

# The Human Face of Naturalism: Putnam and Diamond on Religious Belief and the “Gulfs between Us”

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## ABSTRACT

Hilary Putnam and Cora Diamond both wrote on Wittgenstein’s *Three Lectures on Religious Belief*. They did it quite differently; my ultimate aim in this article is to explore this difference. Putnam’s view of religion is largely a view of ethical life; I look thus into his writings on ethics and his proposals to face the relativist menace therein. Still, in his incursions into philosophy of religion, describing religious experience through authors such as Rosenzweig, Buber, or Levinas, Putnam deals with what Diamond calls, after Wittgenstein, “the gulfs between us.” Such gulfs, and the threat of relativism they bring, need to be accounted for. With that purpose in mind I complement Putnam’s reading of the *Three Lectures* with Diamond’s own reading.

Those who know my writings from that period [the early 1950s] may wonder how I reconciled my religious streak, which existed to some extent even back then, and my general scientific materialist worldview at that time. The answer is that I didn’t reconcile them. I was a thoroughgoing atheist, and I was a believer. I simply kept these two parts of myself separate.

—Hilary Putnam (1992, 1)

## 1. RELIGION AS ETHICS AND THE NATURE OF PUTNAM’S WRITINGS ON RELIGION

How does religion, broadly conceived, sit with Putnam’s philosophy? In what follows I try to answer this question. I will often take Wittgenstein as an object of comparison since, like Wittgenstein’s, Putnam’s view of religion is largely a view of the ethical life. This seems to be so even if Putnam explicitly pays attention to the texts of contemporary religious thinkers, namely Jewish thinkers, such as Franz Rosenzweig, Martin Buber or Emmanuel Levinas (as Wittgenstein paid attention to Kierkegaard, one might say). Yet Putnam’s worry, after Wittgenstein, is how we see our lives and transform our lives: Cavellian moral perfectionism guides his approach to religious thinking (Putnam 1992, 177–78; Putnam 2008, 59).

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What then is Putnam doing exactly in his writings on religion, namely in *Jewish Philosophy as a Guide to Life?* (Putnam 2008). One thing he is doing is carefully reading continental philosophers such as Levinas, taking into consideration the background knowledge of Husserl and Heidegger it requires, and trying to summarize this material for the lay reader interested in religious thought. In fact, as Ruth Anna Putnam points out, his approach to the Jewish religious thinkers I mentioned is mostly exegetical.<sup>1</sup> This means, among other things, that by sticking to the letter of their writings he evades the problems of mainstream analytic philosophy of religion such as whether religious belief is warranted and how. He is equally unworried about strictures of Judaism as they are discussed among religious Jews. Following Levinas, he sees such discussions as “domestic quarrels.”<sup>2</sup> In fact not only historical or sociological questions of religious practices or religiosity are beside the point but also, “theorizing about God is beside the point” (Putnam 2008, 6). Thinking this is in fact something all the religious thinkers Putnam comments on in *Jewish Philosophy as Guide to Life* have in common (Putnam 2008, 6).

It is one thing though to believe that theorizing about God is beside the point and that disputes about strictures of Judaism are domestic quarrels and another thing not to be interested in the ethical and political faces of religion. Putnam is much too interested in the practical life of humanity to be able to turn a blind eye to the fact that in the contemporary world people clash and die because of religion. This is something Wittgenstein did not care much about. It is safe to say that he did not care much about aspects of religion outside the strictly obsessively individual. His interest was in saving one’s own soul, the strife of the tormented individual; he was most likely totally unmoved by the social or political aspects of religion, of the kind which exercised people such as Hume or Russell. It cannot be exactly so with Putnam. This is one reason why the issue of relativism which never ceases to worry Putnam—the philosopher of mind, language, and science cannot be completely absent from his approach to religion.<sup>3</sup> Yet questions with such shape are not directly dealt with in his writings on religious thinkers. Of course as he goes on with exegesis, as, e.g., in *Jewish Philosophy as a Guide to Life*, he does not fail to point out what shape some Wittgensteinian “gulfs between us”<sup>4</sup> might have. Putnam’s readings of Rosenzweig, Buber, and Levinas (and Wittgenstein) go a long way in characterizing religious attitudes (Putnam’s own religious attitudes, in fact, as he admits<sup>5</sup>). They also give us a clear picture of how distant some people’s experience of life might be from that of other people, due to religious attitudes.

Here are some examples taken from *Jewish Philosophy as a Guide to Life*. Some people, like Rosenzweig, think that revelation is an ongoing process in their life; that revelation is an event between God and man; that they are always in the presence of God; that the only commandment is to love God; that one should pray to meet the demand of the day,<sup>6</sup> that one should meet the demand of the day with courage and confidence. Some other people obviously do not think so. Some people think, after Buber, that one comes to God by entering into an I-You (*Du*) relationship, and that an I-You relation is never a matter of knowledge. Although it is impossible to theorize about God one can address God. Man receives not a content but a presence, a presence as strength. Such presence includes three elements: the abundance of

reciprocity, of being admitted; the inexpressive confirmation of meaning (the question of the meaning of life vanishes); the idea that this meaning is not a meaning of another life but of this life, this world (Putnam 2008, 55–67). Some people go around thinking it and some other people do not think that at all (they might very well be, for instance, analytic philosophers of religion). Think finally of Putnam’s profound and sympathetic reading of Levinas. Some people see the “trace” of God in the face of the Other. They think that an infinite willingness to be available to the suffering and neediness of others is demanded of them; that they are obligated with respect to the Other, that they are to be infinitely more demanding of themselves than of others. Many others simply don’t think this.

The presence of such religious frames of mind in some people, while they are completely absent in others, might amount to “gulfs between them.” This per se does not interest Putnam in *Jewish Philosophy as Guide to Life*. But when he considers Wittgenstein’s *Three Lectures on Religious Belief* he faces the problem. One crucial example in the *Three Lectures* is that of the man who believes in the Final Judgement talking to the man who doesn’t, and talking past him. It may be unfair to Putnam to jumble together the experiences above with this last example (Wittgenstein’s Last-Judgement man has a straight theological belief, precisely of the sort Putnam is not worried about in *Jewish Philosophy as a Guide to Life*). But my purpose for now is simply to point out the gulfs between people that religious beliefs of different sorts might involve. Certainly something can be said about such situations regarding relativism and conceptual incommensurability. This is my ultimate interest and this is what I will bring Cora Diamond in for a bit further on. She is another reader of Wittgenstein’s *Three Lectures on Religious Belief*, and she will help us understand better what Putnam himself is doing, or not doing, when considering religious belief and the gulfs between us.

## 2. ETHICS AND RELATIVISM

First, since I claim that Putnam’s view of religion is largely a view of ethical life, and that in itself supposes a stance in ethics, I start by considering Putnam’s views in ethics (Putnam 2002; 2004). From his pragmatist, Deweyan, viewpoint, Putnam sees ethics as a “system of interrelated concerns, which are mutually supporting but also in partial tension” (Putnam 2004, 22). It is from this perspective that he goes about deconstructing noncognitivist views of value judgments traceable to logical positivism, or criticizing the all-too-frequent restriction of options, when it comes to ethical discussions, to Kantianism and (empiricist) utilitarianism. In his two books on ethics Putnam thus welcomes the collapse of the fact-value dichotomy (Putnam 2002) and sets out to explain how ethics can be objective without being metaphysical (Putnam 2004). Following the line of pragmatists, Putnam takes the fact-value dichotomy, assumed in many understandings of the nature of moral judgement, to be as dogmatic as the analytic-synthetic distinction.<sup>7</sup> In our thinking in general and not just in our ethical thinking, description and evaluation are intertwined. Also our thinking of practice is “messy” in that it involves many ways of valuing and describing: some valuing is descriptions, and some valuing is not descriptions (Putnam 2004, 74).

The one sure thing is that there is no such thing as neutral facts supplied by perception to which values (maybe “coming from the will”) are added at a later stage.

Putnam was involved in many specific discussions within analytic ethics and part of what he cared about in his criticism of noncognitivist views of ethics was opposing expressivism.<sup>8</sup> According to the expressivist, the function of ethical utterances is to express attitudes. In contrast with this Putnam thinks ethical utterances contain irreducible normative predicates and resist a factorization into descriptive component and attitude. If this is a way of targeting empiricist views of moral judgement and moral motivation, it should be said that, for Putnam, there is no room either for the Kantian dualism of reason and inclination. For Putnam, neither empiricist nor Kantian frameworks do justice to the nature of practical thinking and moral motivation.

Above all both empiricist and Kantian views deprive the world of value and Putnam, like the classic pragmatists, does not see reality as indifferent in terms of value: “reality, as Dewey saw, *makes demands* on us. Values may be created by human beings and human cultures, but I see them as made in response to demands that we do not create” (Putnam 2008, 6).

That there are such demands, that we do not create them, is one step towards Putnam seeing ethics as being objective; another thing Putnam means when he speaks of ethics being objective *without being metaphysical* is that ethics could do and should do without “ontology,” without discussing and postulating objects, such as “ethical facts”. Positing truth-makers for ethical judgments amounts to trying to justify ethics from outside ethics, which for Putnam is simply not possible. Talk of objects is for Putnam a misguided orientation that analytic metaphysics and ethics share. It stems from an obsession with “exist” which has done a great deal of harm to philosophy in the twentieth century.<sup>9</sup>

Clearly not all approaches to ethics focus on the shape of the ethical life; in fact the ones Putnam most often criticizes (empiricist utilitarianism, Kantianism) do not. In order to get from views of ethics centered on understanding the natures of ethical judgement, moral motivation, and ethical utterances to a view of ethics centered on ethical life, both pragmatism and religion are important for Putnam. I briefly mentioned why a pragmatist like Putnam may be unsatisfied with views in ethics which start from a view of the world without value.<sup>10</sup> Yet the crucial thing for the purpose in this article is what is left as a positive view of ethics after the criticisms above. The positive view of ethics Putnam puts forward is the following. Like Levinas (as he himself puts it responding to Ruth Anna Putnam [Putnam 2015]), Putnam believes that fundamental moral values are universal (to which he adds: although not one, *pace* Levinas<sup>11</sup>) but obligations (such as justice and compassion) are compatible with more than one way of life. The idea that there is something universal about ethics is thus to keep, and yet to be carefully distinguished from, the idea of a universal way of life. Such an idea about values and obligations is spelled out in Putnam’s engagement with Habermas,<sup>12</sup> namely discussing what Habermas calls “values and norms.”

Putnam thinks we should be less Kantian and less formalist than Habermas in thinking of ethics. Habermas sharply separates norms (universally valid statements of obligation, treated in a Kantian way) and values (which he sees as contingent social

products which vary as different life-worlds vary, and thinks should be treated in a naturalistic way). For Habermas, norms and values connect only at the metalevel, in that values have to “stand” being defended rationally. He thinks one simply cannot come up with a value which is more than a preference (mine or of some life-world, in Habermas terminology). Putnam believes Habermas thus makes values as noncognitive as the positivists think they are—and that is his core criticism. As he puts it, Habermas simply assumes that disagreement about values, as disagreement about norms, is a fact of life. The minimalist Kantianism of Habermas’s discourse ethics is meant to work against that background.

A key to Putnam’s view of the ethical is thus the fact that he believes that one can and one should be less minimalist and more substantial about values than Habermas. He has several important criticisms of Habermas’s minimalism (Putnam 2002).<sup>13</sup> But his main point is that Kantianism as defended by Habermas, or by others, always ultimately treats values as psychological facts, or natural impulses (Putnam 2002, 129), seeing them as no more than contingencies of the life-worlds. For Habermas, when it comes to ethics “one needs a few categorical imperatives, but not too many” (Putnam 2002, 115). Putnam thinks that is simply too little. Kantian norms do not exhaust what is objective in ethics. Given the fact that the formulation of norms is bound to contain value terms, relativism of any kind in respect to values simply could not leave norms unaffected.

This is where Putnam’s incursions in ethics lead; this is what he has to say in such contexts about relativism and value. Relativism in ethics is unwelcome and unwarranted and this should arise from the pragmatist’s criticism of mainstream positions in ethics (basically naturalist-empiricist and Kantian, even under their most sophisticated guises). The pragmatist ideal of an ethical life then takes center stage. One basic feature of such ethical life is the idea that there are moral values which are universal and there are obligations such as justice and compassion which are compatible with more than one way of life. This is where I want to start considering Putnam’s approach to the relativism from another angle. Here what’s at stake are not the life-worlds and cultures Habermas has in mind when he discusses ethics but simply the ways of thinking of people by our side. Here we come across the gulfs between us which interest Wittgenstein in the *Three Lectures*.

### 3. WITTGENSTEIN’S THREE LECTURES READ BY PUTNAM

In two of the nine chapters of *Renewing Philosophy* (chapter 7, “Wittgenstein on Religious Belief,” and chapter 8, “Wittgenstein on Reference and Relativism”) Putnam is involved in reading Wittgenstein’s *Three Lectures of Religious Belief*. Simon Blackburn calls it an “extended and respectful meditation” (2015, 735).

Putnam depicts Wittgenstein’s lectures as an example of what a philosophical investigation should be, contrasting it with David Lewis’s conception of what philosophy does (Putnam 1992, 136–39).<sup>14</sup> He acknowledges that perhaps the only sure thing about the lectures is that Wittgenstein thinks the religious man and the atheist talk past each other (Putnam 1992, 143). It is not the case that one negates what the other asserts when one says he believes in the Last Judgement and the other says he doesn’t. The relation between them is not of simple contradiction, not

straightforward disagreement. Neither is it a matter of difference in meaning: “I understand all he says,” Wittgenstein says regarding the religious man, “I have read the same books” (Putnam 2002, 151). What is the relation between them then? Is it that what the religious man says is incommensurable with the ordinary descriptive language used by those around him? In this context Putnam even uses the terms “incommensurable” and “incommensurability,” which he usually does not particularly favour (Putnam 1992, 143). Is the religious man’s language expressive? Is it noncognitive? Is it that the religious man and the atheist are not able to communicate because they do not mean the same with the same words, and that is what “incommensurability” is?

One reason Putnam values Wittgenstein’s lectures is simply that there Wittgenstein goes against simplistic views of religious belief and religious language. Wittgenstein never accepted the “facile idea that religion is essentially conceptual confusion” (Putnam 2008, 11). Putnam goes on situating Wittgenstein’s position within ethics and philosophy of religion by connecting the *Three Lectures* with Wittgenstein’s *Remarks on Frazer’s Golden Bough* (Wittgenstein 1993; Putnam 2002, 170). We know what religious beliefs are not for Wittgenstein. They are not false prescientific theories, subject to standards of verification or confirmation, as in the “supercilious and self-congratulatory” view of Frazer. Religious utterances are not “noncognitive talk,” emotive language used to express an attitude (this way of seeing things goes along with a package including the fact-value dichotomy as a metaphysical contrast, which Putnam rejects). From Wittgenstein’s *Three Lectures* Putnam retains the idea of religious belief as a picture (Putnam 2002, 148), a picture which has total weight in one’s life, a “picture that is at the root of all our thinking.”<sup>15</sup> Granted, being in the grip of a picture is a frequent target of Wittgenstein’s criticism. Yet in this particular context Wittgenstein is not criticizing the religious person for being in the grip of a picture. Not all pictures are bad (Putnam 2002, 157); some are the ultimate ground of a person’s life and thinking. This is something Putnam wants to keep. As he later says in *Jewish Philosophy as a Guide to Life*,

According to the interpretation I went on to offer, Wittgenstein did not, in the end, offer a single “model.” Rather he tried to get his students to see how, for *homo religiosus*, the meaning of his or her words is not exhausted by criteria in a public language, but is deeply interwoven with the sort of person the particular religious individual has chosen to be and with pictures that are the foundation of that individual’s life. (Putnam 2008, 5)

As in ethics, what matters for Putnam in religion, as seen through the eyes of Wittgenstein’s *Lectures*, is life. Putnam’s final point about this in his reading of the *Three Lectures* is a point about relativism and the desire for foundations. He thinks relativism and the desire for a metaphysical foundation are part of the same disease (Putnam 2002, 177). He reminds us of Cavell’s idea that being alienated is part of the human condition and of what philosophical reflection does there. He ends with the idea that if Wittgenstein gives us a good example in the *Three Lectures* of how philosophical reflection can be more than “creating new tempests in old teapots,” it

is because he gives us “an honest and clear view of our situation” (2002, 178). He makes a bonfire of the vanities “which are what keep us from trust and, perhaps even more important, from compassion” (2002, 179). These—trust and compassion—are what matter in Putnam’s view of what I have been calling ethical life. These, I suggest, are what Putnam the man<sup>16</sup> found in Jewish religion, namely in the thinkers he analyses in *Jewish Philosophy as a Guide to Life*.

But how did Putnam’s reading of the *Three Lectures* go then? It started from what we may call the epistemological-metaphysical problems posed by the gulfs (problems regarding contradiction, disagreement, meaning, and relativism) and it ended with a version of Cavellian moral perfectionism and religion’s place in it. One feels that there are still things to be made clear from an epistemological and metaphysical viewpoint about the gulfs between us. This is where I believe Diamond may help.

#### 4. WITTGENSTEIN’S *THREE LECTURES* READ BY DIAMOND

Right at the start of her article “Wittgenstein on Religious Belief—The Gulfs Between Us,” Diamond gives a name to what is challenging in the *Three Lectures*. She says: a challenge is posed there to an idea of Frege,<sup>17</sup> the idea that there is a stack of thoughts which are available to us as thinking beings. The challenge to the thinkableness of all thoughts for all is a challenge to the idea of a common intellectual life of humanity. This is yet another way to think of relativism: relativism is the idea that there is no common intellectual life of humanity.<sup>18</sup> Frege’s idea—that if it is possible for A to believe that *p*, or not *p*, then *p* is simply thinkable, thinkable for all thinkers—seems to simply rule out the situation at the beginning of the *Three Lectures*.

Let us go back to the situation. There is the man who believes in the Last Judgement (the assertor) and there is his interlocutor (Wittgenstein, himself, speaking in the first person). Wittgenstein imagines himself saying “Well, possibly, I’m not so sure.” In such a situation there is a gulf between us, Wittgenstein says.<sup>19</sup> It is not a psychological matter, or the lack of mastery of some complexity in topic. It is a situation where someone believes something whereas others cannot either believe it, or deny it, or consider its truth or falsity as not yet determined. If Frege is right about the common intellectual life of humanity there simply should not be such gulfs.

Diamond thinks Wittgenstein’s Tractarian conception of a logical space where all propositions are interconnected is akin to Frege’s view above. According to her, it is such conception of the logical space that is undergoing criticism in the *Three Lectures*. The criticism gives rise to alternative mappings of “logical space” (a metaphor whose effects Diamond is very much interested in).

In the situation above (where there is the man who believes in the Last Judgement and his interlocutor, Wittgenstein, who imagines himself saying “Well, possibly, I’m not so sure”) the concept of belief diverges from what it should be according to what Diamond calls the Fregean-Tractarian schematism. According to such a schematism there is a logical space where all propositions are interconnected. If it is possible for A to believe that *p*, or not *p*, then *p* is simply thinkable for all thinkers. If A believes *p* other thinkers can either believe it, or deny it, or consider its truth or falsity as not yet determined. Yet this is not how one is situated in relation to the man who believes in

the Last Judgement (or resurrection, or seeing you after we die). Diamond goes on spelling out what she thinks Wittgenstein is saying about different ways believers may be distant from each other. Do I contradict the man who believes in the Last Judgement when I say “I don’t know, possibly”? Do I say that his evidence is not adequate or sufficient for such claims? What interests Wittgenstein is that the answer may be: I do neither. This is a point he wants to make against an objector who thinks that if someone has a belief then if you are not in position to contradict him you have not understood him. Wittgenstein rejects this. What we may call the model of common belief, or scientific belief, which goes on contradiction, disagreement, and evidence, is not sufficient here. In such a context what the objector says is perfectly reasonable (there what separates us may be represented by propositions we share) but not in the cases under analysis.

Diamond claims that what Wittgenstein is saying is that there are different ways of standing before the man who believes in the Last Judgement; it is not the case that we face an alternative between merely articulating words and being involved and engaged in argument, agreement, and disagreement. Such claim has a direct connection with Putnam as she interprets him in “How Old Are These Bones?” (Diamond and Gerrard 2003). In Putnam’s example discussed in the article, the question is whether a person in the seventeenth century thinking that “these bones are one million years old” could mean by that what we ourselves mean now. What is at stake is “meaning the same.”

Following Putnam, Diamond wants to criticize the idea that people coming from temporally distant cultures and who do not share modes of investigation and verification cannot mean the same by their words. In order to do that she rejects one particular argument and the idea that Wittgenstein is committed to it. The premises of such argument are that: (1) modes of investigations and verification belong to the grammar, and (2) it is grammar that shows us what we are talking about. The conclusion from such premises is that people cannot share a belief or hypothesis (for instance about the age of the bones which were dug up) if they do not share modes of verification for it. So if you start by thinking that modes of investigations and verification belong to the grammar and if grammar is different, you will think people are not speaking about the same thing. This is something one needs to accept in order to claim that coincidence in the shape of words does not per se indicate that what those people think is the same. Diamond claims Wittgenstein doesn’t, and agrees with Putnam’s way of treating the bones example: the idea is that we can identify what they are speaking about using our way of speaking even when our ways of speaking depart significantly from what would be available to the people whose thought we are describing (Diamond 2015, 612).

If Diamond does not want—and she doesn’t—to drop the idea of a common intellectual life of humanity,<sup>20</sup> claiming this calls for a proposal for replacing Frege’s idea that is being challenged. So she recruits an idea from Rosenzweig: the movement of intertwining of words in human lives, in contrast with the Fregean stack of thoughts. It is such movement of intertwining of words in human lives that is needed for conceiving of the making sense of our words and those of other people.

This is one step further than Putnam on relativism, religious belief, making sense and grammar.<sup>21</sup>

### 5. CONCLUSION: PUTNAM, ETHICS, AND RELIGION

I started this article by asking how religion broadly conceived sits with Putnam's philosophy. I want to suggest that Putnam's view of religion is largely a view of the ethical life; religion helps Putnam, the person, spell out his view of the (ethical) life.<sup>22</sup> Yet spelling out the shape of an ethical life is not, for Putnam, the philosopher, the only issue associated with religious belief and religious language. The existing gulfs between the religious and the nonreligious man when they exchange words, the question whether they mean the same by those words, is another. In his reading of Wittgenstein's *Three Lectures* Putnam faces that problem. Still in such reading he is mostly interested in criticizing, after Wittgenstein, facile ways of considering religious belief and religious language. The point of bringing Diamond in as a reader of Wittgenstein's *Three Lectures* is that she deals directly with the relation between such issues and Putnam's stance on relativism. Keeping the idea of a common intellectual life of humanity, one which neither excludes religion nor is committed to the Fregean stack of thoughts for all to think but rather replaces it with a new "picture," Diamond puts forward a way of facing the relativist menace that goes one step beyond Putnam's reading of the *Three Lectures*, and complements it.

The question remains open, though, whether for Putnam religion is really just a matter of ethics. He asks:

... what did I make *philosophically* of the religious activities that I had undertaken to be a part of? The question has no final answer, because it is one I am still struggling with, and will very likely struggle with as long as I am alive (2008, 3)

In *Jewish Philosophy as a Guide to Life*, he goes some distance in answering it as a person:

Like Dewey, I do not believe in an afterlife, or in God as a supernatural helper who intervenes in the course of history or in the course of our lives to rescue us from disasters. I don't believe in "miracles" in *that* sense. But spirituality—in my case, that means praying, meditating, putting myself in touch with the ideals, rituals, ancient texts, that the Jewish people have passed down for more than two millennia, and undergoing the experiences that go with all of these—is miraculous and natural at the same time, just as the contact with another in what Buber calls the "I-You" relation is miraculous and natural, and the contact with natural beauty or with art can be miraculous and natural.

Religion gives Putnam's naturalism a face it does not have for other contemporary pragmatists. This is so above all because religion gives content to Putnam's stance on the ethical life. Yet perhaps in the juxtaposition of the natural and the miraculous in the quote above something beyond ethics is alluded to. Thinking that religion is such an important dimension of human life is undoubtedly a distinctive trait of

Putnam's liberal naturalism, one whose different connections with the rest of his philosophy remain to be spelled out.<sup>23</sup>

## NOTES

1. Putnam, R.A. (2015, 707).
2. Putnam (2008, 88). Putnam stresses the fact that Levinas's Judaism, "the Judaism that links the Divine to the moral," has always "aspired to be universal" (Levinas, *A Religion for Adults*, quoted in Putnam [2008, 69]).
3. Here as elsewhere it is important to distinguish relativism (the idea that what we believe is at best only true in our own language-game), and conceptual relativity (the idea that in certain cases what exists may depend on which of various conventions we adopt). Putnam deals with the latter in his critical engagement with Quine, and Quine's renewal of the discussion of "on what there is." Such engagement leads to "the obituary of ontology" (Putnam 2004) and in fact opens the way for the questions I am interested in here.
4. The "gulf between us" is Wittgenstein's expression at the beginning of *Three Lectures on Religious Belief* (Wittgenstein 1966, 53). Wittgenstein is the 1/4 Jewish philosopher of the 3 and 1/4 Jewish thinkers Putnam deals with in Putnam (2008).
5. Rosenzweig, Buber, and Levinas help him with something Wittgenstein cannot help him with: facing the problem of reflecting on a religious commitment he himself has made (Putnam 2008, Introduction).
6. The expression is Goethe's (*die Forderung des Tages*).
7. And with important connections to it. For the spelling out of the common empiricist background of both dichotomies, see Putnam (2002).
8. He makes the connection explicit between expressivism and an empiricist metaphysics he rejects (Simon Blackburn criticizes the way he does it in Blackburn [2015]).
9. Putnam traces it to Quine. The parallel position regarding questions of existence is one reason why philosophy of mathematics has such a large role as object of comparison in Putnam's approach to ethics (Putnam 2004): "It may seem strange that a book with the title *Ethics Without Ontology* deals as much with issues in the philosophy of logic and the philosophy of mathematics as it does with ethics but this is no accident (...) arguments for "antirealism" in ethics are virtually the same as arguments for antirealism in the philosophy of mathematics, yet philosophers who resist those arguments in the later case often capitulate to them in the former."
10. See, e.g., Putnam (2004, 101–108) for Dewey's role as inspiration here.
11. Although Putnam sees Levinas as one of the hedgehogs (in Isaiah's Berlin's term) one needs to listen to regarding the question of the ethical life, he has important reservations concerning the one-sidedness of his thought. They concern namely the extension of Levinas's idea of infinite responsibility for the other to being responsible for the persecutions that I myself undergo (Putnam 2008, 96).
12. Putnam and Habermas had a decade-long engagement and Putnam expresses his admiration for Habermas as a thinker and a human being (Putnam 2002, 111).
13. Putnam 2002 ("Values and Norms"). He believes it leads to either a sole (Rortyan-style) "imperative" "Keep talking," or to a Transcendental Pragmatics, relying on a Peircean conception of truth (which is untenable for other reasons).
14. For Lewis what philosophy does is work out consequences of various metaphysical positions and then test them against our intuitions to see which are the least counterintuitive.
15. Putnam quotes Wittgenstein in Putnam (1992, 156). This is said after the criticism of superstitious understandings of pictures, which Wittgenstein takes apart and rejects (see the example of going to Lourdes with a very credulous person and seeing blood come out of something).
16. I'm availing myself of the distinction made by Ruth Anna Putnam (R.A. Putnam 2015) between Putnam the man and Putnam the philosopher.
17. And present in the *Tractatus* in a different form.
18. This is an alternative to a Rortyan formulation (relativism is the idea that an assertion being warranted is a matter of which community we feel solidarity with), or to the widespread language of objects and universes of discourse (relativism is the idea that A or B [say, dinosaurs or genes] are social constructions; they are not out there apart from our needs and interests, or relativism is the idea that what we talk about depends on our universe of discourse).

19. He compares it to the case of the German plane: someone tells me they saw one and I say “Well, maybe.” There, there is no gulf between us.
20. Nor will she accept, e.g., that religious belief is simply not part of intellectual life.
21. What Diamond has to say about relativism reading Wittgenstein’s *Three Lectures* also has to do with her analyses of the pictures (in grip of which is the religious man), in particular the essentiality and insubstitutability of a picture. I will not go into this now nor into her own way of thinking of ethics—in Diamond Putnam’s pragmatism is replaced with Anscombian-Wittgensteinian centering on meaning and making sense anew.
22. Putnam himself describes this as somewhere between Dewey’s *A Common Faith* (1934) and Buber’s *I and Thou* (1923) (Putnam 2008).
23. This article was written as part of the FCT research Project *The Epistemology of Religious Belief—Wittgenstein, Grammar and the Contemporary World* (PTDC/FER-FIL/32203/2017).

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