

From Existential Feelings to Belief in God

Submitted by Gorazd Andrejč to the University of Exeter
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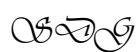
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Signature:

This thesis is dedicated with deep gratitude to my wife Žaklina, my son Natan, and my parents Alojz and Jožica Andrejč. Their love and immeasurable sacrifice made this work possible.

I also wish to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor Dr Mark Wynn whose guidance, expertise, encouragement and friendship was invaluable; and to my friend Bradley Arnold, who spent countless hours discussing and critically engaging with the ideas presented here.



ABSTRACT

The question of the relation between religious experience and Christian belief in God is addressed in radically different ways within contemporary theology and philosophy of religion. In order to develop an answer which avoids the pitfalls of the 'analytic perception model' (Alston, Yandell, Swinburne) and the 'over-linguistic' model for interpreting Christian religious experience (Taylor, Lindbeck), this thesis offers an approach which combines a phenomenological study of feelings, conceptual investigation of Christian God-talk and 'belief'-talk, as well as theological, sociological and anthropological perspectives.

At the centre of the interpretation developed here is the phenomenological category 'existential feelings' which should be seen, it is suggested, as a theologically and philosophically central aspect of Christian religious experiencing. Using this contemporary concept, a novel reading of F. Schleiermacher's concept of 'feeling' is proposed and several kinds of Christian experiencing interpreted (like the experiences of 'awe', 'miracle of existence', 'wretchedness', and 'redeemed community'). By way of a philosophical understanding of Christian believing in God, this study offers a critical interpretation of the later Wittgenstein's concept of 'religious belief', combining Wittgensteinian insights with Paul Tillich's notion of 'dynamic faith' and arguing against Wittgensteinian 'grammaticalist' and 'expressivist' accounts. Christian beliefs about God are normally life-guiding but nevertheless dubitable.

The nature of Christian God-talk is interpreted, again, by combining the later Wittgenstein's insights into the grammatical and expressive roles of God-talk with Merleau-Ponty's emphasis on linguistic innovation and Roman Jakobson's perspective on the functions of language. Finally, the claim which connects phenomenological, conceptual and theological strands of this study is a recognition of a 'religious belief-inviting pull' of the relevant experience. Christian religious belief-formation and concept-formation can be seen as stemming from 'extraordinary' existential feelings, where the resulting beliefs about God are largely but not completely bound by traditional meanings.

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ABBREVIATIONS

Only abbreviations for the works of F. Schleiermacher, L. Wittgenstein, and M. Merleau-Ponty are used without explanation and throughout the chapters of this thesis. A few other abbreviations that appear in the text are clearly explained and do not extend beyond the immediate context.

The following abbreviations of the works of Schleiermacher, Wittgenstein, and Merleau-Ponty, respectively, are used throughout the thesis:

Works of Friedrich Schleiermacher:

OR (1996) *On Religion: Speeches to its Cultural Despisers (Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy)*, transl. from the 1st edition of the original (1799), Richard Crouter (ed.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

CF (1999) *The Christian Faith*, H.R. Mackintosh and J.S. Stewart (eds.), Edinburgh: T&T Clark.

Äst O (1931) *Ästhetik*, Rudolf Odebrecht (ed.), Berlin, Leipzig: Walter de Gruyter.

Dial O (1942) *Dialektik 1822*. Rudolf Odebrecht (ed.), Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs Verlag.

Dial T (1996) *Dialectic or, The Art of Doing Philosophy: A Study Edition of the 1811 Notes*. Terrence Tice (transl. and ed.), Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press.

HC (1998) *Hermeneutics and Criticism and Other Writings (Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy)*, Andrew Bowie (ed.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Sol (1926) *Schleiermacher's Soliloquies: An English Translation of the Monologien*, H.L. Friess (transl. and ed.), Chicago, IL: Open Court Publishing.

BE (2003) *Brouillon zu Ethik/Notes on Ethics (1805/1806) and Notes on the Theory of Virtue*, J. Wallhausser and T.N. Tice (transl. and ed.), Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press.

The number indicating the place where a text is to be found in Schleiermacher's works normally refers to the relevant page number, except in the case of *CF* where it refers to the relevant chapter and section.

Works of Ludwig Wittgenstein:

- LE* (1965) 'Lecture on Ethics', *Philosophical Review*, 74/1, 3-12.
- LC* (1970) *Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief*, Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.
- OC* (1975) *Über Gewissheit – On Certainty*, New York: Harper and Row.
- PI* (2009) *Philosophical Investigations: The German Text with an English Translation*, Revised 4th Edition, G.E.M Anscombe, P.M.S. Hacker and J. Schulte (transl. and ed.), Oxford/Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Z* (1981) *Zettel*, Second Edition, G.E.M Anscombe and G.H. von Wright (eds.), Oxford: Blackwell.
- CV* (1998) *Culture and Value, Revised Edition*, G.H. von Wright (ed.), Oxford: Blackwell.
- AWL* (1979) *Wittgenstein's Lectures: Cambridge, 1932-1935*, from the notes of A. Ambrose and M. MacDonald, A. Ambrose (ed.), Oxford: Blackwell.
- MWL* (forthcoming) *Wittgenstein: Lectures, Cambridge 1930-1933, from the Notes of GE Moore*, G. Citron, B. Rogers and D. Stern (eds.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- BB* (1958) *The Blue and Brown Books*, First Edition, Oxford: Blackwell.
- PPF* (*PI* part II) (2009) *Philosophy of Psychology – A Fragment*, included in L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations: The German Text with an English Translation*, Revised 4th Edition, G.E.M Anscombe, P.M.S. Hacker and J. Schulte (transl. and eds.), Oxford/Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 183-321.
- RFGB* (1979) *Remarks on Frazer's Golden Bough*, translate by A.C. Miles, Doncaster: Brynmill Press.
- RPP I* (1980) *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology Vol. I*, G.E.M. Anscombe and G.H. von Wright (eds.), Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- RPP II* (1980) *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology Vol. II*, G.H. von Wright and H. Nyman (eds.), Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- LPP* (1988) *Lectures on Philosophy of Psychology, 1946-47*, P.T. Geach (ed.), Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf.

TLP (2001) *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus (Routledge Classics)*, D. F. Pears and B. F. McGuinness (transl.), London: Routledge.

The number indicating the place where a text is to be found in Wittgenstein's works normally refers to the number of the remark, unless the work is not structured by numbered remarks (then it refers to page number or, in the case of *MWL*, to the date of the lecture).

Works of Maurice Merleau-Ponty:

PP (2002) *Phenomenology of Perception (Routledge Classics)*, London: Routledge.

PRPC (1964) *The Primacy of Perception*, Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.

SG (1964) *Signs*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.

SNS (1964) *Sense and Nonsense*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.

INT (1969) 'An Introduction to Phenomenology', in *Phenomenology of Religion*, Joseph D. Bettis (ed.), London: SCM Press, 5-30.

VI (1969) *The Visible and The Invisible*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.

The number indicating the place where a text is to be found in Merleau-Ponty's works always refers to the page number.

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