Gordon Graham. *Wittgenstein and Natural Religion*. Oxford University Press 2014. 240 pp. $55.00 USD (Hardcover ISBN 9780198713975).

Graham's objective is to articulate an understanding of what has been called 'natural religion' or 'true religion'. This is a normative notion which, he argues, '…can only be discerned…against the reality of human nature. Religion, when it is not corrupted by ignorance, ambition, vice, and so on, is grounded in the fact that it gives proper expression to some of the natural characteristics of human beings' (10). Agreeing with Scottish philosopher Henry Scougal, Graham adds that 'True religion…is a real participation of the divine nature.' But explaining what this conclusion means, and why we should accept it, requires a lengthy and somewhat circuitous philosophical investigation' (14). This circuitous investigation involves Wittgenstein, whose later thought, Graham believes, provides 'an especially fruitful way of thinking about religion' (xi). Interpreting Wittgenstein is thus important to his enterprise, and this involves refuting prevailing interpretations of those called 'Wittgensteinians'.

According to Graham, language games are portrayed by Wittgenstein as specific activities and do 'not include anything as abstract or general as "religion" or "science" or "art"' (38). He judges (41) that it would be 'a kind of category mistake' to call religion a language game. Graham also thinks that the notion of 'form of life' has been misappropriated. He notes that it just means 'life form' and emphasizes its biological aspects. According to Graham, the notion should not be taken to mean something like a cultural schema or world view. Graham states that Wittgensteinian philosophy of religion has raised a 'huge superstructure' on the notions of 'language games' and 'forms of life' and surmises that this is a 'house of cards' (45).

Graham also criticizes the Wittgensteinian idea that religious beliefs are something like 'world pictures' held without grounds. He asserts that religious beliefs are often believed on the basis of evidence: 'it is simply false that the belief in the Resurrection did not arise as the result of evidence, especially if we include witness testimony in this category' (63). Graham then raises what he calls an 'important consideration' (64). In *On Certainty*, Wittgenstein suggests that religious beliefs can conflict with factual beliefs; an example: believing all humans have two human parents while also believing that 'Jesus only had a human mother' (64). Graham agrees: 'The examples of the Virgin Birth and Transubstantiation suggest…that what is essential to some religious beliefs is that they be held in tension with deeply embedded elements of our world view' (64). He concludes that 'Wittgensteinian attempts to defend religious belief as an alternative *Weltbild* [world picture] to the equally groundless *Weltbild* of the secularist is importantly mistaken about religion. And Wittgenstein's own examples give us reason to surmise that, on this matter at any rate, he was not a Wittgensteinian' (65).

However, despite the potential for tension or conflict, Wittgenstein seemed to deny that religious and empirical beliefs are beliefs of a similar kind. For instance, in *Lectures and Conversations*, Wittgenstein distinguishes between belief in the Last Judgement and a scientific prediction. Drawing on such comments, Wittgensteinians such as D.Z. Phillips contend that religious beliefs are beliefs of a different kind and must be assessed differently. The notion of 'world picture' is accordingly used to elaborate their regulative as opposed to descriptive character. However, Graham further contends that the focus among Wittgensteinians on religious belief is misguided. Instead, Graham focuses on religious practice and he thinks that, while Wittgenstein does discuss religious beliefs, this is in minor

sources compared to the *Philosophical Investigations*, wherein an emphasis on practice and action is evident.

In one of these minor sources, *Culture and Value*, Wittgenstein states: 'It strikes me that a religious belief could only be something like a passionate commitment to a system of reference' (62). Graham gives examples of what he believes are systems of reference: using latitude and longitude to define position on the earth. He then asserts, 'although we can conceive of alternative systems of reference, it makes no sense to ask: "Is Princeton really where our system of reference says it is?" We can frame the question "Do latitude and longitude correspond to how the world is?", but we cannot give it any meaning' (67). As noted, Graham asserts both that religious beliefs can conflict with empirical propositions and that systems of reference are not the sort of thing that can be meaningfully seen to conflict with the world. This is to dispute Wittgenstein's assertion in *Culture and Value* rather than to try to make sense of it. But it may be that Graham's examples of systems of reference are misleading or incomplete. Indeed, it is hard to see how one can have a passionate commitment to a system of reference with the examples Graham provides.

According to Graham, Wittgenstein and Williams James share a similar view in their emphasis on feeling and experience in religion over an intellectualism that emphasizes the rationality of religious belief: 'James aims to discredit intellectualism in religion by focusing attention on the subjective phenomena of religious feelings and religious impulses as lying at the heart of real, or "true", religion and…Wittgenstein also seems to think that it is feelings and impulses that matter' (123). However, Graham believes that this approach completely ignores 'the institutional side of religion—"worship and sacrifice, procedures for working on the dispositions of the deity, theology and ceremony and ecclesiastical organization"' (117). Graham also thinks their focus on experience is itself prey to a kind of intellectualism and distorting 'picture': 'This view of the matter nevertheless continues to employ a "picture" that regards them first and foremost as Cartesian subjects, which is to say animated bodies. They may be moved by felt experiences…but…they are importantly passive' (124). Graham seeks to apply the therapeutic approach of the later Wittgenstein to this alleged intellectualism of James and Wittgenstein. This involves an assembly of 'reminders of the ways in which agency rather than experience is fundamental to the human form of life' (125).

Graham, in trying to understand religion, considers the manifestations of religion as practiced. In attending closely to practice, Graham believes he is abiding by the therapeutic method of the later Wittgenstein. But Wittgenstein and James are also interested in what it is about religion that, to take a phrase from Wittgenstein, can turn 'one's life around'. Admittedly, this emphasizes action, but also in question is what it is about religion that can lead to such action. James, drawing on his empirical investigations, finds this to be religious experience. While agreeing that there are such 'epiphanic moments', Graham argues that they are 'not common *enough'* (182). In contrast, religious practice is quite common, but it also may be taken to be a manifestation of a turned around life, as opposed to a cause. And, as James was aware, it is also found among those whose lives have not been turned around by religion. Graham's anti-intellectualist argument against James here, and by extension Wittgenstein, involves a differing view of what is to be emphasized about religion that warrants further substantiating.

Graham also discusses Wittgenstein's notion of 'seeing as', which involves noticing aspects, and how this 'reveals itself in "fine shades of behaviour", an expression Wittgenstein uses several

times' (110). Noticing aspects involves having appropriate 'sensibilities'. Examples discussed include a sense of humour and a musical ear. These are sensibilities that, while perhaps not necessary to human survival, may be integral to human flourishing. He then discusses whether there is a religious sensibility—sense of the sacred—that is part of the human form of life.

Norman Malcolm reports Wittgenstein to have said: 'I am not a religious man but I cannot help seeing every problem from a religious point of view' (71). Wittgenstein might be taken to have meant that he had a religious sensibility, or sense of the sacred, but was nonetheless not a religious man because his life had not been turned around by religion. However, according to Graham, a religious sensibility must manifest in specific forms. He contends that just as a musical ear shows itself in behaviour 'by being able to whistle (or play) it with the correct expression…a sense of the sacred…will be exhibited in my ability to show "fine shades" of difference in demeanor, posture, and linguistic behaviour' (148). Graham emphasizes behaviours associated with worship, such as ritual and sacrifice. Thus, to lack such behaviours, even if 'seeing every problem from a religious point of view', is to lack a religious sensibility. A strong claim, to be sure.

Graham initially describes his project, involving the empirical consideration of religion, as 'philosophy of religion properly so called, rather than theistic metaphysics' (xii). However, it is theistic metaphysics that is the preoccupation of the final chapter. Herein, Graham considers naturalism and supernaturalism. His project of finding a basis for religion in human nature, or 'natural religion', seems to imply naturalism. He affirms: 'If a sense of the sacred really is a natural sensibility, this effectively discards any real distinction between sacred and profane' (184). However, Graham argues that a religious sensibility is best understood on the supposition of supernaturalism, and that this is best conceived of theistically.

Graham's book is ambitious, in both the range of 'Wittgensteinian' positions it seeks to discredit and the points it advances on its own behalf. The account of 'natural religion' it provides is significant, but more consideration in steps taken, in particular with the large scale dismantling of 'Wittgensteinianism', is warranted.

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