

## ARTICLE

# Hinge Communitarianism

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**Abstract**

In this paper, I will defend a communitarian perspective on the so-called “hinge propositions” (*hinges*, for short). Accordingly, I will argue that hinges play a normative role, in the sense that, among other things, they govern the mechanisms of social inclusion/exclusion. In particular, I will examine the so-called “religious hinges”; and I will argue that such hinges, being the product of mere indoctrination, are particularly effective in shaping boundaries among communities. Finally, with the help of Peter Munz’s theory of altruism, I will attempt to explain *why* religious hinges play the role they do.

**Keywords:** Hinge propositions; religious hinges; communitarianism; norms; indoctrination; altruism; Wittgenstein; Peter Munz

## 1. Introduction

In this paper, I wish to explore the peculiar normative role that *hinge propositions* (*hinges*, in short) play. My basic idea is that hinges are *norms* that govern the mechanisms of social inclusions/exclusions. Some prominent hinge epistemologists also take hinges to be norms.<sup>1</sup> However, they focus primarily on the semantic and epistemic dimension of such norms. In contrast, in this paper, I wish to focus on their social dimension. The end result will be a form of communitarianism. Communitarianism is well entrenched among Wittgensteinian philosophers. Notably, for Kripke (1982), Wittgenstein’s take on rules is essentially communitarian. Yet, a distinctively communitarian hinge epistemology is still missing. My goal is to explore this possibility.<sup>2</sup>

The paper has three main sections. First, in “Hinges as Norms”, I will introduce the idea that hinges are norms. In particular, I will argue that *all* hinges are primarily social norms that govern the mechanisms of social inclusions/exclusions within linguistic communities. Second, in “Religious Hinges”, I will argue that some kinds of hinges are more effective than others in shaping linguistic communities. In particular, I will

<sup>1</sup>See, for example, Coliva (2020).

<sup>2</sup>Although the problem of skepticism is one of the driving forces behind *On Certainty*, I will not discuss it in the present paper. However, as a referee from this journal suggested to me, the fact that in addition to a communitarian role, hinges play also an epistemic role allows for an ‘anti-skeptical’ reading of *On Certainty* that might be more suitable for certain hinges. I plan to explore this suggestion in a future paper.

focus on the so-called *religious hinges*, and I will argue that religious hinges are *particularly* effective in shaping communities. Finally, in “Hinges and Altruism”, with the help of Peter Munz (one of Wittgenstein’s most critical and most original pupils), I will argue that the social mechanisms of inclusion/exclusion that hinges provide have an evolutionary basis.

In short, I wish to answer the following questions: *What are hinges? What function do they have? And, finally, why are they needed?* But first, I wish to address a potential issue. Notably, the very much *en vogue* notion of hinge derives from the late Wittgenstein’s notes on knowledge and certainty (posthumously published in 1969). These notes are quite sketchy and aphoristic. Accordingly, they pose some rather challenging interpretative issues. In this paper, I will signal them; for the reader should know that other interpreters might wish to take Wittgenstein’s hinges in a different direction. Yet, I will not engage them; for my main goal is theoretical. I wish to borrow Wittgenstein’s notion of hinge in order to pursue my own agenda and explore territories that Wittgenstein himself did not care to investigate,<sup>3</sup> but that were not neglected by one of his students: Peter Munz.

Finally, note that in his work, Munz does not explicitly talk about hinges. However, as we will see, his seminal idea that religious beliefs inhibit altruism might very well have been triggered by his lifelong intellectual engagement with Wittgenstein’s philosophy.<sup>4</sup>

## 2. Hinges as Norms

In *On Certainty*, Wittgenstein (1969) introduces the hinge metaphor (§152, §341, §343, §655)<sup>5</sup> in order to stress the fact that some propositions enjoy a special status: they are the basic assumptions or *postulates* (§321) that people implicitly use in order to distinguish between true and false (§94).

In addition to simple arithmetical truths (§43), for Wittgenstein, also propositions like “Here is my hand” (§40), “No one has ever been on the moon” (§106), “There are physical objects” (§479) are hinge propositions. Wittgenstein’s examples are bewildering; for they defy all traditional philosophical distinctions. Moreover, for Wittgenstein, hinge propositions do not seem to be propositions *at all*: they are neither true nor false (§205); neither justified nor unjustified (§130, §166, §359); neither reasonable nor unreasonable (§559); neither known nor unknown (§4).<sup>6</sup> As a matter of fact, Wittgenstein himself suggests that they are norms:

95. The propositions describing this world-picture might be part of a kind of mythology. And their role is like that of rules of a game: and the game can be learned purely practically, without learning any explicit rules.

Moreover, for Wittgenstein, hinges are only *relatively fixed*, in the sense that the distinction between genuine propositions and norms is *fluid*, as “the same proposition may

<sup>3</sup>Notably, Wittgenstein rejected the use of scientific hypotheses in philosophy; for, according to him, philosophy is not a doctrine, but an activity. I do not share his attitude. For me, there is only a difference of degree, philosophy being more speculative than science.

<sup>4</sup>For a most striking account of Munz’s engagement with Wittgenstein (and Popper, for that matter), see Munz (2004).

<sup>5</sup>Unless otherwise specified, the sole “§” refers to a section in *On Certainty*.

<sup>6</sup>See Coliva (2016: 9).

get treated at one time as something to test by experience, at another as a rule of testing” (§98). But also in the sense that hinges might acquire or lose their status across time and cultures:

336. But what men consider reasonable or unreasonable alters. At certain periods men find reasonable what at other periods they found unreasonable. And vice versa.

But is there no objective character here?

Very intelligent and well-educated people believe in the story of creation in the Bible, while others hold it as proven false, and the grounds of the latter are well known to the former.

Finally, as we are about to see, hinges are *communitarian* norms, in the sense that they govern the mechanisms of social inclusions/exclusions. In other words, they are rules for testing whether or not a particular individual belongs to a certain linguistic community or more generally, to a specific form of life. So, for example, the fact that hinges change their status across cultures suggests that they can play a social role; for they can be used to signal a *distance*<sup>7</sup> between two individuals that belong to two different linguistic communities. Consider the following entry:

108. “But is there then no objective truth? Isn’t it true, or false, that someone has been on the moon?” If we are thinking within our system, then it is certain that no one has ever been on the moon. Not merely is nothing of the sort ever seriously reported to us by reasonable people, but our whole system of physics forbids us to believe it. For this demands answers to the questions “How did he overcome the force of gravity?” “How could he live without an atmosphere?” and a thousand others which could not be answered. But suppose that instead of all these answers we met the reply: “We don’t know *how* one gets to the moon, but those who get there know at once that they are there; and even you can’t explain everything.” We should feel ourselves intellectually very distant from someone who said this.

In both §108 and §336, Wittgenstein raises the issue of “objective truth”: *But is there then no objective truth?*; and in both sections he seems to be *evading* the problem,<sup>8</sup> when in fact, he is turning decisively toward communitarianism. From a communitarian perspective, in these passages, Wittgenstein is more or less explicitly alerting us to the existence of norms of inclusion/exclusions.<sup>9</sup> Here, the reference to rule-following turns out to be crucial. If rule-following is essentially communitarian, as Kripke (1982) argues,<sup>10</sup> then we also need norms that govern the mechanisms of inclusion/exclusions among communities.

As we just saw, for Wittgenstein, “the same proposition may get treated at one time as something to test by experience, at another as a rule of testing” (§98). In §108,

<sup>7</sup>I should point out that Kusch (2016) explicitly compares this “distance” to Bernard Williams’ “relativism of distance”.

<sup>8</sup>See Williams (2004: 249): “This passage is striking for the way in which its opening question – ‘Is there no objective truth?’ – is evaded rather than answered. Wittgenstein seems content to register the possibility of a profound divergence of outlook, without further comment.” See also Hamilton (2014: 115): “Here, the opening question – ‘But is there no objective truth?’ – is evaded, not answered.”

<sup>9</sup>See also §608–12. More on these sections later.

<sup>10</sup>For a thorough defense of Kripke’s reading of Wittgenstein, see Kusch (2006).

Wittgenstein is taking “No one has ever been on the moon” as a rule of testing. Accordingly, he is challenging his interlocutor: “*How did he overcome the force of gravity?*”, “*How could he live without an atmosphere?*”, in order to *measure* the distance between them; and, in the end, he seems to conclude that his interlocutor belongs to a different epistemic community.

### 3. Religious Hinges

In the previous section, I introduced the idea that hinges are social norms (or rule of testing) that govern the mechanism of inclusion/exclusion within linguistic communities. In this section, I will argue that in this respect, some hinges work better than others. This presupposes that hinges can *somehow* be categorized. This is a controversial move among hinge epistemologists.<sup>11</sup> Yet, several hinge scholars engage in this task.

Take Moyal-Sharrock (2007), for example. She classifies hinges in four different categories:

- linguistic: “ $2+2=4$ ” (§455);
- personal: “I come from such and such a city” (§67);
- local: “No one was ever on the moon” (§106);
- universal: “The Earth exists” (§209).

Now take Kusch (2016, 2018). According to him, hinges can be classified in eleven types *on the basis of what the respective certainty is about*, which in turn fall under five distinct epistemic categories:

- propositions for which we typically have overwhelming evidence that is difficult to share: “I am in pain” (§178);
- propositions that constitute domains of knowledge: “The Earth exists” (§209);
- fundamental empirical-scientific propositions or cornerstones of scientific paradigms: “Water boils at 100 degrees Celsius” (§291);
- mathematical propositions that have “officially, been given the stamp of incontestability” (§655);
- fundamental religious proposition: “Jesus only had a human mother” (§239).<sup>12</sup>

So, while for Moyal-Sharrock, “Jesus only had a human mother” would fall under the category of *local* hinges, in the sense that its certainty “constitute the underlying framework of knowledge of all or only some human beings at a given time” (2007: 102), for Kusch the same hinge would straightforwardly fall under the category of religious hinges.

Kusch’s categorization is quite sophisticated, but for our purposes, it will suffice to distinguish between mathematical, scientific and religious hinges. So, let us first consider mathematical hinges:  $2+2=4$ . This is what we teach our children. We first teach them how to count: 1, 2, 3, 4 ...; and then we teach them how to add.

<sup>11</sup>For a discussion, see Misak (2016).

<sup>12</sup>“I believe that every human being has two human parents; but Catholics believe that Jesus only had a human mother. And other people might believe that there are human beings with no parents, and give no credence to all the contrary evidence. Catholics believe as well that in certain circumstances a wafer completely changes its nature, and at the same time that all evidence proves the contrary. And so if Moore said ‘I know that this is wine and not blood’, Catholics would contradict him” (Wittgenstein 1969: §239).

Notably, in the *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein (1953) explores this process in great detail in the context of his discussion on following a rule. *Have some rules the power to uniquely determine the right answer? Or are they always open to interpretation?* So, suppose that you are teaching a child “+2”: 2, 4, 6, 8, and so on. In addition, suppose that the child adds “+2” as we typically do up to 1000, but then he starts adding in the following way: 1000, 1004, 1008, 1012, and so on. At this point, we might try to correct him: “We say to him, ‘Look what you’re doing!’ – He doesn’t understand. We say, ‘You should have added *two*: look how you began the series!’” However, if we fail to persuade him, we might perhaps say: “this person finds it natural, once given our explanation, to understand our order as *we* would understand the order ‘Add 2 up to 1000, 4 up to 2000, 6 up to 3000, and so on’” (1953: §185). In any case, when we deny that someone is following a certain basic rule, we exclude him or her from our community, at least to a certain extent. Even worse, if we encountered a person that *seriously* doubted that two plus two is equal four. Yet, and this is the crucial point, such an encounter would be quite rare.<sup>13</sup> This shows that the alienating force of “ $2 + 2 = 4$ ” is actually quite weak.

Take now a scientific hinge: *The Earth rotates*. This is a proposition that changed its status during the Scientific Revolution. At first, it was a mere empirical proposition that most people believed to be false, if they contemplated it at all. Then, during the early phases of the Scientific Revolution, its status became controversial, at least among scientists. But today, it is definitely a hinge.<sup>14</sup> This history is instructive. It shows that the alienating force of “The Earth rotates” is also quite limited; for even the most recalcitrant institutions (for example, the Catholic Church), in the end, accepted it.<sup>15</sup>

Finally, consider the following religious hinges:

- (1) Sun Wukong is a monkey god who travels thousands of kilometers at a single somersault. (Hindu)
- (2) You can obtain benefits from the spirits by spending four days in a lonely place without food and water, and cutting off a finger joint from your left hand. (Crow Indians)
- (3) The Virgin Mary became pregnant and gave birth to Jesus, whose body after his death was carried up in heaven. (Catholic)
- (4) The shaman can travel to the bottom of the ocean, where he pacifies the sea goddess who had been causing misfortunes. (Inuit)
- (5) To determine whether a person accused of adultery is guilty, force-feed a poisonous paste to a chicken. If the chicken does not die, that means that the accused person was innocent. (Azande)
- (6) Men who sacrifice their lives in battle for Allah will be carried to a heaven populated by beautiful virgin women. (Islam)
- (7) On Tepeyac Hill north of Mexico City, in 1531, the Virgin Mary appeared before Juan Diego, and enabled him to pick roses in a desert area. (Mexican Catholic)

<sup>13</sup>See Kripke (1982: 95, 96, 112).

<sup>14</sup>However, I feel compelled to mention that in certain scientific contexts related to the general theory of relativity, the proposition in question is still debated. (For a discussion, see Kosso 2020.) This shows that the status of some hinges is also relative to conversational contexts.

<sup>15</sup>On the other hand, the scientific hinge “Humans and apes have common ancestors” has still a considerable alienating force.

- (8) On a hilltop near Manchester Village in western New York State on September 21, 1823, the Angel Moroni appeared to Joseph Smith, and revealed to him the Book of Mormon. (Mormon)
- (9) Yahweh gave Israel to us, as our home forever. (Judaism)
- (10) In the 1880s God appeared before Wovoka during a solar eclipse, and informed him that if we performed the Ghost Dance, buffalo would again fill the plains and white men would vanish. (Paiute Indian)<sup>16</sup>

When it comes to social inclusion/exclusion, these hinges play an extraordinary role; for in this respect, they are clearly very effective. To put it bluntly, if for some reasons, I wished to exclude some individuals from my own community,<sup>17</sup> “ $2 + 2 = 4$ ” would not work. That the Earth rotates might work, but only for the time being. In contrast, with “There was a man named *Jesus* who resurrected” or “There was a man named *Muhammad* who split the Moon”, I will definitely succeed in alienating people.

In the right circumstances, *all* hinges might play an alienating role. Yet religious hinges, being the result of a peculiar kind of indoctrination or catechism, seem to work best. In this respect, it might be useful to compare the way in which Wittgenstein interacts with his or her pupil in the *Philosophical Investigations* with Elizabeth Anscombe’s attitude toward children in “On transubstantiation”.

Suppose the pupil now writes the series 0 to 9 to our satisfaction. – And this will be the case only if he is *often* successful, not if he does it right once in a hundred attempts. Now I continue to guide him through the series and draw his attention to the recurrence of the first series in the units; and then to its recurrence in the tens. (Which means only that I use particular emphases, underline figures, write them one under another in such-and-such ways, and similar things.) – And now at some point he continues the series by himself – or he does not. – But why do you say that? *That* much is obvious! – Of course; I only wished to say: the effect of any further *explanation* depends on his *reaction*. (Wittgenstein 1953: §145)

It is easiest to tell what transubstantiation is by saying this: little children should be taught about it as early as possible. Not of course using the word ‘transubstantiation’, because it is not a little child’s word. But the thing can be taught, and it is best taught at mass at the consecration, the one part where a small child should be got to fix its attention on what is going on. I mean a child that is beginning to speak, one that understands enough language to be told and to tell you things that have happened and to follow a simple story. Such a child can be taught then by whispering to it such things as: ‘Look! Look what the priest is doing ... He is saying Jesus’ words that change the bread into Jesus’ body. Now he’s lifting it up. Look! Now bow your head and say “My Lord and my God” and then ‘Look, now he’s taken hold of the cup. He’s saying the words that change the wine into Jesus’ blood. Look up at the cup. Now bow our head and say “We believe, we adore your precious blood, O Christ of God”’. This need not be disturbing to the surrounding people. (Anscombe 1974/2008: 84)

<sup>16</sup>(1)–(10): adapted from Diamond (2012: 341).

<sup>17</sup>More on this later.

Notably, the *Philosophical Investigations* is a dialogue between two philosophers, but it is also and foremost a dialogue between Wittgenstein and his pupil.<sup>18</sup> Recall that at the beginning of the *Investigations*, Wittgenstein reprehends Augustine (alias, his former self). Augustine thinks that *words refer to things*; for he also thinks that children learn language ostensibly (Wittgenstein 1953: §1): “Look! Look what the priest is doing ...” However, for Wittgenstein this would be possible only if children already spoke a language (1953: §32). But in this case, we would be assuming exactly what we wished to explain, like Augustine in the *Tractatus* who took for granted a correspondence between true propositions and facts.<sup>19</sup> This is why in order to undo his previous doctrine, Wittgenstein engages in language acquisition. By interacting with his pupil, he wishes to show us how language is *really* acquired.

Philosophers are accustomed to writing dialogues where they indoctrinate their pupils. But the *Philosophical Investigations* is different; for it is both a dialogue between peers: Wittgenstein and Augustine; *and* a dialogue between unequals: Wittgenstein and his pupil.<sup>20</sup> So, on the one hand, Wittgenstein chooses to write a dialogue in order to dispel the dogmatism of the *Tractatus*. While on the other hand, he wishes to show us how language is really acquired in order to dispel the dogmatic character of the Augustinian view of language, which attempts to impose the notion of mere correspondence to the entire language.<sup>21</sup> However, the two dialogues seem to be correlated; for Wittgenstein seems to be suggesting that the dogmatism of the *Tractatus* is a byproduct of the dogmatic character of the Augustinian view of language.

Be that as it may, the contrast between Wittgenstein and Anscombe is striking. Anscombe’s attitude toward children reminds of the dogmatism of the *Tractatus*. She is *not* teaching. She is initiating. On the other hand, Wittgenstein is not only showing how language acquisition works: how mathematical hinges come to play the role they do; but he is also showing how genuine learning, as opposed to mere indoctrination, takes place.<sup>22</sup>

#### 4. Hinges and Altruism

In the previous sections, we established that hinges are norms that play a rather peculiar role. They are communitarian norms that govern the mechanism of inclusion/exclusion. Moreover, we also learned that some hinges, being the product of mere indoctrination, fulfill this task more effectively than others. In this section, with the help of Munz, I will try to explain, from a communitarian perspective, *why* we need hinges at all.

Due to his attitude toward *why questions* in philosophy, Wittgenstein was reluctant to engage these kinds of issues, for him, language games are just *there – like our life* (§559). Yet, he offers several clues that might have led Munz to the idea that religious

<sup>18</sup>The importance of this dimension of Wittgenstein’s work has been rightly emphasized by Williams (1999: Ch. 7, 2010, 2011).

<sup>19</sup>As Wittgenstein himself would later write in *On Certainty*: “The reason why the use of the expression ‘true or false’ has something misleading about it is that it is like saying ‘it tallies with the facts or it doesn’t’, and the very thing that is in question is what ‘tallying’ is here” (§199).

<sup>20</sup>The *Philosophical Investigations* is also a dialogue between Wittgenstein and his reader, for example: §66. See Eco (1994). For a more recent discussion, see McClure (2017).

<sup>21</sup>For an examination of the connection between the Augustinian view of language and dogmatism, see Kuusela (2008).

<sup>22</sup>For a comprehensive overview of Wittgensteinian perspectives on education, see Peters and Stickney (2017).



beliefs inhibit altruism. One clue has to do with *multiplicity*. The other one is related to our primordial *instincts*. I will briefly explore both of them.

*Multiplicity*: Notably, in the *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein insists on multiplicity: of uses (1953: §11) and of language games (1953: §23). Yet, it is not immediately clear if he supports the idea of *one* linguistic community (or form of life); or of a *multiplicity* of them. Again, this is an exegetical issue that I wish to bypass.<sup>23</sup> Yet, I wish to point out that hinge communitarianism readily invites the idea of a multiplicity of linguistic communities more or less intertwined; and that such entanglements can be easily modeled with the help of the notion of family resemblances (1953: §67).<sup>24</sup> So, take three different communities: 1, 2, and 3; and to each community, associate a set of hinges: a, b, c, etc. ..., in the following way:

1	2	3
{a, b, c, d, e}	{b, c, d, e, f}	{c, d, e, f, g}

Since these three communities are governed by some of the same hinges, they are clearly intertwined. But now look at what happens when we continue the series:

1	2	3	4	5	6
{a, b, c, d, e}	{b, c, d, e, f}	{c, d, e, f, g}	{d, e, f, g, h}	{e, f, g, h, i}	{f, g, h, i, l}

Communities 1 and 6 are now completely alien, much like the communities that Wittgenstein contemplates in *On Certainty*:

608. Is it wrong for me to be guided in my actions by the propositions of physics? Am I to say I have no good ground for doing so? Isn't precisely this what we call a 'good ground'?

609. Supposing we met people who did not regard that as a telling reason. Now, how do we imagine this? Instead of the physicist, they consult an oracle. (And for that we consider them primitive.) Is it wrong for them to consult an oracle and be guided by it? – If we call this 'wrong' aren't we using our language-game as a base from which to combat theirs?

610. And are we right or wrong to combat it? Of course there are all sorts of slogans which will be used to support our proceedings.

611. Where two principles really do meet which cannot be reconciled with one another, then each man declares the other a fool and a heretic.

612. I said I would 'combat' the other man,—but wouldn't I give him *reasons*? Certainly; but how far do they go? At the end of reasons comes *persuasion*. (Think what happens when missionaries convert natives.)

<sup>23</sup>For a brief overview of the debate, see Misak (2016: Ch. 7). As she rightly points out on page 217, this issue continues to press Wittgenstein in *On Certainty*.

<sup>24</sup>See also Bambrough (1961) and Eco (1986: 131).



These passages are under intense scrutiny;<sup>25</sup> and some hinge epistemologists attempt to downplay their importance. In particular, according to Pritchard (2016), since we all share the same *über hinge commitment* that one is not radically and fundamentally mistaken in one's beliefs, "we shouldn't invest too much importance in the fact that people from different cultures, ages, and so forth have different overall hinge commitments, since these differences merely reflect the way in which different people will codify their *über hinge commitment*" (2016: 95).

However, if we apply the notion of family resemblances to linguistic communities, then there will not be a belief that all communities have in common: an *über hinge*. As Wittgenstein puts it: "the strength of the thread resides not in the fact that some one fibre runs through its whole length, but in the overlapping of many fibres" (1953: §67). Moreover, the belief that *one is not radically and fundamentally mistaken in one's beliefs* is very much the product of philosophical reflection. Yet, as we are about to see, in *On Certainty*, Wittgenstein turns decisively toward instincts.

*Instincts*: In *On Certainty*, Wittgenstein takes a decisively anti-intellectualistic, almost biological, stance toward hinges. Consider the following entries:

359. But that means I want to conceive it as something that lies beyond being justified or unjustified; as it were, as something animal.
474. This game proves its worth. That may be the cause of its being played, but it is not the ground.
475. I want to regard man here as an animal; as a primitive being to which one grants instinct but not ratiocination. As a creature in a primitive state. Any logic good enough for a primitive means of communication needs no apology from us. Language did not emerge from some kind of ratiocination.

Section §474 is pivotal. There, Wittgenstein invokes the distinction between *causes* and *reasons*,<sup>26</sup> and he opens up the possibility of understanding his language games in terms of causes. Moreover, he suggests that these causes are biological in nature. These causes are *not* reasons, in the sense that they are not what we would generally use in order to justify our practices. Yet, they do play an explanatory role; for they are genuine scientific explanations, motivated by *why-questions*. So, *why* do we need hinges?

As I previously mentioned, Munz does not explicitly engage this issue. Yet, his idea that religious beliefs inhibit altruism points toward the right answer. This is not surprising given Munz's lifelong engagement with Wittgenstein's philosophy. So, again, *why* do we need hinges?

The basic idea is that we need hinges in order to ensure the very existence of a multiplicity of linguistic communities; for, as Munz puts it, "human beings have to know where their altruism has to stop" (1993: 170). According to Munz, like species, communities also struggle for survival: since natural resources are scarce, they cannot be universally shared. They can only be shared with a restricted amount of people: *with my own community*. However, in contrast to species, it is not immediately clear how communities shape their boundaries. So, *how do we discriminate among people*?

According to Munz, religious beliefs and practices do the required job: they provide a criteria of inclusiveness/exclusiveness; for in contrast to other kinds of beliefs that might

<sup>25</sup>See, for example, Boghossian (2006) and Baghrarian and Coliva (2020).

<sup>26</sup>For a discussion of this distinction, see Bouveresse (1991: Ch. 4).

turn out to be true or false, religious beliefs are patently false, and false beliefs have the power to alienate strangers (and to secure pre-existing bounds):<sup>27</sup>

A false belief, unlike a true one, can furnish an efficient criterion of exclusion. For this reason, false beliefs have a great survival value. Their survival value is further enhanced by the effect they produce. On the face of it, one would suppose that a false belief will soon secure its own falsification, because people who espouse it will behave so stupidly that they will not survive for long. If the belief in question is, for example, that grain grows when one prays and not when one tends one's fields, one will suppose that the people who harbour such a belief will soon starve to death. But this supposition is mistaken. The false belief promotes cooperation and solidarity among the people who are using it as a catechism. Such cooperation will make them into a formidable military power and enable them to take food from the people they conquer. The people with the false belief will, therefore, not only not starve to death, but will suppose that it is their false belief which makes them thrive; for it enables them not only to get all the necessary food, but also to enjoy the pride they derive from their ability to conquer. (Munz 1993: 170)<sup>28</sup>

In short, for Munz, since religious beliefs are blatantly false, they have an overwhelming power of alienation.

To some extent, a communitarian would differ. For one, such beliefs are deemed to be true by the people in question. Second, as we saw, from a communitarian perspective, hinges are norms, as opposed to fact-stating propositions. Finally, as we also saw, a communitarian would rather focus on the method of acquisition than the truth-value of the proposition in question. In particular, a communitarian would argue that the alienating force of religious hinges derives from their method of acquisition. Yet, any communitarian who is interested in why-questions should take into account Munz's perspective; for as we saw in the previous section, the alienating force of hinges varies. The alienating force of mathematical hinges and scientific hinges is quite limited. In contrast, "Jesus resurrected" would be outright rejected as foolish by most non-Christians. In this way, non-believers would automatically fall outside the boundaries of the Christian community, and the believers will know where their altruistic tendencies can stop. Granted, also "The Earth rotates" met considerable opposition. However, since it was not only the product of mere indoctrination, it became universally accepted, and this shows that the hinge in question could not be used to set communal boundaries for long.

## 5. Conclusion

So, what are hinges? What function do they have? And, finally, why are they needed? In this paper, I attempted to answer these questions. So, first, I argued that hinges are communitarian norms; second, that these norms determine the boundaries of linguistic

<sup>27</sup>Diamond arrives at a similar conclusion: "If you claim that the founder of your church had been conceived by normal sexual intercourse between his mother and father, anyone else would believe that too, and you've done nothing to demonstrate your commitment to your church. But if you insist, despite all evidence to the contrary, that he was born of a virgin birth, and nobody has been able to shake you of that irrational belief after many decades of your life, then your fellow believers will feel much more confident that you'll persist in your belief and can be trusted not to abandon your group" (Diamond 2012: 343–4).

<sup>28</sup>See also Munz (1985: Ch. 7).

communities; and finally, with the help of one of Wittgenstein's most original and defiant students: Peter Munz, I argued that these boundaries are needed to limit our altruistic tendencies. As we saw, Munz does not discuss hinges. Moreover, the early Munz explicitly and vehemently distanced himself from Wittgenstein.<sup>29</sup> Like the pupil that Wittgenstein envisions in the *Philosophical Investigations*, he was a recalcitrant student. Yet, in the end, he had to recognize the *real depth* of Wittgenstein's discovery that since we cannot rely on ostensive definitions in order to acquire language, we are in need of linguistic communities.<sup>30</sup> Like Wittgenstein himself, also Munz was once Augustine.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup>See Munz (1985).

<sup>30</sup>See Munz (2004: 80). See also Munz (1999).

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