free, use of language where practice, picture and ceremonial come together in a faith-inspired community. This in no way precludes the achievement of faith being the action of God's grace.

The centrality of ritual is in the acting out of the mystery of belief and *expressing* the emotional expansion of language which comes out of the deep grammar of the religious discourse. Thus, ritual can do what language alone cannot and all is in the act – cognitive and non-cognitive, affective and non-affective are not separable here; act and effect are one. The actions and rituals draw their power from community life in general, not some marginal process but act allows unpredictability and surprise in ways language does not. One does not enter into ritual, community worship, etc looking for consequences, fulfilments of a wish, but they open understanding to the depth of the mystery.

Such comments on ritual and action clearly flow into Rhees's understanding of 'wonder', the wordless wonder founded in a personal humility, closely allied to compassion and charity and, for Weil at least, indistinguishable from God's grace. Wonder itself is a 'showing', not an emotional response, and the ritual, by occurring in a group with a common culture, a shared common spirit, a common 'seeing-as', allows a deepening of the understanding, the depth and meaning, of the ritual process. It amplifies or allows the numinous to be accessed. The seeing as (aspect seeing) involves drawing connections *internally* between common concepts with a powerful immediacy that may result in persistent changes in minor understandings or the whole of one's religious outlook.

The showing of the depth of God's creation, the meaning of life and the fit of one's own beliefs may be altered permanently. What is seen and interpreted in one way by the non-religious is seen entirely differently by the believer, or one newly enlightened. Judgement occurs in aspect-seeing but is pre-conditioned by grammar, spirit, and setting. World-picture, spirit of the community and aspect-seeing all come together to achieve faith, a new awareness of the presence of God.

9. Conclusion

9.1 Introduction

The essential argument of this thesis is that a close reading of the writings of Rush Rhees on the reality and intelligibility of life and religious belief can offer the modern seeker after faith a deeper insight into Pascal's apologetics, in particular his understanding of the three 'orders' by which the non-believer can come to true faith. The first seven chapters of the thesis examined thoroughly Pascal and Rhees's understandings of the nature of religious belief and its relationship with philosophy and man's place in the contemporaneous worlds of the writers. Pascal's indebtedness to Augustine, Montaigne and Descartes has been made clear (chapters 3, 4 and throughout chapter 5) and the previously unstressed similarity of the views of Descartes and Pascal on the role of habit in stabilizing reason has been brought out (chapter 4.6). An in-depth analysis of Rhees's philosophy has been given (chapter 5), covering intelligibility, conversation, reality, and Moore's propositions (5.2-5.4). The relationships between Moore's propositions, form of life, world-picture, hinges, etc. are discussed together with the most recent work on these topics regarding religious belief (5.5-5.7). Some relevant points of difference between Rhees's philosophy and Wittgenstein's have been explained (5.3). Chapter 6 covers Rhees's deep understandings of the nature of God, His existence and reality. This is followed by an analysis of Rhees's position on the relationship of language and world-picture to belief, scepticism, and ritual. The purported weaknesses of Rhees's account of religious belief are covered in chapter 7.

In the following synthesis (chapter 8), utilizing the findings of the above chapters, I have brought into comparison, in an entirely novel way, Pascal's presentation of the role of principles with Rhees's analysis of Moore's propositions and his views on world-picture/form of life. The role of custom and habit in language, conversation, community, and ritual has been elucidated. The Pascalian concept of the role of the heart and intuition in God's gift of faith entails an acceptance of God's action in the world which Rhees would consider lying outside the remit of language and philosophy, but the 'dawning' of belief has been investigated through his, and Wittgenstein's, views on aspect-seeing and 'wonder'.

This conclusion summarizes the importance of the insights gained from a theological viewpoint. There are essentially two major strands – the nature of the reality underpinning belief and the role of ritual and worship in coming to faith.

9.2 Reality of life and religious belief

1. Blaise Pascal should be regarded as showing remarkable prescience in his development of the nature of 'principles' and their fundamental role in underpinning the whole of our reality and our understanding of the reality of religion. He clearly points to the way principles are accepted without any rational test of their veracity, to the different types of principle and to how modification of principles may take place by the interaction of habit, heart and will. The understanding that religion itself can be seen as not unique in having no objective supportive evidence, as the very principles we depend upon for all belief are not evidence based, is implicit, though not clearly stated.

2. Rhees bases his understanding of the underpinning of reality on Moore's certainties, hinge propositions and form of life/world-picture. These are the equivalent of Pascal's principles and produce the relatively fixed substratum of reality, but essentially the whole basis of reality is dependent upon language in practical usage. Our reality can be seen in the interconnected language that we use, and reality can change with the community usage and meaning of language, non-verbal expositions such as ritual, art, music, etc. The nature of reality is shown through an accurate reading of the use of language in a group or society, hence scientism offers a misunderstanding of the reality of religion because it misreads the use of language within differing forms of life. With change in the use of language and the development of new understandings there can be change in hinge propositions (the riverbed is not fully fixed) and this can be individual or community wide.

3. Rhees's above position includes deeper insight than Pascal's into the difference between belief and knowledge and the nature of certainty. The limits of reason in faith become the limits of language. Belief is explicitly removed from the realm of knowledge and compared with certainties of Moore's type, held with conviction but not rationally questioned. The role of certainty and mistakes in knowledge and belief is explicated through understanding the nature of Moore's propositions and this development has made possible the opening of a field of

interest in religious belief as an example or variant of hinge proposition. In a religious sense Pascal's presentation of the origin of all principles in God as first principle might be said to go further than Rhees's position on certainty, but Pascal offers no development of any deeper understanding of what God as first principle really means. Whilst Pascal addresses pyrrhonism and the limits of reason his apology does not address scientism and the world-picture or 'spirit' of today's world. Both authors offer a cogent response to the accusation that religious belief differs from belief generally in having no evidence base but Rhees's presentation extends to the nature of all reality and intelligibility.

4. For Pascal, habit and custom (community based), whilst able to act to stabilize principles, change our reality in that they produce a second nature, and their alteration alters our fundamental desires and the disposition of the will. They provide a path to improvement through the development of virtue, brought about by persistent repetition of charitable acts, etc. This is supported by the example of those who have already achieved faith (i.e., the community has a major role here). Habit and custom also, however, can act to fix an illusory reality. Reality for Pascal is not fixed but alters and is subject to the negative influence of imagination which produces a false reality stabilized by habit and an illusory self. All of Pascal's apologetics has at its core the illusory reality produced by the fallen will and the conflict between our two natures. Through this, entirely Augustinian, interpretation he leads us to the understanding that our only way to a true reality and an authentic self is by the achievement of true faith.

5. Rhees's presentation considers the role of habit and stresses the role of community/custom in belief, but it also offers a deeper interpretation of Pascal's own outline of the role of habit, exemplar, and ritual in producing 'human faith'. The influence of custom is through the community use of language in a particular way, in particular religious settings, with a particular grammar, in agreement on what can and cannot be said of God. Where Pascal simply offers habit, custom and the automaton as a mode of easing the way to true faith, Rhees deeply investigates what faith consists in through the language within a religious group or setting but also through the shifts of meaning that occur in everyday speech when one is a believer. Insight here cannot come through the scientific world-picture because God is not an object, religion does not demand belief in an 'objective God' and objective language used as in science has no purchase here.

6. Rhees makes explicit that habit and custom cannot 'pull the weight' that Pascal asks of them in coming to faith. They do not even account for religious understanding in the child. The much richer interactions of conversation, debate and non-verbal communication in a religious community develop the understanding of the deeper meaning of the language used in that setting. Individual circumstances differ markedly and influence understanding and reactions. There is interaction in the development of understanding, not an active/passive dichotomy. The new reality that comes with religious belief is a progressive change in the sense that understanding deepens with time and age and what offers instruction in the use of language informs our reality, both for believer and non-believer equally.

7. Religious conversion may, of course, be a sudden change but this is not a necessary path and may only occur late in conversion. Pascal's apologetics do allow for this, in the interrelationship of habit and heart, but Rhees's comments on aspect-change, taken together with world-picture, allow a deeper and more nuanced explanation of conversion, and loss of faith. Pascal's negativity towards imagination becomes, in Rhees's analysis, a positive force, which can, under the influence of habit and instruction, awaken new insights and inspirations. Pascal leaves one with a sense of the achievement of faith as an event or outcome occasioned by God, but a process initiated and prepared for by us. Clearly this is an oversimplification, as Pascal would have a deeper understanding of prevenient faith, but nonetheless the impression persists and the 'how' of habit's effect is only explained functionally.

9.3 Language and act

1. Pascal never really develops an understanding of the role of having masses said, acting as believers do, etc. in faith's development and progression other than by connecting them with habit and the automaton/animal. He sees the effect both mechanistically and in terms of effect on disposition, passions and will. Whilst the power of ritual and community in religious belief is accepted, it is not further explained.

2. Rhees by contrast offers a rich vein of understanding regarding the connections between act and speech and the inter-relationship with music, aesthetics, and

'wonder'. When one reasons there is in a sense a fixed road that one passes along; insights, new aspects etc. develop but within reason's confines, constrained by the objective. Acting, dancing, singing, art all bring in the unforeseen, the openness of the possibility of constructive error and happenstance in a way thinking does not. They are more open to the non-objective, the 'externally' inspired. Religious acts are also 'open' in a way speech is not and can inspire surprise, wonder and insight because of this disconnection. To separate the rational, habitual/mechanistic, and intuitive as Pascal does, even with his caveats regarding interconnections, does not cover these areas of Rhees's philosophy.

3. Ritual may be the only mode of experiencing the emotions evident in its acting out. Language in ritual is expanded into action and aesthetics to provide a wider experience of the nature of religion. Ritual brings together and produces the association between broader aspects of life, language, and behaviour, thus deepening the religious world-picture – it produces the 'overarching' or 'perspicuous view'. There is no suggestion in Rhees's writings that a particular type of mind or mentality is necessary for this (c.f. Pascal's *finesse*). Rite and life, 'acting as' and living in accordance with, all come together. The habitual behaviour here, regularity of church attendance, etc., reinforces the effect. Worship and ritual are critical for Rhees to the whole reality of the believer – worship *is* one's relationship with God. God's reality lies in that interconnection of ritual and language. Ritual is unequivocally custom-based and habitually enacted; the customs and habits are, as for Pascal, those of they who have passed this way before and now believe. One might see this as the opening to the possibility, the wonder and joy of the open option of God-given faith, but this would be to go well beyond Rhees's comments.

9.4 Pascal and Rhees, a complementary approach

Pascal uses faith in God as the basis of understanding reality whereas Rhees wants to understand the nature of reality and thus shed light on what people mean by 'God'. Despite this, if we put together Pascal's and Rhees's positions then we can see that their approaches are complementary. A habitual sharing of ritual, prayer, and religious aesthetic insights, together with personal association with the faithful, fosters by habit

the virtuous life. With this comes the potential to achieve the humility and compassion needed to follow Christ. Devotion needs context, exemplars, and habit for its nourishment. This overcomes the customs, the world-view, the spirit, of the age. We achieve the spirit of the religion in its depth and as that progresses so does the possibility of true faith. Whether one can cogently argue for the final achievement of true faith as a change of aspect in Wittgenstein's sense is a moot point, but such a change would seem undeniably to come with a religious world-picture/form of life.

In a sense the above understandings regarding ritual and belief draw the boundary and point beyond habit and beyond world-picture. As the entry into this 'beyond' we have, in Pascal's case, the role of the intuitive, the inspired by God, as the fullness of faith; intuitively apprehended and all encompassing. We also have an acceptance in faith of miracle and biblical typology and prophesy. Pascal was in the position of personally experiencing both miracle and direct inspiration by God and unarguably was in a privileged position, but how far will that influence the seeker in an age of scientism. Rhees cannot enter Pascal's realm and his whole philosophy is underpinned by 'going the hard way', continually striving for understanding rather than Pascal's waiting in the final analysis on God's act. Rhees can, however, offer wonder, love, aesthetics, morality, the inexpressible but numinous, as insights into a reality beyond language. It must here be stressed that these can only be experienced personally, no theories must be offered, no metaphysical speculations; these Rhees would see as destructive to sense not illuminating.

I have offered what I believe is an original and thorough investigation of the value of a 'Rheesian' re-appraisal of Pascal's apologetics; one which can effectively address secular arguments against the rationality of faith based on both a 'scientific world-picture' and misunderstandings about the nature of reality. It also, however, opens up the possibility of further related areas of study with potential apologetic value. The first of these relates to the questions it raises as to the process of coming to faith. In Pascal's writings there is an underlying assumption that the conversion of the type of seeker he addresses will finally come to true, redemptive faith by an event, occasioned by God and accessed through intuition. Habit and custom lead only to non-salvific 'human faith'. In Rhees's analysis event is treated as a process of learning and habitually absorbing the reality of a community with a shared reality, belief in God and religious truths. These differing emphases reflect the life experiences of the two authors.

Rhees had great respect for the religious views of Simone Weil and a thorough comparison of Rhees's and Weil's views on coming to faith would be potentially rewarding, indeed extension of the topics to religious reality and the nature of God also would bear fruit.

The second area for further research relates to the influences on Rhees's religious views. Rhees was the son of a famous Christian minister and ministry extends back further into his genealogy; his grounding in Christian doctrine is likely therefore to have been thorough. He was also, however, known to highly regard the religious writing of Kierkegaard as well as Weil. A comparison of the inter-relationships in the views of the three authors on the nature of faith would be of great interest.

This thesis has cogently argued that Rush Rhees's philosophy of religion allows significant development and illumination of Blaise Pascal's apologetics. The views of the two writers complement each other and together retain relevance for the modern reader seeking belief.

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