

Jakub Gomułka Beyond the Limits of “Wittgensteinian Fideism”

The article regards four problems connected to the standpoint of the so called “Wittgensteinian fideists”. Firstly, it gives a positive answer the question whether Wittgenstein himself can be labeled by this term. My goal was to show the roots of Swansea School’s doctrine in his own remarks on religion (such as Remarks on Fraser’s Golden Bough, Lectures on Religious Belief and Culture and Value). The Wittgenstein’s notion of superstition and his idea of the difference between the superstitious and the religious, developed and broadly utilized in many of Phillips’ books and papers, is the best example of this connection. The second thread of my article is an attempt to present the vision of a rational discourse between an atheist and a believer within the conceptual framework of Swansea School. Such a discourse is still possible but it must abandon the traditional problems of the existence of God (which are strongly dependent on the grammar) and focus on the language itself, namely, on the grammars of both sides of the discourse and the differences between them. The third topic of my paper is Roy Holland’s idea of “empirical certainty conceptually impossible” which he presented in his late texts. The idea is, in my opinion, not well-considered and appears in a strange context which suggests that Holland actually began to think outside of the basic Wittgensteinian concept of grammar. The last point of my article is a critique of “Wittgensteinian fideists” in terms of their own ideal of “philosophy as a pure description”. I read Wittgenstein’s remarks on religion as a kind of a priori view of what the “true religion” should look like. The view was taken over and developed by Swansea School, particularly by Dewi Z. Phillips. Hence this philosophy of religion can be understood in terms of religious doctrine rather than the philosophy, especially Wittgenstein’s descriptive philosophy.