Lectures on Religious Belief and the epistemology of disagreements

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[Penultimate draft. Please cite published paper in *Wittgenstein-Studien*]

Abstract

The relation between deep disagreements and Wittgenstein's philosophy has been shaped by Wittgenstein's last set of notes, *On Certainty*. Since the metaphor of 'hinges' plays a central role in the scholarship of *On Certainty*, a Wittgensteinian theory of deep disagreements is assumed to be contained within *hinge epistemology.* Hence, it is assumed that a Wittgensteinian take on deep disagreements is one where the disagreement is deep because of the parties' conflicting hinges. When we shift our attention to a different part of Wittgenstein's oeuvre, however, another picture of deep disagreements emerges. This article proposes a new approach to a Wittgensteinian take on disagreements through the analysis of the *Lectures on Religious Belief*. Some of the disagreements that Wittgenstein and his pupils discuss in these lectures are deep, but not because they are grounded in different hinges, but because they are disagreements about *pictures*.

i. The role of Wittgenstein in the scholarship of deep disagreements

Epistemologists have always paid attention to disagreements, but for the past few decades, this interest has only intensified, producing as a result, copious articles, special issues, edited volumes and monographs dedicated to the issue. Among the many kinds of disagreements with which epistemologists are concerned, we find *deep disagreements.* In his classic paper from 1985, Robert Fogelin used the phrase "deep disagreements" to refer to "disagreements, sometimes on important issues, which by their nature, are not subject to rational resolution" (Fogelin 1985: 7). But, although the phrase and the concept became popular both in informal logic and epistemology, the claim that deep disagreements are beyond rational resolution is rejected across the board. But even if deep disagreements can be resolved, the fact that their resolution is difficult

due to epistemic reasons (and not, say, psychological or sociological) has been widely treated in the literature as their defining characteristic. Epistemologists tend to be interested in deep disagreements because they link the existence of hard-to-resolve disagreements with the possibility that the parties reason and analyse evidence using different epistemic frameworks, i.e. *epistemic relativism.* The link between deep disagreements and epistemic relativism, however, is not as straight-forward as epistemologists tend to think (see Lavorerio 2018).

The connection between deep disagreements and Wittgenstein's philosophy was forged at the very inception of the issue, as Fogelin claims that the idea of deep disagreements was Wittgenstein's: "My thesis, or rather Wittgenstein's thesis, is that deep disagreements cannot be resolved through the use of argument" (Fogelin 1985: 5). Fogelin quotes passages #608-612 from *On Certainty* (henceforth, OC) to back this claim, thus cementing the idea that we can find Wittgenstein's views on deep disagreements in OC. And since the scholarship on OC focuses heavily on the notion of hinges, it is assumed that a Wittgensteinian view on deep disagreements must, thus, be based on *hinge epistemology*[1].

Hinge epistemology is an umbrella term that gathers a diverse group of views which aim at developing a promising epistemological theory from the notion of *hinges*, as found in *On Certainty*[2]. Thus, a Wittgensteinian theory of deep disagreements is taken to advance the claim that deep disagreements involve *conflicting hinges*[3]. The leading proponent of this view is Duncan Pritchard who explores in a series of articles (2009, 2011, 2018a, 2018b) the relationship between deep disagreements, hinge epistemology and epistemic relativism. For Pritchard, hinges are propositions of which we are maximally certain, but do not *believe*. We do not believe hinges because, for Pritchard, *belief* "bears some basic conceptual connections to (epistemic) reasons" (2018a: 25). Alternatively, *hinges are unresponsive to reasons;* thus, he refers to them as *hinge commitments.*

[1] There are exceptions; like Fogelin (1985) who says that Deep disagreements are based on differences in *forms of life* and Godden & Brenner who claim that we find deep disagreements "where similar but incompatible *language games* are in play" (Godden & Brenner, 2010: 47; my emphasis).

[2] What is meant by the term 'hinge', however, remains highly controversial. For example, Schönbaumsfeld (2016) divides hinge epistemologists into two big groups: a *semiepistemic* reading (Kusch 2016, Williams 2003) and a *semipragmatic* reading (Moyal-Sharrock 2004, Stroll 1994) depending on whether hinges can be known.

[3] (Ranalli 2018) for the denomination of hinge theories as *Wittgensteinian*. However, it is doubtful that Wittgenstein would endorse any of these views.

The fact that deep disagreements are based on commitments which are unresponsive to reasons explains, in Pritchard's eyes, why they are so difficult to resolve[4].

In this paper, I do not argue against Pritchard's theory of deep disagreements or any other hinge-based theory. Instead, I wish to explore Wittgenstein's views on deep disagreements from a different angle, by focusing my attention on another point in his oeuvre. Unlike OC, where the entries which could be classified as deep disagreements are limited, the collision of radically different views run through the entirety of the *Lectures on Religious Beliefs* (henceforth, LRB). Therefore, I believe that this is a much more promising work in which to explore Wittgenstein's views on deep disagreements, at least when it comes to disagreements on religious matters. The account of deep disagreements that emerges from analysing LRB diverges significantly from the Wittgenstein-inspired accounts of deep disagreements present in the literature, which are based on the notion of hinges. By analysing LRB, we conclude that deep disagreements are better thought of as consequences of parties' using different *pictures*. Hence, this paper proposes a different kind of Wittgensteinian view of deep disagreements, one which holds that deep disagreements stem from the parties' using different pictures to conceive of the issue at hand.

When studying the later Wittgenstein's views on disagreements that could be classified as deep, LRB is an excellent source. Alas, there are serious exegetical concerns raised against this book, which I address in section ii. Section iii is dedicated to establishing that the cases discussed in LRB are legitimate examples of disagreements. I present the reasons why some commentators refuse to refer to these differences as 'disagreements' and argue against this restraint. In iv, I explore the grammar of 'belief'. The use of the word 'belief' in 'religious belief' can be deceiving, as it invites us to compare religious belief with other kinds of beliefs, e.g., scientific. However, a cursory

[4] Nevertheless, Pritchard believes that rational resolution of deep disagreements is possible. Firstly, because people's hinge commitments overlap, providing a common ground for the parties to argue their way out of the disagreement. Secondly, because of Pritchard's conception of "an overarching commitment that we are not radically and fundamentally in error in our beliefs", which he calls the *Über Hinge Commitment* (Pritchard 2018b: 4). Even if we cannot change hinge commitments by appealing to reasons, we can alter them through the massive transformation of our beliefs. When enough of someone's beliefs have changed, the hinge commitments which codify their Über Hinge Commitment will be modified accordingly.

exploration of Wittgenstein's views on religion shows that the grammar of 'belief' is much more complicated.

The next section, v, discusses a core feature of the disagreements which LRB explores, namely, parties' failure to contradict each other. In the cases that Wittgenstein and his students discuss, it is doubtful that believer and unbeliever are talking about the same thing. I introduce the distinction between pictures and super-pictures and argue that we should not take propositions to be super-pictures; that is, we should not think that the content of a sentence can be understood independently of its use, context and purpose, i.e., its methods of projection. Once we start seeing sentences and expressions as pictures, and not super-pictures, it becomes highly unlikely that believer and unbeliever are using the expression in the same way.

Throughout LRB, Wittgenstein connects the puzzlement one experiences when confronted with the other party's position, as well as the failure to fully understand it, with the impossibility of drawing consequences from a statement or connecting thoughts to it. Hence, in vi, I argue that drawing consequences and attaching ideas are methods of application of sentences and expressions. If I do not see how an expression is being used, then I will not know what it is supposed to mean and will wind up being confused. But if ideas, thoughts, and consequences are methods of projection, what pictures are being projected? I turn to this issue in vii, where I analyse the disagreement between Wittgenstein and the person who thinks of illness as a punishment. I finish the article by presenting some reasons why the picture-based account that emerges from studying LRB is worthy of further research.

ii. The exegetical conundrum

In 1966, Cyril Barrett published a book, entitled *Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology, and Religious Belief.* A part of this book, the *Lectures on Religious Belief*, consists of a mixture of class notes taken by some of Wittgenstein's pupils. Hence, Wittgenstein did not write

or dictate LRB himself. But, unlike other sets of notes of Wittgenstein's lectures, LRB is rife with further difficulties[5].

In the preface of the book, Barrett claims that the three lectures included under the heading of *Lectures on Religious Belief* belong to a course on 'belief' that Wittgenstein gave around the summer of 1938. This statement, however, is most likely false. A recent investigation of the corpus of Smythies's extensive lecture notes, published under the title of *Wittgenstein's Whewell's Court Lectures Cambridge, 1938–1941* (Munz & Ritter 2017), has raised several questions about the legitimacy of LRB being considered a unity. Neither Barrett's dating nor his grouping of the lectures holds up to closer scrutiny[6].

Barrett's *Lectures on Religious Belief* consists of three lectures. Munz and Ritter discovered that Lecture III is the last session (N. 16) of the *Lectures on Similarity* (Munz & Ritter 2017: 86), and not, as Barrett claimed, one of the *Lectures on Belief*. Furthermore, the *Lectures on Similarity* took place in the autumn of 1939, making Barrett's dating of Lecture III off by at least one year. In contrast to Lecture III, the origins of Lectures I and II are still uncertain. Lecture I was found in the same notebook as some of the *Lectures on Belief*, imparted in 1940. The fact that these notes were written in the same notebook may suggest that Lecture I was indeed part of *Lectures on Belief*. However, further evidence shows that such appearances may be misleading (Munz & Ritter 2017: 87). As for Lecture II, a manuscript version is yet to be found. It may indeed have been part of the *Lectures on Belief*, but there is not enough evidence to establish that. Munz and Ritter conclude that what has come to be known as the *Lectures on Religious Belief* is "a supposed set of lectures (…) whose putative unity may be nothing more than the product of an undeclared editorial intervention" (Munz & Ritter 2017: 86).

Nevertheless, I will analyse the *Lectures on Religious Belief*, as published by Barrett. LRB is particularly relevant to the study of disagreements, especially religious ones. Even though

[5] Cora Diamond also expresses her frustration at LRB: "The published notes present some difficulties, since at various points they appear not to be entirely reliable... There are points at which the notes do give us Wittgenstein very directly; at other points, though, we see him through a kind of fog" (Diamond 2005: 99).

[6] I want to thank Bernard Ritter for bringing this to my attention.

Wittgenstein addresses related issues in other places of his oeuvre (e.g., *Remarks on Frazer's Golden Bough, Culture and Value* and the *Lectures on Similarity*), he, to the best of my knowledge, does not extensively discuss the issues presented in LRB anywhere else. Consequently, it is preferable to bypass LRB's exegetical problems and engage with it as published.

iii. Disagreements in *Lectures on Religious Belief*?

Exegetical worries notwithstanding, LRB is the perfect place to explore Wittgenstein's views on disagreements, as he and his students discuss different cases of controversies, some of which are deep disagreements. However, it would be wrong to say that LRB is *about* disagreements. The central subject-matter of the lectures, as I read them, is the grammar of *belief/believing*; the 'disagreements' in LRB are meant to reflect on what gets treated as 'belief.'

The disagreement that receives the most attention in LRB is the one concerning the Last Judgement. Here, we see a conflict between a believer in the Last Judgement and Wittgenstein, who says he does not believe in it. Closely related, we have the difference between a man who thinks of everything that happens to him in terms of retribution and someone else (also Wittgenstein at times) who does not. Other disagreements in LRB concern ritualistic beliefs (like a spiritualist séance where every participant sees a dead relative) or the belief in miracles (like a statue that bleeds). One common thread that runs throughout LRB is that of resurrection and life after death, such as the man who says to Wittgenstein 'I shall think of you after my death' or the man who thinks that the body will not rot, but that "particles will rejoin in a thousand years, and there will be a Resurrection of you" (LA 1966: 55).

What do all of these cases have in common? They can be deemed religious, or at least, touching upon issues of spirituality and supernatural occurrences. Besides, Wittgenstein regards disagreements of this kind to be non-standard: "These controversies look quite different from any normal controversies" (LA 1966: 56). But, what makes such disagreements abnormal? First, Wittgenstein insists that even if he does not believe in the Last Judgement, he cannot contradict

someone who does. Second, Wittgenstein feels "bewildered" (LA 1966: 69) and "puzzled" (LA 1966: 60) by certain religious expressions or beliefs. He even finds some of them "ludicrous", like carrying consecrated bread in chromium steel (LA 1966: 55). Third, we find in these disagreements a *breakdown in understanding*. Although Wittgenstein is familiar with the words used by the other party, he does not grasp how they are being used. Thus, it is not evident in these cases whether the parties understand each other or not, or, better, what' understanding' even means in these controversies (LA 1966: 55). These characteristics, impossibility of contradiction, perplexity towards the other's position and breakdown in understanding, turn these cases into a special kind of disagreement. Although Wittgenstein does not use the word "deep" to describe them, I think the label fits. Therefore, LRB seems like a fitting work to theorise about what Wittgenstein would say about deep disagreements.

Nonetheless, it is not evident in what sense the cases that Wittgenstein discusses in LRB are indeed cases of disagreements. Some commentators say that they are not disagreements at all. For example, Barrett claims that "we are not concerned here with controversy, contradiction and disagreement" (1991: 168). Meanwhile, Genia Schönbaumsfeld says that: "Wittgenstein thinks that religious believer and atheist do not necessarily have a 'disagreement' at all" (2014: 103). This position finds some support in the fact that nowhere in the notes that compose LRB do the words 'disagree' and 'disagreement' are used to describe the cases presented therein. Instead, Wittgenstein uses hypothetical scenarios where a person asserts something or acts in a certain way that another person (sometimes Wittgenstein himself) would not say or do:

> Suppose I say that the body will rot, and another says 'No. Particles will rejoin in a thousand years, and there will be a Resurrection of you' (LA 1966: 53; also 54 and 71).

Furthermore, Wittgenstein (or the note-takers) uses alternative words to refer to these cases, like "controversies" or "differences" (LA 1966: 56). When Wittgenstein does use the word 'disagreement', he struggles with the question of whether it is right to use this word: "What would be the real sign of disagreement? What might be the real criterion of his disagreeing with me?" (LA 1966: 71).

Therefore, there are valid reasons to be cautious when it comes to labelling the cases treated in LRB as disagreements. After all, Wittgenstein insists that he cannot contradict a person who believes in the Last Judgement, even if he does not believe in it himself. So, declining to call this situation a disagreement seems sensible. However, this reasoning presupposes a rather narrow view of what disagreements are; a view according to which a disagreement consists exclusively of a party believing a proposition and another party disbelieving it. If this is how 'disagreement' is conceived, then the difference between Wittgenstein and the believer of the Last Judgement should not be deemed as such. This seems to be Schönbaumsfeld's position: "believer and unbeliever do not necessarily have a 'disagreement' at all, for this presupposes that *one can deny what the other affirms*" (2014: 103, emphasis in original).

I agree with Schönbaumsfeld, and other like-minded commentators, that Wittgenstein cannot *contradict* the believer, in the sense of denying what she affirms. However, the lack of a contradiction does not necessarily mean that the word "disagreement" is inadequate. Schönbaumsfeld says that "Wittgenstein thinks that religious believer and atheist do not necessarily have a disagreement at all, but are rather *engaged in different activities"* (2014: 108). This is a disjunction that I wish to avoid: either two people (or groups) contradict each other and therefore disagree, or they are playing different language games, and thus cannot disagree. Once we let go of the idea that a disagreement always involves contradiction (that is, that disagreements require a person affirming what the other denies), there is no reason to think that people "engaging in different activities" cannot disagree. If you attend Mass and I go to a women's rights activist group, we are participating in different activities. These activities are not in opposition *per se*; you can very well join me at the activist group right after Mass. However, participation in different forms of life could result in deep disagreements. So, even if the Catholic and the feminist can be described as engaging in different 'activities' when it comes to the question of whether abortion should be legal, there may be a real conflict in their views, which can be adequately described as a disagreement.

> When Wittgenstein said that he could not contradict the assertor, he meant he could not say *what the atheist said*; he did not mean that he could not do *something else* … if

> we see Wittgenstein as holding in the Lectures that only two people who play the same language game can contradict each other, or anything like that, that view is being *read into* the Lectures. (Diamond 2005: 103-104).

All things considered, this dispute seems to be merely verbal. We all agree that some conflicts of opinion cannot (or should not) be described as a person affirming precisely what the other denies. I am nonetheless willing to refer to these as 'disagreement', where other authors are not. As Martin Kusch (*unpublished*) says, Wittgenstein would not be too preoccupied in this verbal dispute; "Say what you choose, so long as it does not prevent you from seeing the facts" (PI 1957: 79).

> *Not much hinges on whether we use the term 'disagreement'* for Wittgenstein's distance from the believer who asserts his belief in the Last Judgement. What is important is to understand the peculiarity of this kind of distance, and how it differs from more familiar or standard forms of disagreement (Kusch *unpublished*: 9).

Therefore, I will continue to use the word 'disagreement' and mean it in a broad sense. Following Cora Diamond, I use 'contradiction' solely for the cases where one party affirms a proposition that the other party denies.

iv. The grammar of "belief."

The role of disagreements in LRB is to explore a theme that runs throughout the lectures, namely, the analysis of the grammar of 'belief' and 'believing'. There are two 'species' of belief being contrasted to each other (Kusch *unpublished*). In the disagreement over the Last Judgement, we can see a rift between different beliefs:

> Suppose somebody made this guidance for this life: believing in the Last Judgment. Whenever he does anything, this is before his mind. In a way, how are we to know whether to say *he believes this will happen or not*? (LA 1966: 53).

Wittgenstein points to a difference between believing *in* the Last Judgement as a guide to one's life and believing *that* it will happen. To see why we use the same word in two very different ways, we must conduct a grammatical investigation of 'belief'. In the *Lectures on Belief* (WCL 2017: 203-253), Wittgenstein criticises the idea that belief is a feeling. We are tempted to think of believing as having a certain feeling, attitude or mental state because it can then be 'attached' to any 'content' (e.g., a proposition). This model squares with the fact that we use 'belief' to refer to a wide variety of things: ethical principles, mundane facts, introspective records, etc. Furthermore, "I believe" can be used to express both doubt and the firmest of convictions. Therefore, if 'believing' were something like a feeling of acceptance or endorsement, it would explain why we are inclined to use it in such a diverse fashion.

However, Wittgenstein shows us that language, once again, deceives us. Because we use a single word in such different circumstances, we are inclined to think that there must be something that all of these cases have in common. In the case of 'belief', the *thing* that all instances of belief must share is a feeling that accompanies the belief-content. However tempting it may be to equate believing with having a certain feeling, it is simply not the case:

> This word ('belief') occurs the whole time in our ordinary lives. – Why should it be so rare to talk about the feeling of belief, in fact hardly ever, whereas we talk about belief the whole time? You would have thought that, if belief is a feeling, nothing would be more common than to talk about that feeling, if belief is common, which, in fact, it is … on second thoughts, you'd see that we don't know for our lives one feeling of belief (WCL 2017: 204-5).

The word 'belief' can deceive us into thinking that the various things we call beliefs are fundamentally the same. Nowhere is this more problematic, according to Wittgenstein, than in the case of religion. The following extract, I find, is crucial to understanding Wittgenstein's views on religious belief:

> I believe: the word *'believing' has wrought horrible havoc in religion...* But if instead of 'belief in Christ' you would say: *'love of Christ'*, the paradox vanishes, i.e., the irritation to the intellect ... (PPO 2003: 247).

The idea that when talking about religious attitudes, 'belief' is interchangeable with 'love' can also be found in *Culture and Value*: "This message (the Gospels) is seized on by a human being *believingly (i.e. lovingly)*" (VB 1998: 38). Wittgenstein is adamant that we should not think of religion as (only) a doctrine[7]. It is not the intellect which is compelled by Christianity, and it is not by proofs that one comes to believe in God:

> A proof of God ought really to be something by means of which you can convince yourself of God's existence. But I think that *believers* who offered such proofs wanted to analyse and make a case for their 'belief' with their intellect, although they themselves *would never have arrived at belief by way of such proofs* (VB 1998: 92).

It is noteworthy that in this quote, the word "believers" is in italics, while "belief" is in scare-quotes. Those may be hints that when talking about religion, the word 'belief' is only appropriate up to a certain point. The use of the word should not fool us into thinking that religious belief is the same as non-religious belief: "although it's *belief*, it is really a way of living, or a way of judging life" (VB 1998: 73). The fact that the grammars of 'belief' and 'believe' are so multifaceted makes a disagreement of the form "I believe in God, and she doesn't" seem much simpler than it really is. The grammar of 'belief' makes it seem as if an atheist can contradict a theist because they both harbour a belief.

A clear example of the view that religious disagreements can be cases of contradictions is Richard Feldman (2007), who characterises the disagreement between the theist and the atheist as the former affirming the proposition that God exists and the latter denying it. However, Wittgenstein's views on religion complicate matters. In what constitutes a departure from the mainstream

[7] Cf. VB 1998: 32. To stress that Christianity is for Wittgenstein not *only* a doctrine (i.e., a comprehensive set of factual claims and theories) is *not* the same as defending a 'fideist' or 'expressivist' reading of Wittgenstein's views on religion where "religious discourse is essentially self-referential and does not allow us to talk about reality" (Amesbury 2017).

treatment of disagreements, Wittgenstein claims that, even if he does not believe in the Last Judgement, he cannot contradict a person who does.

> Suppose that someone believed in the Last Judgement, and I don't, does this mean that I believe the opposite to him, just that there won't be such a thing? I would say: 'not at all, or not always' (LA 1966: 53).

Wittgenstein's point is that if two people stand so far apart regarding an issue, particularly one concerning religion, it is unlikely that they would be expressing the same thing with their words (e.g., LA 1966: 55). Thus, for Wittgenstein, the disagreement between the theist and atheist can never be a clear case of contradiction. I find Wittgenstein's point convincing, as I would describe neither my atheism nor my disagreement with the theist as the belief that there is no God. My atheism, instead, is better described as the absence of 'God' in my life; far from dwelling on arguments against God's existence, the concept of 'God' rarely appears in my life. At the same time, however, I do not think that Feldman is entirely off-track: when push comes to shove, I have to say that I believe that there is no God. This is what makes deep disagreements so puzzling; *they are incompatibilities that should not be thought of as contradictions,* and yet we cannot help but think of them this way. When we take deep disagreements seriously, we have a double theoretical duty: we need to honour the fact that the parties' positions do conflict with each other while also recognising how widely different they are.

v. Failure to contradict: Propositions are not super-pictures

Wittgenstein openly denies one of the most widespread assumptions in the literature on disagreements: that not believing a proposition automatically commits you to either believing the opposite proposition or abstaining from judgment. Wittgenstein rejects this idea because he denies its underlying assumption, namely, that "if a sentence is composed grammatically of words we understand, we can judge it to be true or false or inadequately supported by evidence"

(Diamond 2005: 107). In contrast, for Wittgenstein, understanding what someone is saying entails more than merely knowing the words they utter and how they relate to each other.

Because we can imagine a string of words uttered meaningfully in some contexts, we assume that we can grasp their meaning *in any context,* independently of how and when they are uttered. The underlying assumption is that the meanings of words are independent of their application; "as if the sense were an atmosphere accompanying the word, which is carried with it into every kind of application" (PI 1957: 117). This is why when Feldman says that theists and atheists disagree about the truth of the proposition that God exists, he has no reason to suppose that there is something undetermined about the proposition. Thus, so long as both parties understand the words being used, they can disagree about the truth-value of the proposition.

In what appears to be a digression, Wittgenstein discusses what it would mean to know that one's thought is of one's (Wittgenstein's) brother in America. He states,

> If you said that the thought was in some way a picture of his brother in America -Yes, but by *what method of projection is it a picture of this*? How queer it is that there should be no doubt what it is a picture of (LA 1966: 66).

Wittgenstein's complaint is not about the use of the term 'picture' (which he thinks is "quite all right" LA 1966: 67). He complains that it is unclear what the *method of projection* of the picture is. Pictures need methods of projection in order to depict; it is not inherent in the picture what it is supposed to depict (PI 1957:23 and 139). With ambiguous pictures, it is easy to see how context determines application; whether a cross denotes the Swiss flag, a pharmacy or a crossroad will depend on the context in which we encounter it. But, Wittgenstein's point is that *all pictures* depend on contextual features to depict. In some cases, however, the use of a picture seems so obvious, so inescapable, that we cannot avoid thinking that the picture *indicates* this specific use. It seems as if the picture did not have a method of projection, but that it depicted something entirely by virtue of itself. In these cases, we are tempted to think of it as a *super-picture*.

> With a picture, it still depends on the method of projection, whereas here it seems that you get rid of the projecting relation, and are absolutely certain that this is a thought of that (LA 1966: 67).

Wittgenstein uses the term "super-picture" not to name a special kind of picture that exists, but to designate a chimaera that philosophers are after. David Egan tells us that "Wittgenstein often uses 'super' as a prefix to denote the kind of superlative rigidity that we do not find in life but often seek in philosophy" (Egan 2011: 62). Hence, if a super-picture "dictates its own application" (Egan 2011: 60), then it will not vary according to contextual circumstances, and its meaning remains rigid. Nonetheless, I find it more illuminating to think of the difference between pictures and super-pictures in terms of *dependence and independence*. The crucial point, as I see it, is not that the applications of pictures vary, but that applications of pictures are not autonomous, but depend on external factors.

In LRB, Wittgenstein gives us examples of methods of projection for different pictures. A picture of a tropical plant in a book is used to show a specimen that exists in another part of the world (LA 1966: 63), while old photographs show me pictures of my aunts, whom I never met (LA 1966: 59). The picture of God as painted by Michelangelo, however, is not used in the same way, as we are not supposed to think that it is a portrait of someone whom we might encounter if we were to travel to another place or a different time. "If we ever saw this, we certainly wouldn't think this the Deity. The *picture has to be used in an entirely different way* if we are to call the man in that queer blanket 'God'" (LA 1966: 63)[8]. What is true for actual pictures also applies to *thoughts*, which, just like pictures, have different methods of projection. Nevertheless, we tend to think of thoughts as super-pictures because we take it to be obvious what a thought is a thought of.

Just as with thought, taking a proposition as graspable without the need to account for its application, is to take it as a super-picture. It implies that we can grasp the meaning of a proposition solely for its content, independently of its use, context and purpose, i.e., *its methods*

[8] It would not be right, based on these considerations, to conclude that religious pictures have a distinct method of projection compared to 'secular' ones. Think of Delacroix's "La liberté guidant le Peuple"; one could say that the picture has to be used in an entirely different way if we are to call the woman in that queer dress 'liberty'.

of projection. The sentence 'there will be a Last Judgement' is used differently by the religious believer and the non-believer, which is why Wittgenstein, playing the role of the unbeliever, says that "the religious person never believes what I describe" (LA 1966: 55). To think that a proposition can exist independently of the sentence which expresses it, and independently of how that sentence is used is tantamount to thinking that a picture can be grasped independently of how it is projected. Once we let go of the idea that propositions are super-pictures, it begins to seem doubtful that the religious believer and the atheist have different attitudes towards the same proposition, and thus, that they can contradict each other.

vi. Methods of projection

If we do not take propositions to be super-pictures, then we have to treat them in the way that Wittgenstein treats *pictures*. 'Pictures' is a term of art; a theoretically charged notion used by Wittgenstein throughout his philosophical thought, albeit with very different senses. One of the features of pictures is that they *only depict given a method of projection*. The methods of projection, or application, of pictures, refer to the role they play in the context that they appear in (is *this* cross informing me about a nearby pharmacy or a crossroad?). The role of a picture determines how we interpret it; *how we see it as*. What are the methods of projection of sentences or expressions?

> If you say to me – 'Do you cease to exist?' – I should be *bewildered*, and would not know what exactly this is to mean. 'If you don't cease to exist, you will suffer after death', there I begin to *attach ideas***,** perhaps ethical ideas of responsibility. The point is, that although these are well-known words, and although I can go from one sentence to another sentence, or to pictures [I don't know what *consequences you draw* from this statement] (LA 1966: 69-70).

Here, Wittgenstein is confused by the question "do you cease to exist?" because he cannot attach any ideas to it. When he starts to attach ideas to it, he starts to understand what the statement

means. In the various disagreements considered by Wittgenstein and his students in LRB, the possibility of drawing *consequences* from a statement, as well as of attaching or connecting *ideas* or *thoughts* to it, recurs again and again (e.g., LA 1966: 55, 65, 69, 70, 72).

If a sentence is a picture, we need to know how it is *used* in order to understand it. The ideas and thoughts that we attach to a statement, as well as the consequences we draw from it, tell us how it is being used. In other words, these are the *methods of projection of the sentence*. When we do not have a clear idea or thought 'attached' to an expression, or when we do not know which consequences to draw from a sentence, then we do not fully understand what is being said, and a feeling of perplexity follows. Understanding an expression means understanding what *it does*. Attaching ideas, connecting thoughts, drawing consequences; these are all things we do with an expression. However, 'idea' should not be understood as a private personal phenomenon: "what is commonly called 'having an idea', has a reference to the *technique of the word*".

> We are all here using the word 'death', which is a public instrument, which has a whole technique [of usage]. Then someone says he has an idea of death … If you treat this [your idea] as something private, with what right are you calling it an idea of death? … [In this case,] it does not belong on the game played with 'death', which we all know and understand. If what he calls his 'idea of death' is to become relevant, it must become part of our game (LA 1966: 68-69).

It is not that one connects private thoughts with a sentence, and that we fail to understand or contradict each other because we attach different thoughts to the same sentence. Words are public instruments, and the ideas we attach to them indicate the techniques by which these instruments are applied. If it is a shared technique, we can recognise the way that the word is being used. If instead, you present your "own private idea of death", in what way is it an idea of 'death', since the word is a public instrument?

> When I talked the other day of using two different pictures for the same situation... I don't mean that the difference between you and Malcolm is merely a *psychological* one. They don't necessarily differ on pictures at the moment of usage. But entirely

> different facts are *connected* with these words. If you are making a different picture, different pictures come into your mind (WCL 2017: 120).

"If you are making a different picture, different pictures come into your mind". This statement seems puzzling because Wittgenstein uses 'picture' in two different senses (in fact, Wittgenstein uses 'picture' in multiple ways, which can be confusing at times.) I take this sentence, and this passage, to be saying that the difference in pictures is not psychological; it does not come down to what *images* (*Vorstellung*) a person might have in their mind. They can think of different things at the moment of uttering an expression or not, that is of no interest to us. Saying that someone uses a picture is a "grammatical remark": "[What I say] can only be verified by the consequences he does or does not draw" (LA 1966: 72).

vii. Deep disagreements are grounded in pictures

So far, I have argued that the deep disagreements discussed by Wittgenstein and his pupils are caused by a lack of shared methods of projection between the parties. But what pictures are being projected?

> 'God's eye sees everything' -I want to say of this that it uses a picture… We associate a particular use with a picture … I meant: what conclusions are you going to draw? etc. Are eyebrows going to be talked of, in connection with the Eye of God? (LA 1966: 71).

'God's eye sees everything' is a figurative representation of our grammar, in this case, of our theological grammar. The phrase is short of a thesis, but it invites us to think of God as seeing. Pictures are analogical conceptions; we conceptualise something in terms of something else: we see x *as* y. Speaking of God as having eyes, ironically, conceptualises it by way of analogy to ourselves. But once again, the picture does not have a unique method of application; thus, it is not obvious whether it is appropriate to talk of God's eyebrows. Talking about God's eye, but not of God's eyebrows, is to use the picture in a particular way; to "associate a particular use with a picture". If someone were to talk of God's eyebrows because, for them, God is anthropomorphic,

they would be using the same picture differently. Using a picture in different ways means drawing different consequences and attaching different thoughts and ideas to it. For example, this conceptualisation of God as having eyes pertains to the thought of being watched. This thought has consequences in my life; if God's eye sees everything, then even my most secret activities are subject to judgement.

To expand on why deep disagreements are between pictures, I turn to the case of the man who thinks of illness as punishment (LA 1966: 54-55). In this example, we have two imaginary people: one who thinks of retribution when he reflects on what happens to him, and the other who does not (at times, Wittgenstein himself).

> Suppose you had two people, and one of them, when he had to decide which course to take, thought of retribution, and the other did not. One person might, for instance, be inclined to take everything that happened to him *as* a reward or punishment, and another person doesn't think *of* this at all (LA 1966: 54).

The first thing to notice about this case is that the two people cannot contradict each other. When Wittgenstein says, "you can't say they believe different *things*" (LA 1966: 55), he means that their difference should not be interpreted as one person affirming a proposition that the other denies, i.e. a contradiction.

A second thing to notice in this example is the use of prepositions: "thought *of* retribution", "think *of* punishment", "doesn't think *of* this at all". The "of" is crucial. It is not that this person thinks *that* illness is an act of retribution, but that he thinks *of* retribution when he reflects on his illness. This tells me that the difference being explored here is not a difference *in belief*, or at least, not primarily. Whether the person *believes* (whether she has a conscious endorsement of) the proposition 'everything that happens to me is an act of retribution' is not important; he may believe that or not. The important thing is that, regardless of the man's doxastic state, he is inclined to take everything that happens to him *as* a reward or punishment; he is inclined to *think this way*. This person's *way of thinking* about illness is different from Wittgenstein's. These

different ways of thinking cannot be reduced to the parties believing different propositions, but they can be explained by the parties' holding different pictures.

Wittgenstein begins by talking about retribution and ends up talking about illness as punishment. Why? Because taking illness as a punishment is a consequence of thinking in terms of retribution, i.e., of *using the picture of retribution*. Using a picture entails being inclined to apply a certain logic to an issue; in this case, the logic of retribution to personal occurrences. For instance, whenever I act wrongly, I am punished by illnesses, accidents, rejections, etc. Alternatively, whenever I do something right, I am rewarded with luck, money, good health, etc.

Wittgenstein imagines someone asking him whether he thinks that illnesses are caused by retribution: "Suppose someone is ill and he says: 'This is a punishment', and I say: If I'm ill, I don't think of punishment at all" (LA 1966: 55). Wittgenstein's point is not that he *believes* that illnesses are not punishments (although, presumably, he does). His point is that he does not connect the two because he does not use the picture of retribution to think of personal occurrences. A person who thinks in terms of retribution *can* contradict this man. For example, she can say that generally, illness is a divine or cosmic punishment, but not in this particular case. Or she can say that his illness is a punishment, but not for what the man thinks it is. A person who does not think of punishment when he thinks of illness, however, cannot contradict the man because they do not move within the same conceptual space.

> An *enormous difference* would be between those people for whom the picture is constantly in the foreground, and the others who just didn't use it at all (LA 1966: 56; see also, WCL 2017: 118-9).

viii. A picture-based account

If my reasoning has been on the right track, the view of deep disagreements that emerges from the *Lectures on Religious Belief*, a picture-based view, differs from the Wittgensteinian theory of deep disagreements sketched in section i. The picture-based view has the benefit of being aligned with

Wittgenstein's post-Tractarian views in three crucial ways: it is non-foundationalist, it emphasises the interconnectedness of our beliefs, and it revolves around sense.

Firstly, the view that I propose, that deep disagreements are caused by the use of different pictures, does not lend itself to foundationalism because it does not entail that beliefs are stratified. A picture is not a proposition, hence, not a belief. A picture is a pattern of thought, the logic that we impose to a domain. In other words, a picture is *the way* we think of an issue. Therefore, pictures are not basic or fundamental; we do not conceive of a domain in a certain way *because of* a picture; rather, the picture *is* the way that we conceive of the domain.

The non-fundamentality of our beliefs is related to their *interconnectedness.* A hinge-based view of deep disagreements locates the conflict at the level of hinges. Finding a 'core' to the disagreement can help us analyse a phenomenon. However, it can also obscure the complexity of the disagreement, making it seem as if the parties only agreed on their hinge commitment, their disagreement would just disappear. In contrast, a deep disagreement is never over just one proposition (e.g., "this illness is a punishment for my sinful behaviour"), but about many others in the vicinity. An account of deep disagreements based on pictures better captures the way that deep disagreements are *systematic*[9]. The different ways in which the parties think of the issue they disagree about explain why their disagreement extends to many related propositions in the domain.

A further feature of deep disagreements that a picture-based account is better-fitted to explain is the *breakdown in understanding* between the parties. The parties to a deep disagreement are often baffled and surprised by how the other party uses certain terms and which connections they make with them. This is because deep disagreements are as much about *sense* as they are about beliefs (if not more so). Since pictures are the way that we conceive of an issue, the fact that the parties use different pictures explains why they *make sense* of it differently. For example, because Wittgenstein does not use the same picture as his interlocutor to conceive of a phenomenon, his

[9] Sanford Goldberg calls "systematic disagreement" to disagreements where "what is at issue is part of a broad and interconnected set of issues (where disagreement extends over most or all of these issues)" (Goldberg 2013: 1192).

understanding of their position is limited. Wittgenstein *gets* the logical space in which the man operates, but he cannot bring himself to use such a picture.

These considerations are admittedly vague and far from a detailed account of a picture-based theory of deep disagreements; the reader is bound to have more questions than answers about this account. But the aim of this paper is not to defend a picture-based account over a hinge theory of deep disagreements. Rather, this paper merely aims to show how, when we shift our focus from *OC* to other parts of Wittgenstein's oeuvre, we find an entirely different, and in my view, more promising account of deep disagreement.

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