


BOOK REVIEW

**Gorazd Andrejč and Daniel H. Weiss (eds) *Interpreting Interreligious Relations with Wittgenstein***

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One of the virtues of this edited collection is the diversity contained within it. There is diversity to be found in the uses made of Wittgenstein's writings, reflecting the diversity of ways of understanding religion found in Wittgenstein's work. Andrejč, in his introduction (3), suggests that there are four dominant ways in which Wittgenstein depicts religion: the nonsensicalist, existentialist, grammaticalist and instinctivist conceptions of religion. In his early work Wittgenstein claimed that religious propositions were nonsensical (the *nonsensicalist* conception of religion). Wittgenstein claimed that 'propositions of natural science' are 'what can be said' (Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, tr. D. F. Pears and B. F. McGuinness (London: Routledge, 1961), 6.53), but even if we have all possible scientific claims laid out before us, we have not touched upon 'the problems of life' (6.52), including problems concerning God (6.432) and the immortality of the soul (6.4312). Vörös and Štrajn's chapter uses a Wittgensteinian nonsensicalist approach to interreligious dialogue which places *activity* at its centre, as a way of resolving existential problems. In both Wittgenstein's early and later work we can find an *existentialist* conception of religion, in which Wittgenstein emphasises the importance of experience and volition for religion. For example, in the 'Lecture on Ethics' Wittgenstein talks about feelings of 'wonder at the existence of the world' and of 'safety' as being central to religion and ethics (Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Occasions*, ed. James Klagge and Alfred Nordmann (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1993), 41–42) and in a remark from 1950, Wittgenstein suggests that 'sufferings of various sorts' can lead a person to belief in God: 'Experiences, thoughts, – life can force this concept on us' (Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, 2nd edn, ed. G. H. von Wright (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 97e). Venturinha's chapter, on Wittgenstein's understanding of religious belief, highlights existentialist passages from Wittgenstein's 'Lecture on Ethics' and connects them with John Henry Newman's influence on Wittgenstein. In Wittgenstein's later work we can find *grammaticalist* and *instinctivist* conceptions of religion. The grammaticalist says that central religious assertions are best understood as being grammatical remarks that tell us how to use religious terms in everyday religious discourse. In the *Philosophical Investigations* Wittgenstein says that 'Grammar tells us what kind of object anything is' and in parentheses afterwards describes 'Theology as grammar' (Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, rev. 4th edn, tr. G. E. M. Anscombe, P. M. S. Hacker, and