

Language About God: A Philosophical Analysis of Religion on the Concept of Divinity

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Abstract

This study aims to conduct an in-depth analysis of the problems of religious language within the field of philosophy of religion, with a primary focus on how limited human language attempts to represent the concept of a transcendent and absolute God. The main challenge examined is the tension between the cognitive nature of language which is oriented toward empirical facts and the nature of God, who is often considered to be beyond the reach of the senses and linear logic. The research method applied is a descriptive-analytical qualitative method using a library research approach, which integrates various classical and contemporary literature from both Western and Eastern philosophical traditions. The results of the study indicate that language about God cannot be understood univocally or literally without falling into the error of anthropomorphism, yet it is also not entirely equivocal, which would lead to total agnosticism. This analysis concludes that the validity of religious language can be maintained through the mechanisms of analogy, symbolism, and functional understanding within the context of "language games." These findings affirm that although human language has ontological limitations, it still functions as a vital means of expressing humanity's absolute concern and directing consciousness toward a reality that transcends the boundaries of the phenomenological world.

INTRODUCTION

Human existence in the world is inherently linked to the quest for meaning that transcends material reality a drive that is universally manifested in the phenomena of religion and philosophical thought. Religion, in its most basic sense, is often understood as God's guidance directing the rational human soul toward goodness and happiness through free will (Mahmood, 2020). However, this relationship between humans and God is not merely ritualistic; it is also intellectual and communicative. Humans, as rational beings, continually seek the truth scattered throughout life, which ultimately leads to the search for God as the first and foremost entity. The question that then arises is how humans, with all the limitations of their language, can speak of God, who is defined as an absolute, infinite, and transcendent Being (Muhammad et al., 2022).

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The philosophy of religion is a branch of philosophy that critically and systematically investigates fundamental questions concerning God, divinity, the universe, human existence, and the relationship between the human being and the transcendent. Rather than merely affirming or rejecting religious beliefs, the philosophy of religion seeks to examine the rational foundations, conceptual coherence, and implications of religious claims (Toker, 2024). Its primary concern is not only to understand what human beings believe about God, but also to investigate how such beliefs can be articulated, justified, and communicated through human reason and language. In this sense, the philosophy of religion occupies an important position in the broader philosophical tradition because questions concerning God are closely connected to questions concerning knowledge, truth, morality, freedom, human existence, and the meaning of life (Erisman, 2021).

Historically, philosophy and religion have shared a fundamental concern with the pursuit of ultimate truth, although they have generally approached this objective through different epistemological foundations. Philosophy traditionally relies upon rational reflection, critical inquiry, logical argumentation, and human intellectual capacities to investigate reality. Religion, by contrast, generally derives its fundamental claims from divine revelation, sacred texts, religious traditions, and forms of spiritual experience. Nevertheless, the distinction between philosophical reason and religious faith does not necessarily imply an absolute separation between the two (Sandur, 2023). Throughout the history of Western thought, philosophers and theologians have repeatedly attempted to establish a constructive relationship between reason and revelation. This interaction has generated enduring debates concerning the rationality of religious belief, the nature of theological knowledge, and, most importantly, the possibility of speaking meaningfully about God (Takaliuang, 2020).

One of the central issues emerging from the intersection of philosophy, religion, and language is the problem of religious language. Religious language refers to the various forms of human expression used to describe, communicate, or interpret religious realities, including statements concerning God, divine attributes, creation, revelation, salvation, and transcendence (Dandel et al., 2024). The problem arises because God, within classical theistic traditions, is understood as transcendent and fundamentally different from finite human beings and the empirical world. Human language, however, develops primarily through human experience and interaction with finite objects. Consequently, an important philosophical question emerges: how can finite human language adequately refer to an infinite and transcendent reality? Furthermore, do statements such as “God is omniscient,” “God is omnipotent,” or “God is good” possess genuine cognitive meaning, or are they merely symbolic, emotional, or subjective expressions that cannot be objectively verified (Wahab & Wan Razali, 2024).

Language itself is an essential human instrument for understanding and communicating reality. Through language, human beings formulate concepts, construct arguments, express experiences, and transmit knowledge from one generation to another. Nevertheless, there is a fundamental difference between the linguistic representation of reality and reality itself. Words and concepts do not necessarily capture the totality, complexity, or depth of what they signify. This problem becomes particularly significant when language is used to discuss realities that transcend ordinary empirical experience. If language is limited to describing observable and empirically verifiable objects, then theological statements about God may appear problematic because God cannot be treated as an ordinary object of sensory observation. The philosophical investigation of religious language therefore

concerns not only the meaning of particular theological terms but also the epistemological limits of human language (Harahap, 2019).

The relationship between philosophy and language is consequently inseparable from the broader question of human knowledge. Philosophical inquiry depends upon language because concepts and arguments must be formulated linguistically in order to be examined, communicated, and evaluated. In the philosophy of religion, this dependence becomes especially important because theological doctrines are frequently expressed through propositions and narratives contained in sacred texts, oral traditions, liturgical practices, and theological discourse. For practitioners of the Abrahamic religious traditions, the question of whether human beings can speak meaningfully about God is therefore not merely an abstract philosophical problem. Claims concerning divine attributes, revelation, creation, divine action, human freedom, and salvation depend to a significant extent on the possibility of meaningful discourse about the divine (Albayrak, 2021).

The linguistic problem of God becomes even more complex when considering the apparent tension between divine transcendence and human conceptual limitations. If God is conceived as infinite, eternal, omnipotent, omniscient, and beyond ordinary human categories, then it seems difficult to apply finite concepts directly to God without either reducing the divine to human categories or making theological statements so vague that they lose their meaning. This tension has generated various philosophical approaches to religious language. Some thinkers have attempted to preserve the meaningfulness of theological statements through analogy, arguing that language about God is neither completely identical to nor entirely different from language about finite beings. Others have emphasized symbolism, suggesting that religious language communicates meanings that cannot be fully expressed through literal propositions. Another influential approach focuses on the practical and contextual use of language, arguing that the meaning of religious expressions can be understood through the particular forms of life and language practices in which they function (Rahman, 2023).

The historical development of philosophical thought concerning divinity demonstrates significant changes in the understanding of religious language. Classical and medieval thinkers generally sought ways to establish the rational intelligibility of theological discourse while acknowledging the limitations of human knowledge. Thomas Aquinas, for example, developed the theory of analogy to explain how human beings can meaningfully predicate attributes of God without suggesting that divine and human qualities are identical in exactly the same sense. His approach provides an important foundation for understanding theological language as meaningful while simultaneously recognizing the radical distinction between Creator and creation (Erisman, 2022).

In the modern and contemporary periods, however, the status of religious language became increasingly contested. Developments in empiricism, modern science, and analytic philosophy encouraged philosophers to reconsider the criteria by which statements should be regarded as meaningful or true. The emergence of logical positivism in the twentieth century represented one of the strongest challenges to traditional theological discourse. Through the verification principle, logical positivist thinkers questioned whether metaphysical and religious statements could possess cognitive meaning if they could not be empirically verified or reduced to logical propositions. From this perspective, statements about God appeared problematic because they could not be tested through ordinary empirical

observation. The challenge forced philosophers of religion to reconsider whether theological language should be interpreted literally, symbolically, analogically, or according to alternative theories of meaning (Al-Attas, 2019).

In response to these challenges, several philosophical approaches emerged to defend or reinterpret the meaningfulness of religious discourse. Paul Tillich, for instance, emphasized the symbolic character of religious language. For Tillich, religious symbols are not merely arbitrary signs but expressions that participate in and point toward dimensions of reality that cannot be adequately captured by ordinary descriptive language. His approach offers a way of understanding theological statements without reducing them to simplistic empirical propositions. Meanwhile, Ludwig Wittgenstein's later philosophy introduced the concept of language games, which emphasizes that the meaning of an expression is closely connected to its use within a particular linguistic and social context. From this perspective, religious language may need to be understood according to the distinctive practices, forms of life, and contexts within which religious expressions function rather than being evaluated exclusively according to the standards of scientific language (Suryaningsih, 2019).

The debate concerning religious language remains relevant because contemporary religious discourse continues to encounter challenges arising from scientific rationality, secularization, pluralism, and changing forms of communication. Digital communication, in particular, has expanded the circulation of theological claims while simultaneously increasing the possibility of misunderstanding, decontextualization, and reduction of complex religious concepts into simplified statements. Consequently, the question of how human beings can meaningfully speak about God remains significant not only for classical philosophy of religion but also for contemporary theological and philosophical discourse (Triguna, 2018).

Although previous philosophical discussions have extensively examined analogy, symbolism, and language games as approaches to religious language, these perspectives are often discussed separately within their respective philosophical traditions. There remains a need for an integrative analysis that places the approaches of Thomas Aquinas, Paul Tillich, and Ludwig Wittgenstein within a single analytical framework focused specifically on the problem of naming and speaking about God. Such an approach is important because the three thinkers represent substantially different philosophical strategies: analogy emphasizes the relation between finite and divine predication, symbolism emphasizes the depth and indirect character of religious meaning, while language games emphasize the contextual use and function of religious expressions. The existing discussion therefore leaves a conceptual gap concerning how these three approaches can be comparatively examined to explain the continuing validity of discourse about God despite the limitations of human language.

Accordingly, this study aims to critically examine the problem of religious language by analyzing the theories of analogy, symbolism, and language games, with particular attention to the philosophical contributions of Thomas Aquinas, Paul Tillich, and Ludwig Wittgenstein. The novelty of this study lies in integrating these three theoretical perspectives into a comparative framework for analyzing the philosophical validity of human discourse about God. Rather than treating analogy, symbolism, and language games as isolated solutions, this study investigates their complementary and contrasting capacities in addressing the tension between divine transcendence and human linguistic limitations. By bringing classical, modern theological, and contemporary linguistic perspectives into dialogue, this research

seeks to demonstrate that the problem of religious language cannot be adequately resolved solely by asking whether statements about God are empirically verifiable. Instead, their meaningfulness must also be examined through the logical relationship between concepts, symbolic depth, and the contexts in which religious language is used. In this way, the study contributes to the philosophy of religion by offering a more comprehensive understanding of how discourse about God can remain philosophically meaningful while acknowledging the inherent limitations of human language.

METHODS

The research employs a descriptive-analytical qualitative method using a library research approach, integrating a wide range of classical and contemporary literature from both Western and Eastern philosophical traditions (Jeri, Ihsan, Efendi, Akbar, Majid, et al., 2025). This approach is selected to facilitate an in-depth and systematic examination of philosophical concepts, arguments, and perspectives relevant to the subject under investigation (Jeri, Ihsan, Efendi, Akbar, & Majid, 2025). The primary sources consist of classical philosophical texts and original works of major philosophers, while secondary sources include contemporary scholarly books, peer-reviewed journal articles, research reports, and other relevant academic publications (Efendi et al., 2025). The collected literature is critically examined, classified, and interpreted based on its relevance to the research objectives. The analysis focuses on identifying fundamental concepts, comparing philosophical arguments, and examining the similarities, differences, and contextual relationships among perspectives derived from Western and Eastern philosophical traditions (Triguna, 2018).

Through the descriptive-analytical process, the study first presents the philosophical ideas found in the selected literature and subsequently analyzes their conceptual significance in relation to the research problem. The comparative use of classical and contemporary sources is intended to avoid a purely historical description and instead develop a critical understanding of how philosophical ideas have evolved and remain relevant to contemporary intellectual discourse (Arzam et al., 2023). Furthermore, the integration of Western and Eastern philosophical perspectives provides a broader analytical framework for identifying convergences and divergences in their respective approaches to fundamental philosophical questions (Efendi et al., 2023). Data validity is maintained through careful source selection, cross-referencing among relevant academic works, and critical interpretation of the original philosophical texts. Thus, the library research approach enables the study to construct a comprehensive and theoretically grounded analysis while maintaining consistency between the philosophical sources, analytical framework, and research objectives (Kalukar et al., 2024).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Ontology and Characteristics of Religious Language

Religious language encompasses statements, propositions, concepts, and claims that refer to God, the gods, the divine, or other forms of transcendent reality. Within the philosophy of religion, religious language constitutes a fundamental epistemological and ontological problem because it attempts to express transcendent realities through finite human linguistic categories.

Human beings understand and communicate reality through language that is generally developed from sensory experience, social interaction, and encounters with objects within the temporal and spatial world. Religious discourse, however, frequently refers to realities that are conceived as immaterial, infinite, eternal, transcendent, and fundamentally different from ordinary objects of human experience. This distinction creates a philosophical tension concerning the extent to which human language is capable of referring meaningfully to God (Karim, 2023).

Ontologically, the problem emerges from the difference between the nature of the subject who speaks and the reality that is being described. Human beings are finite, temporal, embodied, and situated within particular historical and cultural contexts, whereas classical theism understands God as infinite, eternal, immaterial, and transcendent. Consequently, language developed through human experience may appear inadequate when applied directly to divine reality. When human beings state that “God is good,” “God is wise,” or “God is powerful,” for example, an important philosophical question arises concerning whether the terms “good,” “wise,” and “powerful” possess the same meaning when attributed to God as they do when attributed to human beings. The problem is not simply linguistic but also ontological because it concerns the relationship between the nature of language, the nature of human knowledge, and the nature of divine reality. The difference between finite human concepts and the transcendent object of religious discourse may consequently generate semantic ambiguity in divine predication (Murata & Chittick, 2022).

The problem becomes more complicated when religious statements are examined according to theories of meaning developed in modern philosophy. One of the important distinctions in the philosophy of religion is the distinction between cognitive and non-cognitive approaches to religious language. Cognitive approaches maintain that religious statements can function as genuine propositions that make claims about reality. From this perspective, a statement such as “God exists” is not merely an expression of emotion or personal commitment but constitutes a proposition that can, at least in principle, be evaluated in terms of truth or falsity. Classical philosophical arguments for the existence of God, including ontological and cosmological arguments, operate within this broader cognitive framework because they attempt to establish rational grounds for claims concerning the existence and nature of God (Latif, 2021).

The cognitive interpretation of religious language consequently gives theological propositions an objective or truth-apt status. Statements concerning divine omnipotence, omniscience, goodness, creation, or divine action can be regarded as meaningful claims that attempt to describe reality. However, this position faces the challenge of explaining how finite human concepts can adequately refer to a transcendent being. If religious statements are understood literally and univocally, there is a danger that divine attributes will be interpreted according to the same conceptual framework used to describe finite beings. Such an approach may unintentionally reduce divine transcendence by treating God as though God were simply another object within the empirical world (Hussein, 2021).

In contrast, non-cognitivist approaches question whether religious statements should be understood primarily as factual descriptions of an external reality. According to this perspective, religious utterances may function as expressions of attitudes, emotions, commitments, existential orientations, or forms of life rather than as propositions that provide empirically verifiable information about the world. A religious statement may therefore express a person's relationship with the divine without necessarily functioning in the same manner as a scientific statement. From this perspective, saying “God is good,” for example, may communicate an attitude of

trust, worship, commitment, or moral orientation rather than provide a straightforward factual description comparable to a scientific proposition. Non-cognitivism consequently shifts attention from the question of whether religious language describes an objective reality to the question of what religious language does within human experience and religious practice (Shenkar, 2019).

The debate between cognitive and non-cognitive interpretations demonstrates that religious language cannot be analyzed solely by applying the standards of scientific discourse. Scientific language generally aims to formulate propositions concerning observable or theoretically measurable phenomena that can be subjected to empirical investigation. Religious language, by contrast, often performs multiple functions, including describing beliefs, expressing commitment, communicating existential meanings, guiding moral behavior, and participating in worship. Therefore, attempts to evaluate religious language exclusively according to empirical verification may overlook the distinctive function and context of religious discourse. Nevertheless, this does not automatically establish that every religious statement is meaningful or true. The philosophical challenge remains to determine how religious language can retain intelligibility and significance while acknowledging the limitations of human conceptual capacities.

Within this broader debate, three principal approaches to the use of predicates concerning God have traditionally received significant philosophical attention: univocity, equivocity, and analogy. These approaches concern the relationship between the meaning of a term when it is applied to God and when the same term is applied to creatures or human beings.

First, univocity maintains that a term possesses essentially the same meaning when applied to God and to human beings. If the statement “God is good” uses the term “good” univocally, then “good” would have fundamentally the same semantic content when referring to God and to human beings. The advantage of this position is that it preserves a degree of conceptual clarity because human beings can understand the predicate in a recognizable sense. However, the approach creates a significant theological and philosophical difficulty. If divine attributes are understood in precisely the same sense as human attributes, God may appear to be merely an enlarged or perfected version of a finite being. Such an interpretation risks anthropomorphism, namely the tendency to conceptualize God primarily through human characteristics and categories. It may therefore weaken the distinction between the transcendent and the finite.

Second, equivocity maintains that a term has entirely different meanings when applied to God and to creatures. According to a strictly equivocal interpretation, when the term “good” is attributed to a human being and to God, there is no common semantic content connecting the two uses. Although this position strongly protects divine transcendence, it generates another serious philosophical problem. If words referring to God have meanings completely unrelated to their meanings in human experience, then human beings may have no reliable basis for understanding or communicating anything about God. Religious statements could become radically unintelligible because the linguistic concepts available to human beings would provide no meaningful connection to the divine. In its extreme form, equivocity could consequently undermine theological knowledge and move toward agnosticism concerning what can meaningfully be said about God.

Third, analogy seeks a position between univocity and equivocity. Analogical language does not claim that a predicate has exactly the same meaning when applied

to God and creatures, but neither does it claim that the meanings are completely unrelated. Instead, the meanings are connected through a proportional, relational, or analogous correspondence. When human beings say that “God is good,” for instance, the goodness attributed to God is not identical in mode or degree to human goodness, yet there remains a meaningful relationship between the two concepts. Analogy therefore attempts to preserve both divine transcendence and human intelligibility.

The theory of analogy is particularly significant because it provides a philosophical framework for explaining how finite human beings can speak meaningfully about an infinite and transcendent God without reducing God to the categories of finite existence. In this respect, analogy represents not merely a linguistic technique but a broader epistemological position concerning the limits and possibilities of human knowledge. Human language may not capture the divine essence exhaustively, but its limitations do not necessarily imply that all religious discourse is meaningless. Rather, religious language may possess a qualified form of meaning that corresponds to the relationship between human concepts and transcendent reality.

The distinction among univocity, equivocity, and analogy therefore reveals the central tension within the ontology of religious language. Univocity provides conceptual accessibility but risks compromising divine transcendence; equivocity protects transcendence but threatens intelligibility; while analogy attempts to maintain a balance between the two. This philosophical tension provides an important foundation for examining subsequent theories of religious language, particularly symbolic approaches and theories that emphasize the contextual use of language. The problem of religious language thus cannot be reduced to the simple question of whether humans can describe God literally. Rather, it requires a broader examination of how meaning is constituted, how human language relates to transcendent reality, and what forms of linguistic expression are capable of preserving both intelligibility and transcendence.

The Evolution of the Concept of God in the History of Thought

The concept of God is not a static or universally uniform idea within human consciousness. Throughout the history of human thought, conceptions of God have continuously developed in response to changing cultural environments, religious traditions, philosophical inquiries, and intellectual transformations. The ways in which human beings understand divine reality are closely connected to the historical circumstances in which particular religious and philosophical ideas emerge. Consequently, the concept of God cannot be adequately understood as a single, unchanging formulation. Rather, it represents a complex and evolving intellectual phenomenon shaped by different interpretations of transcendence, creation, morality, causality, and the relationship between God and the world (E. Setiawan et al., 2022).

Karen Armstrong argues that the concept of God has undergone substantial transformation over approximately four thousand years, particularly within the traditions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The historical development of monotheistic thought demonstrates that even within traditions that affirm belief in one God, the understanding of divine nature and divine action has not remained conceptually identical. Changes in political structures, cultural encounters, philosophical movements, scientific developments, and social conditions have influenced the ways in which God has been conceptualized. In this context, the evolution of the concept of God does not necessarily mean that religious traditions have abandoned their fundamental belief in divine reality. Rather, it indicates that

human interpretations of the divine have developed as religious communities have attempted to articulate their beliefs in response to new intellectual and historical circumstances.

The relationship between God and the world constitutes one of the most important questions in this development. Classical theistic traditions generally emphasize God's transcendence, eternity, unity, and independence from the created order. Within Islamic philosophy, this understanding received a particularly systematic formulation through the thought of Al-Kindi, one of the earliest major philosophers in the Islamic intellectual tradition. Al-Kindi's conception of God is closely associated with the principle of divine unity and absolute transcendence. He describes God as *al-Haqq al-Awwal*, or the "First Truth," emphasizing that God is the ultimate source of truth and existence (Bucar, 2023).

For Al-Kindi, God cannot be understood as a material being or as an entity possessing the characteristics of created things. God has neither matter nor form and cannot be classified according to genus and species. Such classifications apply to beings that exist within the created order, whereas God transcends these categories. The divine essence is therefore fundamentally different from contingent beings. Al-Kindi's conception emphasizes absolute divine unity: God is the One without multiplicity, while everything other than God is characterized by some form of multiplicity, composition, or dependence. The distinction between divine unity and created multiplicity becomes a central principle in his metaphysical account of God.

Al-Kindi's argument concerning the existence of God is also connected to his understanding of the universe as contingent and originated. The existence of finite things raises the question of their beginning and causal explanation. Since contingent entities do not possess the sufficient reason for their own existence, their existence requires an explanation beyond themselves. In this framework, the universe cannot ultimately account for its own existence. The dependence of the created order therefore points toward a first principle or creator that is not itself dependent in the same manner as contingent beings. God, as the First Truth, becomes the ultimate foundation of existence and the source upon which the multiplicity of created beings depends (Sandur, 2023).

This conception illustrates an important characteristic of classical Islamic philosophy: the attempt to understand God through rational and metaphysical inquiry while maintaining the absolute transcendence of the divine. Al-Kindi's philosophical project demonstrates that reason can be employed to investigate the relationship between God and the universe without reducing God to a finite object. His conception also reveals the importance of negative or apophatic elements in theological discourse. God can be described by denying characteristics that belong to created beings, such as matter, form, genus, and species. This approach acknowledges the limitations of human language and conceptual categories when speaking about an absolutely transcendent God.

However, the history of the concept of God also reveals philosophical movements that challenge the notion of God as exclusively an immutable and distant absolute. A significantly different perspective emerges in the process philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead. Whitehead's philosophy developed within the context of modern science and sought to overcome what he regarded as the limitations of scientific materialism. Rather than understanding reality primarily as a collection of static substances, Whitehead conceived reality in terms of processes, events, relationships, and becoming. This metaphysical framework consequently influenced

his understanding of God.

In Whitehead's process philosophy, God is not conceived merely as a distant, immutable ruler who exists independently from the changing world. Instead, God is intimately related to the processes of the universe. Whitehead's conception introduces a dynamic understanding of the divine, in which God participates in the development of the world rather than remaining completely detached from worldly events. This conception has often been expressed through the idea of God as a "True Friend," emphasizing divine companionship, persuasion, and participation rather than coercive domination. God does not simply impose a predetermined order upon the universe; rather, the divine is involved in the possibilities and developments that characterize the process of reality.

One of the most distinctive aspects of Whitehead's theology is his doctrine of the two natures of God: the primordial nature and the consequent nature. The primordial nature refers to God's eternal dimension. It represents the divine conceptual ordering of possibilities and provides an eternal structure of potentiality through which the world can develop. The consequent nature, by contrast, refers to God's relationship with the temporal and historical world. Through this dimension, God receives and incorporates the experiences of the world. Consequently, the divine life is related to the changing processes of creation (Muhammad et al., 2022).

The distinction between primordial and consequent natures enables Whitehead to present a conception of God that simultaneously incorporates transcendence and immanence. God remains eternal and provides the order of possibilities through the primordial nature, while the consequent nature establishes an intimate relationship between God and the temporal world. In this sense, God is not simply outside the world but is also dynamically related to its development. The suffering, achievements, and experiences of the world are not irrelevant to divine reality but are incorporated within the consequent nature of God. This represents a significant departure from strictly classical conceptions of divine immutability.

The contrast between Al-Kindi and Whitehead illustrates a broader transformation in philosophical conceptions of God. Al-Kindi emphasizes God as the absolutely One, transcendent, necessary, and ultimate source of the contingent universe. His philosophical framework places particular emphasis on divine unity, transcendence, and the causal dependence of creation. Whitehead, in contrast, emphasizes divine relationality, process, temporality, and God's participation in the unfolding of reality. Whereas Al-Kindi's conception highlights God's independence from the world, Whitehead's conception gives greater attention to the dynamic relationship between God and the world.

Nevertheless, these perspectives should not necessarily be interpreted as mutually exclusive. Both thinkers attempt to address fundamental questions concerning the nature of ultimate reality and the relationship between God and creation. Their differences primarily reflect different metaphysical frameworks and historical contexts. Al-Kindi develops his conception within the framework of Islamic monotheism and classical metaphysics, whereas Whitehead develops his understanding within a modern philosophical context shaped by scientific developments and the philosophy of process. The comparison therefore demonstrates that philosophical conceptions of God are influenced not only by religious commitments but also by broader assumptions concerning reality, causality, change, time, and knowledge.

The evolution from a predominantly transcendent conception of God toward more dynamic and relational interpretations also has significant implications for the

philosophy of religious language. If God is conceived primarily as an absolutely transcendent and immutable being, religious language may require approaches such as negation and analogy to avoid reducing God to finite categories. Conversely, if God is understood as dynamically related to the world, theological language may emphasize relationality, process, experience, and historical participation. Thus, changes in the philosophical conception of God inevitably affect the way human beings understand the possibility and meaning of statements about God (Meiring, 2021).

The comparison between Al-Kindi and Whitehead ultimately demonstrates that the concept of God has developed through a continuous interaction between religious belief, philosophical reasoning, and changing understandings of reality. Al-Kindi represents a classical metaphysical approach that emphasizes divine unity, transcendence, and the dependence of creation upon the First Truth, while Whitehead represents a process-oriented approach that emphasizes divine relationality and participation in the temporal world. Their respective positions provide an important foundation for understanding why religious language requires diverse philosophical approaches. The development of the concept of God consequently reinforces the central problem of this study: if human conceptions of God are historically and philosophically diverse, then the language used to speak about God must also be examined according to its conceptual, symbolic, analogical, and contextual dimensions.

The Challenges of Logical Positivism: Verification and Falsification

In the 20th century, religious language faced a serious challenge from the school of Logical Positivism pioneered by the Vienna Circle. A.J. Ayer, in his book *Language, Truth, and Logic*, proposed the “Verification Principle,” which states that a statement is meaningful only if it is an analytic truth (like mathematics) or can be empirically verified through the senses. Since statements about God cannot be empirically tested, Ayer concluded that religious language is “nonsense” or literally meaningless (Afzal, 2023).

Antony Flew reinforced this attack with the “Principle of Falsification.” Using the analogy of the “Invisible Gardener,” Flew argued that religious claims often leave no room for evidence to refute them. If a believer continues to say “God is love” despite terrible suffering, and keeps adding endless qualifications, then the statement loses its meaning because nothing can prove it wrong.

Philosophers of religion offer various defenses to demonstrate that religious language retains cognitive and functional validity:

1. Eschatological Verification (John Hick): Hick argues that statements about God cannot be empirically verified at present, but can be verified at the end of time or after death. Using the parable of “Two Travelers on the Way to the City of Heaven,” Hick demonstrates that the truth of faith will be tangibly proven at the end of the journey.
2. Faith as Commitment (Basil Mitchell): Mitchell rejects Flew’s claim that believers are indifferent to contradictory evidence. Through the analogy of “The Resistance Fighter,” he explains that a believer acknowledges the existence of conflicting evidence (such as evil) but still chooses to believe based on a previously established conviction.
3. The Concept of “Blik” (R.M. Hare): Hare argues that religious language is not a scientific statement, but rather a “blik”—a fundamental worldview

that cannot be falsified yet profoundly shapes a person's behavior. A person's blik of an orderly world will cause them to act differently from someone who holds a blik of a chaotic world (A. Setiawan, 2017).

Ludwig Wittgenstein said, "From Silence to Language Games," meaning that in his early phase (the *Tractatus*), Wittgenstein emphasized the importance of silence in the face of things that cannot be described logically. For him, language is a representation of the facts of the world, and since God is not a fact within the world, God lies beyond the bounds of language.

However, in his later phase (*Philosophical Investigations*), Wittgenstein introduced the concept of "language games." He argued that the meaning of a word depends on its use in a specific context and is part of a "form of life." Religious language is understood as a language game with its own internal rules.

Meaning as Use: The word "God" has meaning not because it refers to a physical object, but because of its role in religious practices such as prayer, rituals, and testimonies of faith. **Way of Life:** Religious life is a way of life that gives meaning to religious expressions. Prayer is considered a valid linguistic game within the context of a community of believers. **The Uniqueness of Rules:** Criticizing religious language using the standards of scientific language is a category mistake, since each has its own criteria for rationality and utility.

An analysis of the philosophy of religion shows that the concept of God lies at the very foundation of metaphysical studies. The concept of God is not the exclusive domain of philosophy but is also a serious focus for other disciplines due to its impact on human social behavior and worldview. If God is believed to be a cruel entity, then human behavior tends to follow that pattern; conversely, belief in a loving God will encourage gentle and compassionate actions (Meiring, 2021).

The concept of God in the Abrahamic religions (Islam, Christianity, Judaism) emphasizes God as a person with a distinct identity and boundless perfection. Knowledge of God is obtained not merely through philosophical speculation, but through revelatory information brought by His messengers. The philosophy of religion is tasked with providing a rational justification for this faith, especially in the face of challenges from modern society, which is often skeptical or alienated by consumerist culture.

Al-Kindi's philosophy of God, for example, demonstrates that the search for philosophical truth is fundamentally aligned with the study of the concept of God in religion. Using mathematical and logical reasoning, Al-Kindi proved that God's existence is a necessity that cannot be rejected by reason. This affirms that there is no fundamental contradiction between philosophy and religion, as both uphold the truth.

CONCLUSION

Based on a comprehensive analysis of the linguistic discourse on God in the philosophy of religion, this study concludes that although human language has inherent limitations in describing a transcendent Being, it nevertheless retains its validity as a means of expressing faith and rational thought. The problems of religious language arising from the tension between the finite and the infinite should not be viewed as an intellectual impasse, but rather as a space for the development of richer theories of meaning.

The analogy proposed by Thomas Aquinas provides a strong metaphysical bridge between creation and the Creator, while Paul Tillich's theory of symbols captures the inner, participatory dimension of human beings in absolute reality.

Ludwig Wittgenstein, with his theory of language as a game, offers a resolution to the critiques of logical positivism by shifting the focus from empirical verification to functional use within the community of faith. This demonstrates that religious language need not conform to scientific criteria to be meaningful.

Overall, the concept of divinity in the philosophy of religion is the result of a synergy between critical reasoning and acceptance of revelation. Human language about God whether through positive, negative, or symbolic means serves to guide people toward “Absolute Care,” which gives meaning to their existence. The validity of this language is ultimately found not in its ability to provide a mathematical definition of God, but in its ability to move the human heart and mind toward virtue and ultimate truth.

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Author Contribution

Jakfari Musel Syidik, Supardi Dwimaputra: Writing-Preparation of original manuscript, Conceptualization, **Rudianto, Wini Kurnia Sapitri, Neneng Kapitri, Baharudin:** Visualization, Methodology, Improve Language, Investigation.

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