

# Theme 4 – Letter F – Religious Language as a Language Game



# Spec Check

<b>AO1 – Knowledge and Understanding</b>	<b>AO2 – Analysis and Evaluation</b>
<p><b>F: Religious language as language game</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Meaningful to people who participate in same language game (Ludwig Wittgenstein).</li><li>• Supportive evidence – non-cognitive form of language provides meaning to participants within language game; consider use of language not meaning; language games fit with coherence theory of truth; religious language as expressions of belief.</li><li>• Challenges, including rejection of any true propositions in religion that can be empirically verified; does not allow for meaningful conversations between different groups of language users; does not provide adequate meaning for the word 'God'.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The extent to which language games provide a suitable way of resolving the problems of religious language.</li></ul>

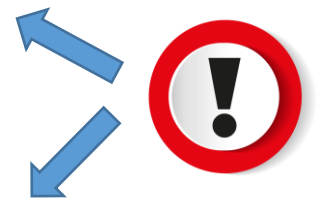
# Ludwig Wittgenstein

- 1889-1951
- Born in Vienna, Austria
- Attended the same school as Hitler from 1903-1904.
- Originally studied engineering in Berlin.
- 1908 – worked on the development of jet engines in Manchester University.



# Ludwig Wittgenstein

- Developed an interest in the foundations of mathematics and went on to study with Bertrand Russell in Cambridge University.
- Later lived in Norway and developed an interest in Philosophy.
- Served in the Austrian artillery during WWI.
- Captured and wrote his notes for *Tractatus Logico Philosophicus* in prison.
- Worked as a teacher in Austria (but didn't enjoy it)
- 1930 – Worked on Philosophy again in Cambridge.
- 1936-1937 – Returned to Norway – worked on *Philosophical Investigations*.
- 1939 – appointed professor of Philosophy at Cambridge University (succeeding G.E. Moore)



# Ludwig Wittgenstein - *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*

- It is worth noting that Wittgenstein's **earlier work** actually inspired the work of the logical positivists
- **“Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent.”**
- Where there are no facts (i.e. the mystical, the metaphysical, the ethical), there is no corresponding proposition.
- If there is no proposition, no statement can be made in regards to these topics (mystical, metaphysical, ethical). So, we should not speak!
- Rather than speak meaningless nonsense, it's better to say nothing at all!

# Ludwig Wittgenstein

- This, however, all changed upon him watching a game of football and coming to the conclusion that **language changes depending on the 'game' that you are participating in**
- **TASK:** Read pages 148-152 of your EDUQAS textbook to understand Wittgenstein's argument. Make notes as you go.





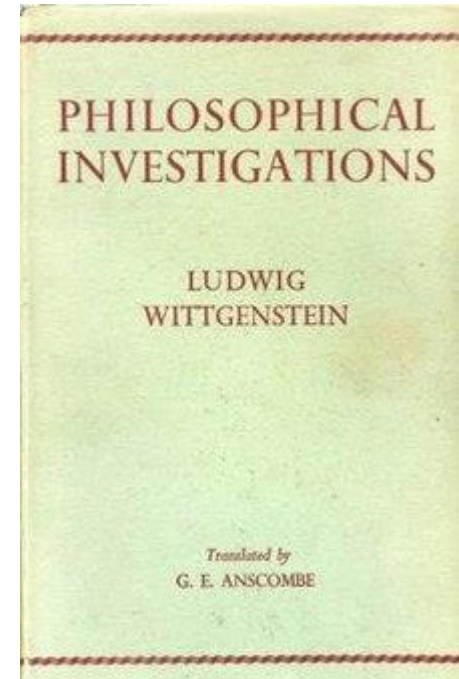
Supportive Evidence - non-cognitive form of language provides meaning to participants within language game; consider use of language not meaning;

- We will use the acronym '**PUFFCAN**' to help us remember these key features of Wittgenstein's language games



# PUFF CAN

- **P**hilosophical Investigations
- This is Wittgenstein's later work in which he **changes his mind** about religious language.
- Rejects the *Tractatus* and thus also the verification principle.





# PUFF CAN

- **Use**
- All words are called **tools**
- Not everything has the same function
- First look and see how they are **used**
- So too does the meaning of words/language depend on its use, the user and situation.



- *“Don’t ask for the meaning – ask for the use.”*

# PUFF CAN

- **F**orm of life
- Different **contexts** in which language is used.
- Language has its own meaning in the different contexts



# PUFF CAN

- **F**ootball

- 'Games' applies to a range of **diverse activities**.
- Different games have **different rules**, tactics and goals.
- Games are **learnt by participation**.
- There are different language games just as there are different ball games.
- Rules vary according to context – form of life.
- This can be applied to the **language game called religion**.
- Religious language = **meaningful** within the religious form of life.
- Conceptual confusion arises if the same rule/word is applied in different games.



# PUFF CAN

- **C**ategory mistake
  - Misunderstanding religious language because you are not in the 'game'.
  - **Religious Language is a separate language game** with its own logic and rules of use. **It cannot be judged by external rules** - e.g. science
  - The empiricist challenge tried to fit Religious Language into a scientific mould.



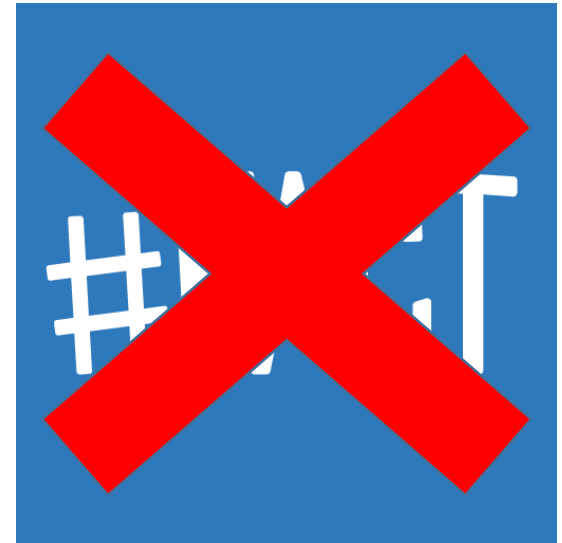
# PUFF CAN

- **Anti realist**
- Religious language is **not about making statements that are observably true or false.**



# PUFF CAN

- **N**on-cognitive
- Non-factual.
- Religious statements are **not necessarily making claims** about a transcendent reality.
- **Its meaning comes from within the religious 'form of life'.**



# Coherence Theory of Truth

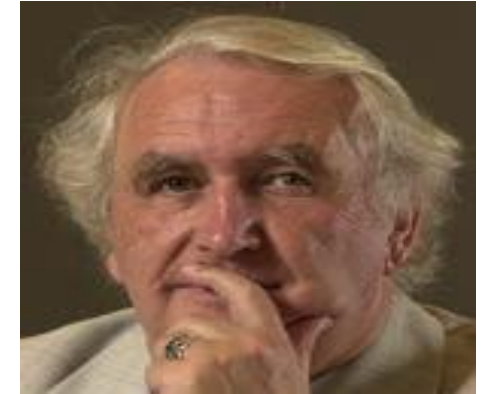
- Language games are **consistent with 'coherence theory' of truth**
- Coherence theory of truth states that **the truth of any (true) proposition consists in its coherence with some specified set of propositions** i.e. **how the language is UNDERSTOOD in its context**
- Meaningfulness is established through participation



# Stretch and Challenge – D.Z Phillips

- **D. Z. Phillips**

- 1934-2006
- British philosopher
- Supporter of Wittgenstein's language game concept.
- Key book: *The Concept of Prayer* (1965)



- Religion cannot be either grounded or criticised in reason – it is a system all of its own.
- The 'reality' of God or religion does not lie in the abstract issue of whether God exists, but instead is located in the words and practice of religion.
- What God is, is defined by the language game of faith.
- Participating in this 'game' enables meaning to be understood.

# A01 Consolidation

- **TASK:** Complete your lean learning sheet letter 'F' in your booklet
- **TASK:** Check your understanding through these bullet points:
- **Wittgenstein**
- **Language use**
- **Non-cognitive meaning in a context**
- **Language games**
- **Dribbling**
- **Forms of life and category mistakes**
- **Coherence theory of truth**
- **Language games prevent meaningful conversation**
- **Language games don't provide any empirical truths**



# Challenges Against Language Games

- There are 3 spec challenges against language games:
  - **1. True propositions that can be empirically verified are rejected**
  - **2. Language games don't allow for any meaningful conversations between different groups of learners**
  - **3. Language games don't provide an adequate meaning for the word 'God'**
- **TASK:** Read pages 152-3 of your EDUQAS textbook and make notes on the challenges

## AO2 – Are language games an adequate solution to the problems of religious language?

- **TASK:** Ask your partner whether they think that language games provide a suitable way of resolving the problems of religious language. Write down their arguments for and against on a post it note. Switch roles and answer the question to your partner. Stick the post it notes on the board.
- **TASK:** Read the essay on page 155-6 of your EDUQAS textbook. One of the pair needs to find all the arguments in support of language games, the other partner should find all all the arguments in opposition to language games. Compare your points and create a table together which consists of arguments for and against.



# A02 – Are language games an adequate solution to the problems of religious language?

## LANGUAGE GAMES ARE ADEQUATE

All language is decipherable for the receivers – that's how language works! Language is based on understanding in all contexts.

Religious language transmits information about the religion

Language games accept that there are certain rules to each game of language. It accepts that people that haven't participated in the game should focus on the use of the language in the game that they observe

The language has validity for those within the game – a coherence theory of truth

## LANGUAGE GAMES AREN'T ADEQUATE

Some languages take longer to learn than others. Just as it may take longer to learn a foreign language, it may take longer to learn religious language

It is difficult for people outside of the religion to understand the language if they aren't 'in that game'

Religious language can still be regarded as nonsense with no place in the 'real' and 'empirical' world. Meaningful dialogue can't take place between a believer and an empiricist

It excludes people who aren't in the game. It prevents inter-faith dialogue.