1

00:00:00,170 --> 00:00:07,049

So let's get underway. The first speaker

is Sean Wilson, who is Associate

2

00:00:07,049 --> 00:00:13,740

Professor of Political Science. he

teaches courses in Public Law, Judicial

3

00:00:13,740 --> 00:00:20,640

and American Politics, in Ludwig

Wittgenstein. His first book, "The Flexible

4

00:00:20,640 --> 00:00:27,570

Constitution" was published in 2013. His

second book, "New Critical Thinking is

5

00:00:27,570 --> 00:00:33,570

Forthcoming." His talk is titled "The

Problem of Alternate Reality and

6

00:00:33,570 --> 00:00:41,809

Politics and How Wittgenstein Got There

First." A very timely topic. Sean. Okay it's

7

00:00:41,809 --> 00:00:46,860

really difficult I think to do Wittgenstein in politics in 10 minutes. My

8

00:00:46,860 --> 00:00:50,100

head will be a little bit like the

Olympics, but what I'm going to do is

9

00:00:50,100 --> 00:00:55,230

talk about a portion of a book that I

have completed and that I'm shopping to

10

00:00:55,230 --> 00:01:01,260

a publisher. The book is called "New

Critical Thinking, What Wittgenstein Offered." and the

11

00:01:01,260 --> 00:01:05,400

piece that I'm going to talk about today

is something called picturing. What is

12

00:01:05,400 --> 00:01:09,659

picturing? And by the way when I

use the word picturing, I'm referring to

13

00:01:09,659 --> 00:01:14,010

something in Wittgenstein's book about.

What picturing is, is it's a cognitive

14

00:01:14,010 --> 00:01:19,979

phenomena. It's actually something that

the brain does. For example, suppose I

15

00:01:19,979 --> 00:01:24,299

were to say to you I want to say "don't

think of an elephant" What happens is

16

00:01:24,299 --> 00:01:28,590

when you hear this command, your mind

usually pictures an elephant, you see

17

00:01:28,590 --> 00:01:35,130

you see an elephant. And Lackoff

has an explanation for why this is

18

00:01:35,130 --> 00:01:41,310

so. I'll read it to you here. He says

"because most people don't have any

19
00:01:41,310 --> 00:01:45,600
actual relationship with elephants, as

they do for example, with dogs, people with

20
00:01:45,600 --> 00:01:50,430
lesions in visual regions of the parietal

cortex, we lose the ability to recognize

21
00:01:50,430 --> 00:01:55,470
an elephant since visual imagery is part

of the meaning." Which is basically saying

22
00:01:55,470 --> 00:02:00,420
is that you know with other animals like

dogs, you have this to relationship but

23
00:02:00,420 --> 00:02:04,170
most people don't have any relationship

with elephants. They sort of think of

24
00:02:04,170 --> 00:02:09,799

them sort of in the way that you might

have unicorn. Now

25
00:02:10,150 --> 00:02:14,450
picturing is an interesting idea. There's

lots of things that your brain can see.

26
00:02:14,450 --> 00:02:19,459
You can see for example, an image, it

might be able to picture a scenario, for

27
00:02:19,459 --> 00:02:24,590
example if you're reading a newspaper,

you imagine things, your mind fills

28
00:02:24,590 --> 00:02:30,590
in the gap. You also kinda see a metaphor,

or a framework, and this is very very

29
00:02:30,590 --> 00:02:35,920
important. An example might be Ben

Franklin. He was studying electricity and

30

00:02:35,920 --> 00:02:41,690

he began to see it with this concept

of being a current, no one had really

31

00:02:41,690 --> 00:02:47,480

talked about prior to Ben Franklin you'd only hear this idea of a current in

32

00:02:47,480 --> 00:02:52,850

water, it had a water grammar, you know?

Water has current. Ben Franklin,

33

00:02:52,850 --> 00:02:57,410

studying electricity says you know, he

described this in terms of currents, so

34

00:02:57,410 --> 00:03:03,500

this is a metaphor or a framework and it

also is an example of picturing, that

35

00:03:03,500 --> 00:03:10,790

goes on in the brain. Wittgenstein was

probably autistic and he had this

36

00:03:10,790 --> 00:03:15,410

pictorial capacity that was very

aggressive, and he talked about it often

37

00:03:15,410 --> 00:03:20,750

in his writings. He says "I just

took some apples out of a paper bag

38

00:03:20,750 --> 00:03:26,180

where they had been lying for a long

time I had to cut half off many of them

39

00:03:26,180 --> 00:03:30,079

and throw them away. Afterwards when I

was copying out a sentence I had

40

00:03:30,079 --> 00:03:34,220

written, the second half of which was bad,

I had once thought as a half-rotten

41

00:03:34,220 --> 00:03:38,870

apple. And that's how everything is with

me. Everything that comes my way becomes a

42

00:03:38,870 --> 00:03:42,380

picture for me of what I am thinking

about at the time. Is there something

43

00:03:42,380 --> 00:03:47,000

feminine about this way of thinking?" He

was constantly bombarded with mental

44

00:03:47,000 --> 00:03:52,790

pictures of one kind or another and as a

result in his philosophy he wanted to

45

00:03:52,790 --> 00:03:58,280

make sense of what this picturing is all

about. What role does it play in an

46

00:03:58,280 --> 00:04:05,239

assertion, and basically he comes up with

two ideas. He says on one hand picturing

47

00:04:05,239 --> 00:04:10,640

can really be helpful, but in

another way, it can be manipulative, and

48

00:04:10,640 --> 00:04:16,160

let me give you an example of how it can

be helpful. He talks about the Commutative

49

00:04:16,160 --> 00:04:23,600

Law of Multiplication and he says

"What this is, is informal learning it's

50

00:04:23,600 --> 00:04:32,470

simply a multiplied by b equals b multiplied by a so 5 times 4 is 4 times 5. In his mind

51

00:04:32,470 --> 00:04:38,660

when he was thinking about this he says

"look, all this is doing is flipping rows

52

00:04:38,660 --> 00:04:45,170

for columns" not so of it is actually

doing and if when learning this formula

53

00:04:45,170 --> 00:04:50,570

you could see that that's all it was

doing, flipping rows for columns, then he

54

00:04:50,570 --> 00:04:55,430

called them "scene connections" that there

was something about this picture that

55

00:04:55,430 --> 00:04:59,260

would pop in the mind that would

actually aid very much in comprehension.

56

00:04:59,260 --> 00:05:07,150

But there's another example where this

can be actually very bad and he says

57

00:05:07,150 --> 00:05:13,010

"let's say you would imagine that there

was a cord stretched around the equator

58

00:05:13,010 --> 00:05:17,390

imagine the earth and you're going to

stretch a cord around the equator and

59

00:05:17,390 --> 00:05:23,300

it's going to be very very very tight." He

says, "How much above the earth would the

60
00:05:23,300 --> 00:05:28,370

cord become if you increase the length

by only one yard but kept it tout and

61
00:05:28,370 --> 00:05:32,750

circular?" So your brain might picture a

yard as being not that much you know

62
00:05:32,750 --> 00:05:40,820

it's in football, fourth and one, no not

that much and so the common answer is to

63
00:05:40,820 --> 00:05:46,940

say "well it's you know,

insignificant" but in truth the actual

64
00:05:46,940 --> 00:05:52,610

distance is the cord would become nearly

six inches off the ground and so this is

65
00:05:52,610 --> 00:05:59,150

an example he says where you've been

misled by a picture. A picture came into

66

00:05:59,150 --> 00:06:03,430

your mind and it completely misled you.

Alright, so there's this interesting

67

00:06:03,430 --> 00:06:08,900

dynamic that you have with picturing.

Sometimes it's really helpful in an aim

68

00:06:08,900 --> 00:06:15,140

to comprehension and other times it

throws you into the wrong track. Okay and

69

00:06:15,140 --> 00:06:21,650

so now what we want to do is apply this

to politics. All of that ideology really

70

00:06:21,650 --> 00:06:29,889

is in politics is an effort by others,

other people to dominate

71

00:06:29,889 --> 00:06:35,499

what picture emerges in your mind in a

social context. That is actually all the

72

00:06:35,499 --> 00:06:40,740

ideology is it's trying to force a

picture onto a social onto a situation.

73

00:06:40,740 --> 00:06:48,069

My field presently doesn't understand

this. My field sees ideology as something

74

00:06:48,069 --> 00:06:52,719

else. It sees it for example as a

starting point in the discussion, a set

75

00:06:52,719 --> 00:06:56,620

of values. I get to have my points and you get to have your points you know. This is

76

00:06:56,620 --> 00:07:05,319

just their values. But in point of fact

what really happens is all the ideology

77

00:07:05,319 --> 00:07:16,810

is it's a cognitive and neurological

phenomena. It's an effort to take in a social context, try to manipulate you

to see the picture that I want, I see and

78

00:07:16,810 --> 00:07:21,909

that I want validated in that context,

and a good example might be for example

79

00:07:21,909 --> 00:07:28,990

abortion. You know suppose I say to you

two things I say to you I'm pro-life. Well

80

00:07:28,990 --> 00:07:33,159

I could also save you I could say hey

I'm pro-embryo. What is it that comes

81

00:07:33,159 --> 00:07:38,319

before your mind in each of these

phrases? Now some of you don't

82

00:07:38,319 --> 00:07:42,159

don't like this issue so you're already

guarded against it but let's take

83

00:07:42,159 --> 00:07:45,580

someone who doesn't know much about it

and someone is neutral about it if we

84

00:07:45,580 --> 00:07:50,500

could find such a thing. If you

spoke to a person and said you were

85

00:07:50,500 --> 00:07:54,939

pro-life it's very different what might

come to mind then saying you're pro

86

00:07:54,939 --> 00:08:01,270

embryo. This is what an the embryo would

look like after four weeks. It's about the

87

00:08:01,270 --> 00:08:06,669

size of a poppy seed and so if we had a

discussion, we could have a discussion we

88

00:08:06,669 --> 00:08:10,419

could have a discussion, about what the

value of that should be. We could have

89
00:08:10,419 --> 00:08:14,349

that, but that's not really the

discussion we have it kind of gets side

90
00:08:14,349 --> 00:08:19,779

stepped because it's a battle to try to put

certain other kinds of imagery before

91
00:08:19,779 --> 00:08:26,500

your other kinds of pictures in your

mind, right? Now there's a philosopher by the

92
00:08:26,500 --> 00:08:35,229

name of James Garvey, who I went to high

school with, and he has a book out and in

93
00:08:35,229 --> 00:08:40,820

the book he makes an interesting

claim. He's talking about how

94
00:08:40,820 --> 00:08:47,900

crime gets pictured. Now if you

describe crime as a wild beast, people

95

00:08:47,900 --> 00:08:53,060

think well, we need more policing to

control the beast, but if you describe

96

00:08:53,060 --> 00:08:57,740

crime as being something else like a

plague or a disease people think more

97

00:08:57,740 --> 00:09:02,270

well we need to cure and fix it and

heal it, and so whatever picture you put there

98

00:09:02,270 --> 00:09:08,060

or what metaphor you put

there for that issue is suggestive for

99

00:09:08,060 --> 00:09:12,170

what people then will get pushed as to

what the solution should be. Let's listen

100

00:09:12,170 --> 00:09:17,030

to James. So that story was

told the two separate groups of people

101

00:09:17,030 --> 00:09:22,750

one heard the story about crime being

described as a beast lurking in the city.

102

00:09:22,750 --> 00:09:28,760

Seventy-five percent of them thought

about policing, incarceration, sending in

103

00:09:28,760 --> 00:09:34,400

the army, just twenty five percent

thought about social reform, creating

104

00:09:34,400 --> 00:09:38,270

education opportunities for people in

the city. If you heard a different

105

00:09:38,270 --> 00:09:41,150

version another group pretty different

version that story where crime was

106

00:09:41,150 --> 00:09:45,860

described as a plague virus infecting

the city. The number of people who

107

00:09:45,860 --> 00:09:49,520

thought about social reform nearly

doubled to forty four percent. There's a

108

00:09:49,520 --> 00:09:54,020

corresponding drop in the number of

people who thought about policing, right?

109

00:09:54,020 --> 00:09:57,320

So this is this is framing this is a

framing effect. We don't really

110

00:09:57,320 --> 00:10:01,730

understand how framing works. It's

thought the authors of this study think

111

00:10:01,730 --> 00:10:05,690

that it's when you hear a certain

metaphor, hear a certain word that

112

00:10:05,690 --> 00:10:10,570

emphasizes some aspects of concept and

not others. So your brain will think of

113

00:10:10,570 --> 00:10:14,150

obstructing inconsistent inferences when

you hear about a beast you think about

114

00:10:14,150 --> 00:10:22,220

guns and cages. We have a virus you think

about healing the whole thing. This is

115

00:10:22,220 --> 00:10:26,360

unfortunately this is the real power of

spin, this works on us. What is the

116

00:10:26,360 --> 00:10:32,330

solution to this? In three minutes I'm

going to give a solution but first I

117

00:10:32,330 --> 00:10:37,040

want to hear Garvey's solution and

my conclusion here think Garvey's wrong

118
00:10:37,040 --> 00:10:43,400
but let's listen to a solution. So
this is how spin works, it works and it's

119
00:10:43,400 --> 00:10:47,000
really easy to scale up and change the
opinions of a lot of people just by how

120
00:10:47,000 --> 00:10:51,450
you put language. And this is happening I
think at the

121
00:10:51,450 --> 00:10:55,530
expense of things like reasons and
arguments and careful carefully made

122
00:10:55,530 --> 00:11:01,530
points. If you can think critically and
carefully, wouldn't you undermine things

123
00:11:01,530 --> 00:11:04,650

like that rather than support them and

go along with them? And you have to

124

00:11:04,650 --> 00:11:09,720

wonder, I have to wonder, if some of this

shift and persuasion is partly what's

125

00:11:09,720 --> 00:11:14,640

going on in the states with the rise of

Donald Trump. Is this kind of what's

126

00:11:14,640 --> 00:11:18,270

going on with brexit? There were no

good arguments, there were no good

127

00:11:18,270 --> 00:11:24,810

debates. It was appeals to emotion, appeals

to Authority, outright lies and is this

128

00:11:24,810 --> 00:11:29,690

shift to post-truth politics part of

this change in persuasion? All right, now

129

00:11:29,690 --> 00:11:34,620

here's the way a Wittgensteinian would

look at this: Garvey's solution actually

130

00:11:34,620 --> 00:11:42,780

is not correct. It is not true that the

problem is that the information is false

131

00:11:42,780 --> 00:11:48,750

and it's not true that the metaphor is

tricking you and you have to therefore

132

00:11:48,750 --> 00:11:54,710

put it to the side because presumably if

Garvey has a solution to crime it too

133

00:11:54,710 --> 00:12:00,990

involves a picture. You can't escape the

picture, all right? What happened in the

134

00:12:00,990 --> 00:12:07,170

study with crime is perfectly natural. This is in fact a natural mode of

135

00:12:07,170 --> 00:12:14,250

understanding. George Lackoff says

"pictures structure the whole system of

136

00:12:14,250 --> 00:12:17,310

thought though they rarely show up in the

language of the discourse they are

137

00:12:17,310 --> 00:12:22,140

structuring. Where they show up is in the

forms of reason used in the coherence of

138

00:12:22,140 --> 00:12:26,360

apparently disparate ideas if you strip

away the picture it's not clear how you

139

00:12:26,360 --> 00:12:33,090

could think about communication or what

communication is." The real problem that

140

00:12:33,090 --> 00:12:39,900

we have today isn't that there's

misinformation. The real problem that I

141

00:12:39,900 --> 00:12:46,460

believe we have today is that as a

society, we are reaching a point where

142

00:12:46,460 --> 00:12:53,490

whatever picture you want to exist for

something, there's a market photo, and you

143

00:12:53,490 --> 00:13:00,780

can live in this bubble and have only

that picture there and that we as a

144

00:13:00,780 --> 00:13:07,109

people are now becoming intolerant on both the left and the right

145

00:13:07,109 --> 00:13:13,239

whenever someone comes along and tries

to show another picture. We don't want to

146

00:13:13,239 --> 00:13:20,379

be consumers of pictures we don't like,

and this is actually what's happening. It's

147

00:13:20,379 --> 00:13:27,459

not that there's false information out

there, it's that what is out there, there are

148

00:13:27,459 --> 00:13:33,160

now markets out there to feed only one

way of seeing something, and we get kind

149

00:13:33,160 --> 00:13:38,410

of upset when we're forced to look at

something, conceptualize it, think about

150

00:13:38,410 --> 00:13:42,759

it in a way that we don't want to and

it's a social phenomena and this is

151

00:13:42,759 --> 00:13:50,439

what I think is happening, all right? The

solution to this is threefold. What you

152

00:13:50,439 --> 00:13:56,739

want to do is number one show people

that picturing as a phenomenon occurs in

153

00:13:56,739 --> 00:14:01,959

the brain whether it's religion or

politics or what have you, there's some

154

00:14:01,959 --> 00:14:08,649

framework some scenario in their mind

that they've invested in and you will

155

00:14:08,649 --> 00:14:13,929

to show them that this in fact happens

as a phenomenon and the other thing you

156

00:14:13,929 --> 00:14:19,329

want to do is try to capacitate the

pictorial imagination, so that when

157

00:14:19,329 --> 00:14:25,059

someone decides what the views are on

something that they're able to indulge

158

00:14:25,059 --> 00:14:29,919

other ways of seeing it and it's not

simply other arguments or other facts

159
00:14:29,919 --> 00:14:34,239

its other two ways of seeing it to see

it the way someone else sees it when

160
00:14:34,239 --> 00:14:38,589

they see it in their mind, all right you

have to you have to become well-rounded

161
00:14:38,589 --> 00:14:46,689

and this gets to the last topic therapy,

part of what Wittgensteinian's believe

162
00:14:46,689 --> 00:14:50,589

is that the role of philosophy is

actually just to do simply this: mess

163
00:14:50,589 --> 00:14:56,649

with the pictures in people's head. Wittgenstein would come into the class and often

164
00:14:56,649 --> 00:15:01,419

imagine for scientific facts and have his

students do that because part of what

165

00:15:01,419 --> 00:15:07,389

we're supposed to do is force these

pictures, force people to see different

166

00:15:07,389 --> 00:15:11,799

ways of seeing things because only then

could they become better consumers for

167

00:15:11,799 --> 00:15:14,650

what

frameworks that they want to choose from.

168

00:15:14,650 --> 00:15:28,310

Anyway that's what I have for you today.

Thank you very much. So on all your

169

00:15:28,310 --> 00:15:34,190

announces are all pictures of people or

some pictures more representative than

170

00:15:34,190 --> 00:15:41,030

others? And if so, which ones? Yeah I didn't have time to get

the quote from Wittgenstein. There's

171

00:15:41,030 --> 00:15:47,380

absolutely no question that pictures are

not equal okay and there was a time in

172

00:15:47,380 --> 00:15:53,240

the social configuration of life, the

form of life when for example a flat

173

00:15:53,240 --> 00:15:58,150

earth picture fit better than the

picture we have of the earth now and

174

00:15:58,150 --> 00:16:05,210

there's no question that some pictures

are better than it is and which ones

175

00:16:05,210 --> 00:16:10,490

actually fit better is I think something

that would belong to aesthetics

176

00:16:10,490 --> 00:16:14,720

connoisseur judgment Wittgensteinian's approach aesthetics the way

177

00:16:15,880 --> 00:16:22,010

analytic philosophers do morality with

basic foundations in aesthetics some

178

00:16:22,010 --> 00:16:26,180

choices are better than others. So I

consider myself a post analytic thinker

179

00:16:26,180 --> 00:16:32,500

not a post modern thinker. I'm not a

skeptic, I don't think all choices are equal. Go Ahead.

180

00:16:36,610 --> 00:16:42,490

Well I mean I think it's probably a

probably good question. Wittgenstein

181

00:16:42,490 --> 00:16:49,130

wanted would ask his students to

imagine false scientific facts, not say

182

00:16:49,130 --> 00:16:53,480

that they were false. He wanted them to

see if they have the capacity to imagine

183

00:16:53,480 --> 00:16:59,420

concepts as they existed if certain

facts weren't true and so what this was

184

00:16:59,420 --> 00:17:04,339

for was to encourage the way that they

would conceive and think of things

185

00:17:04,339 --> 00:17:09,829

because he wanted to show show them that

what they currently think is only a way

186

00:17:09,829 --> 00:17:14,209

of thinking an orchestration of social

construction in some way and you can

187

00:17:14,209 --> 00:17:18,230

give a gift of sort of God's eye view

where you can see yourself in this

188

00:17:18,230 --> 00:17:23,610

construction then you presumably

would know better it's also

189

00:17:23,610 --> 00:17:28,650

unsettling because it mean it means that

foundations become something a little

190

00:17:28,650 --> 00:17:35,610

different. So it's negative in one sense

but it is trying to get a God's eye

191

00:17:35,610 --> 00:17:39,900

perspective on where your beliefs come

from so it's meant to be it's meant to

192

00:17:39,900 --> 00:17:45,180

be used instrumentally to make someone

think better. Sean, getting back to what novel is

193

00:17:45,180 --> 00:17:48,900

saying about different pictures and

whether they're equal or not in your

194

00:17:48,900 --> 00:17:53,730

answer, from a psychological viewpoint though wouldn't there be certain pictures that

195

00:17:53,730 --> 00:17:58,410

would elicit stronger emotional

responses and therefore opinions in

196

00:17:58,410 --> 00:18:06,270

people's minds? Yes and I think the first

thing that a Wittgensteinian want to

197

00:18:06,270 --> 00:18:12,240

show the person is that effect

is occurring. I mean I don't quite know

198

00:18:12,240 --> 00:18:17,130

how to answer the question other

than to say that you know you want to

199

00:18:17,130 --> 00:18:22,320

be as sensitive as possible in

education you know normally they are we

200

00:18:22,320 --> 00:18:26,220

look at very controversial things and we

want to do that in the most sensitive

201

00:18:26,220 --> 00:18:35,010

way possible but it is definitely true

that picture it can cause great

202

00:18:35,010 --> 00:18:40,410

great emotion you know it's very can be

very very manipulative, pictures can be.

203

00:18:40,410 --> 00:18:45,240

You know, you have this you have these

things that come to your mind. Prejudice

204

00:18:45,240 --> 00:18:50,070

is a very good example of it I

mean think of what pictures

205

00:18:50,070 --> 00:18:57,660

are in the mind of someone who might be

you know a prejudice individual and so

206

00:18:57,660 --> 00:19:05,310

you know stereotypes and what people what you imagine for people this is

207

00:19:05,310 --> 00:19:10,950

quite it's quite a difficult thing it's
quite a difficult thing pictures can be

208

00:19:10,950 --> 00:19:17,370

and very very very harmful and this is
why I ultimately think that the way to

209

00:19:17,370 --> 00:19:22,920

make someone smarter is not so much to
get them to have control over their

210

00:19:22,920 --> 00:19:27,730

emotions,
but to get them to have greater curatorial

211

00:19:27,730 --> 00:19:33,899

capacity. Greater ways of imagining

things. Greater ways of seeing things and

212
00:19:33,899 --> 00:19:38,940
you know Richard Rorty talks about
sensitivity training to teach people

213
00:19:38,940 --> 00:19:43,419
first-person experiences. What is it like
to walk in this person's shoes? How does

214
00:19:43,419 --> 00:19:48,970
this person you know see life? And really
what I'm trying to argue for is being

215
00:19:48,970 --> 00:19:54,070
well-rounded and seeing other ways of
seeing a subject and I think it's kind

216
00:19:54,070 --> 00:19:57,370
of getting difficult to do in the age
that we live in, because I think we're

217
00:19:57,370 --> 00:20:03,129

reaching a point where we don't want how

we see things messed with and I think

218

00:20:03,129 --> 00:20:08,110

that's I think it's very important in

education that we make that commitment

219

00:20:08,110 --> 00:20:12,850

that you may not like this picture or way of

seeing it but I'm going to

220

00:20:12,850 --> 00:20:20,279

show this to you you know it's very

important to let me do that.

221

00:20:35,620 --> 00:20:37,680

Thank you.