

10-19 draft
Final version to appear in
A Plea for Natural Philosophy and Other Essays

Wittgenstein on Hinges

Let me begin by thanking Annalisa and Duncan for including me in this conference. I feel like a bit of an interloper here for a number of reasons, among them that I'm not a hinge epistemologist or a participant in the contemporary debate on its structure and merits. But I do have some thoughts on the role of hinge propositions in Wittgenstein's discussion -- in particular, I don't think he was a hinge epistemologist, either. Given his standing as founding father of the view, this reading is no doubt somewhat heretical, but I hope it might still be of some interest. One preliminary note, though: I honestly don't believe there's only one correct reading, or only one interesting or fruitful reading of the Wittgensteinian opus early, middle, or late,¹ so it would be more accurate to say that I'm presenting what I take to be an illuminating option for your consideration.

Our ultimate goal, of course, is *On Certainty* -- but for reasons we'll get into in a moment, it's even more treacherous to interpret

¹ For the record, I'm using 'early' for the *Tractatus* and surrounding manuscripts, 'transitional' for the *Philosophical Remarks*, *Philosophical Grammar*, *Big Typescript*, etc., 'middle' for the *Investigations* and its ilk, and 'late' or 'final' for *On Certainty* and other writings of 1949-1951.

than the *Tractatus* or the *Investigations*. My thought, then, is to get a running start by drawing a trajectory through those early and middle works, then to try to extend this line of development into his final writings on skepticism.

The story begins, then, with the *Tractatus*.² Of course there are many schools of thought on this book, each with many variations³ -- from the logical atomism of Russell and the logical positivism of the Vienna Circle to the new, therapeutic reading of Diamond and Conant. Whatever each of these may have to offer, here I propose a straightforward so-called 'metaphysical' reading familiar from the likes of Anscombe, Stenius and Pears: Wittgenstein is offering an account of logic and representation. To my mind, this is among the most fascinating accounts of these notions ever proposed.

Wittgenstein's project can be seen as beginning on analogy with Kant's: Kant asks, 'what must the world be like that we can cognize it as we do?'; Wittgenstein asks, 'what must the world be like that we can represent it as we do?' What makes Kant's project so difficult is that he thinks our cognition of some aspects of the world -- for example, its geometry -- is a priori. Analogously, Wittgenstein assumes that the sense of a representation must be independent of any contingent facts about the world.⁴ This is natural idea: we have to

² For more on the reading sketched here, see [2014], chapters 1 and 2.

³ See Stern [2003] for a helpful taxonomy.

⁴ In fact, neither philosopher distinguishes clearly between a priority and necessity, so the analogy is actually stronger than it may sound to our post-Kripkean ears.

know what a claim says, what it would take for it to be true, before we look to the world to determine whether or not it is true. Armed with this simple idea -- let me call it the 'priority of sense' -- Wittgenstein produces many of the book's wonders, beginning with its confounding ontology.

The argument is familiar to students of the *Tractatus*. If p is a statement apparently about a complex object, C , does p have sense if C doesn't exist? There seem to be two options. If the answer is no, if the non-existence of C implies that there is no way the world would be if p were true, then whether or not p has sense would depend on the contingent facts, in particular, on whether or not C happens to exist. That can't be right by the priority of sense -- sense is independent of contingent facts! -- so the answer must be yes, p has sense even if C doesn't exist. How can this be? Well, part of what p claims must be that the constituents of C are so arranged as to constitute C . But then, on pain of infinite regress, this sort of analysis must eventually bottom out in some fundamental, non-composite, non-contingent ur-constituents. So, in order for us to represent the world as we do, our language must include simple names of necessarily-existing simple objects.

But naming isn't all there is to representing. Faced next with the challenge of explaining how Othello can represent Desdemona loving Cassio when in fact she doesn't, he comes up with the picture theory: the parts of the picture stand for parts of the world; the picture represents those parts of the world as related to one another just as the corresponding parts of the picture are related to one another. In

this way, an elementary proposition -- a concatenation of names -- can represent a state of the world even if that state doesn't actually obtain. Again, the sense of the proposition -- what the world would be like if it were true -- is prior to any facts about how the world actually is; the proposition represents a possible way the world could be.

When Wittgenstein extends this account of representation to all propositions -- that is, to all logical combinations of elementary propositions -- he wants to preserve the idea that every such proposition describes a possible situation. This requires that any conjunction of elementary propositions is possible, in other words, that the elementary propositions are logically independent and the possible states of the world correspond to rows in a big truth table (except for all T's and all F's). At this point, the various strong theses of the *Tractarian* view fall into place. But why should we think that the elementary propositions are logically independent?

This is a difficult question to answer, but let me just observe that here, too, the priority of sense is implicated. To see how, recall the familiar example from 6.3751: 'the statement that a point in the visual field has two different colours at the same time is a contradiction'. This means that 'red here now' isn't elementary, and by the same reasoning, neither are 'this is three centimeters long' or 'this particle is moving with velocity v ' or anything else we might look to as an example of an elementary proposition. The *Tractarian* response, of course, is to agree that these aren't elementary, to conclude that 'this point in the visual field is red' is in fact a

complex proposition, which -- when analyzed down to a logical combination of truly elementary propositions about truly simple objects -- will be revealed to be contradictory, senseless. My point is that this recovery makes essential use of simples; if we stick to ordinary, familiar objects, there would be no hope for logical independence. So the priority of sense is playing an role here, too - - indirectly, as guarantor of a non-standard ontology that saves logical independence from immediate refutation.

Now, as is well-known, the color exclusion problem was one of several puzzles that soon led Wittgenstein to re-think the *Tractarian* position on representation. Various ideas flit through the transitional period, until a new and very different vista opens up in the *Investigations*. By then, Wittgenstein has rejected the 'illusion' that 'proposition', 'sense', and 'truth' are 'super-concepts', realizing that they are just words with 'a use ... as humble ... as ... the words "table", "lamp", "door"' (*PI* §97):

The sense in which philosophy ... speaks of sentences and words is no different from that in which we speak of them in ordinary life when we say, for example, 'What is written here is a Chinese sentence' ... We're talking about the spatial and temporal phenomenon of language, not about some non-spatial, atemporal non-entity. (*PI*, after §108)

Our whole approach to meaning,

... must be turned around, but on the pivot of our real need. (*PI* §108)

What we really need is an understanding of how we ordinary humans actually manage to represent the world.

As we all know, this middle-period Wittgenstein proposes that in many cases, 'the meaning ... is its use in language' (*PI* §43), so the

pressing question becomes: how can I grasp the meaning, if it encompasses the entire use? The problem is starkly posed with the case of the recalcitrant student who's taught the meaning of 'plus-2' with apparent success, but who goes on to write '1004' after '1000'. The numerical example might suggest that the challenge only arises at the relatively sophisticated level of grade-school arithmetic, but of course it can be posed just as easily for new applications of even the very first words a child acquires, like 'cat', 'dog', 'house', 'tree', 'red', 'square', and so on -- words based on pre-linguistic classificatory abilities, many of which we share with other animals. So, how do we manage to mean 'plus-2' so that '1002' comes after '1000' and '1004' doesn't? More simply, how do we manage to represent cats rather than cats-plus-this-new-house?

Here again, what Wittgenstein offers in response has been interpreted in a variety of ways, but I think it's safe to say that many of these count as therapeutic readings. The line I favor is among these.⁵ In the welter of cross-talk that makes up the rule-following discussion there are at least three voices. One is the rule-following skeptic who ultimately claims that

... no course of action could be determined by a rule, because every course of action can be brought into accord with the rule.
(*PI* §201)

Then there is the voice often called the 'interlocutor', or (by David Stern, following Cavell) the 'voice of temptation', that attempts to block the skeptic's conclusion by appealing to a litany of potential

⁵ See [2014], pp. 63-73, 95-98, [2017], pp. 181-187, drawing on Stern [2004].

determiners -- an intuition, a feeling, an image, a paradigm case, the instructor's intentions, a reformulation of the rule, and so on -- none of which do the job. Still another is the 'voice of correctness' (again Stern) or sometimes 'Kripkenstein' (from Kripke [1982], see also Fogelin [1976], [1987]) who accepts the skeptical conclusion that nothing pre-determines the correct or incorrect applications, but charts an account of how the community's shared inclinations and practices support our assertion that '1002', not '1004', follows '1000' in our debate with the recalcitrant student.

So, where is the therapeutic Wittgenstein in all this? Each of these three voices stakes out a controversial philosophical position: the meaning skeptic presents the 'paradox' that there is no such thing as following a rule; the voice of temptation attempts a so-called straight solution, while the voice of correctness offers a so-called skeptical solution. But Wittgenstein tells us that when philosophy is done properly

If someone were to advance *theses* ... it would never be possible to debate them, because everyone would agree to them. (*PI* §128)

So, apparently none of these voices represents Wittgenstein himself.

If we're to do philosophy properly, then, what are we to say about the case of the recalcitrant student?

Wittgenstein counsels us to 'stick to matters of everyday thought' (*PI* §106), to 'speak the language of everyday' (*PI* §120):

The aspects of things that are most important for us are hidden because of their simplicity and familiarity. (One is unable to notice something -- because it is always before one's eyes.) (*PI* §129)

If we return to the case in this spirit, we realize that we aren't actually at a loss. When the student puts '1004' after '1000', we see that we were too hasty in thinking he understood; we give him more examples, more training, more testing. If he continues stubbornly in his error -- resisting all our efforts to help him understand -- we conclude that he's in for a difficult life. What we emphatically do not do is doubt that '1002' is the right answer. As long as this poor fellow is an outlier, we retain our confidence in our general ability to teach and learn, our general ability to use our language with meaning. Our actual methods remain well suited to what Wittgenstein has called our 'real need'.

What's gone wrong, then, with the various other voices is that they somehow don't feel the force of these perfectly ordinary considerations. Somehow they

... get on the wrong track where it seems [they] have to describe extreme subtleties, which [they] are unable to describe with the means at [their] disposal. [They] feel as if [they] had to repair a torn spider web with [their] fingers. (*PI* §106)

Thus begins the therapeutic diagnosis: they've lost sight of what actually happens in everyday life. The only hope of a cure is to figure out what's causing this persistent distortion. 'If I am convinced that a mouse cannot come into being ... by spontaneous generation out of grey rags and dust', then examining 'those rags very closely ... will perhaps be superfluous':

... what it is in philosophy that resists such an examination of details, we have yet to come to understand. (*PI* §52)

What blocks our attention to the ordinary facts in this case?

The recalcitrant student is portrayed as arising in our midst, but in fact he's unlike anything we typically face in our classrooms or tutoring sessions. Presumably he hasn't displayed any of the usual signs of cognitive deficit, and known cognitive deficits don't tend to be so strictly localized. Perhaps we rule out that he's playing a joke or acting on a dare or some other sort of put on. If we regularly came upon inexplicable cases like this, it would be a problem, but we don't -- and that's the key. Our troubled philosophers are being led to question the effectiveness of our ordinary methods by bringing them up against a kind of case that's not found in practice. That we couldn't force this wayward student to get the hang of what we're trying to teach him doesn't change the fact that our ways of training actual students tend to work just fine. Meditating on his case blinds us to what 'would in fact, *does in fact, do to explain to someone how to go on*', as Cora Diamond puts it. We come to think we to convince 'someone on who uptake, on whose responses, we are not at all depending' (Diamond [1986], pp. 68-69). We think we need an explanation of our meaning that can't possibly be misunderstood, so that no sincere student could be as recalcitrant as the skeptic imagines.

But in fact we *don't* need this, and recognizing that we don't is to turn our inquiry around 'on the pivot of our real need' (*PI*, §108). Getting the voices of temptation and correctness to see this would effect a cure, would 'show the fly the way out of the fly-bottle' (*PI* §309). I think it has to be acknowledged that this therapy seldom works in practice -- the rule-following paradox remains a topic of

much philosophical debate -- but if it did, the outcome would be as Wittgenstein hopes: 'the one that gives philosophy peace' (*PI* §133).

Before we move on to *On Certainty*, let me make one last observation that might indirectly support this reading of the rule-following argument: the distorting presupposition it targets -- that we need an account of meaning that works no matter how bizarre the circumstance -- is none other than the priority of sense, so central to the *Tractatus* -- the assumption that our statements must have the meanings they do quite independently of any contingent facts. Obviously this is a tendency of thought to which Wittgenstein himself was deeply susceptible, a tendency at the very heart of his early philosophy, so perhaps it wouldn't be surprising if exorcising that tendency would be equally central to his next phase, to the middle period.

OK, so we now have a fairly straightforward therapeutic reading of middle-period Wittgenstein on meaning and representation. My plan, as suggested earlier, is to use this as a template for a reading of the treatment of skepticism in *On Certainty*, but first I must acknowledge that many acute observers, including most prominently our co-symposiast Professor Moyal-Sharrock,⁶ have argued in detail that the final Wittgenstein of 1949-1951 was no longer a therapeutic philosopher, that he reverted to proposing and defending philosophical theses. As it happens, a former student here, Brian Rogers, wrote a provocative dissertation a few years back, arguing that there was no

⁶ See Moyal-Sharrock [2004].

such reversion, that Wittgenstein continued to pursue his therapeutic method in *On Certainty*.⁷

Evaluation of these opposing claims is difficult, given that the book wasn't prepared for publication by Wittgenstein himself, but selected from a series of notebooks by his literary executors, Anscombe and von Wright. They explicitly note that 'it is all first-draft material, which [Wittgenstein] did not live to excerpt and polish', but they nevertheless maintain that 'it constitutes a single sustained treatment of the topic' (*OC*, preface). In an remarkable philological effort, Rogers challenges this characterization. Drawing on evidence as varied as the colors of ink, the neatness (or not) of the handwriting, vendor's stamps on the notebooks, and of course contemporaneous letters and reports, he argues persuasively that only §§1-65 (which I'll call part 1) and §§300-676 (part 3) are 'sustained' treatments. Part 1 comes from late 1949 -- either during or shortly after Wittgenstein's discussions in Ithaca with Malcolm about Moore, when he was ill but not yet diagnosed with prostate cancer -- and part 3 from the last six weeks of his life in early 1951, after the hormone and X-ray treatments were abandoned and he felt better for short time before his death. The middle portion of the book as we know it today, §§66-299 (part 2) was selected and organized by the editors from several notebooks mixed in with material on color and philosophy of psychology as well as skepticism, material sometimes difficult even to order and often difficult to date.

⁷ Rogers [2011]. See also Rogers [2010].

Rogers also establishes that Wittgenstein was consistently unhappy with the work in parts 1 and 2, though more so for the latter than the former. In February 1951, just before those last six weeks, he wrote to Malcolm that 'my head [is] empty' although 'it was half empty already when I was in Ithaca'. Two months later, in April 1951, he wrote, again to Malcolm:

An extraordinary thing has happened to me. About a month ago I suddenly found myself in the right frame of mind for doing philosophy. I had been absolutely certain that I'd never again be able to do it. It's the first time after more than 2 years that the curtain in my brain has gone up.⁸

This stands to reason, as Rogers reports, because Wittgenstein was increasingly weak and ill in much of 1949 and mental confusion is a well-known side-effect of the hormone treatments he received from November of 1949 until March of 1951.

All this means that *On Certainty* can't be approached with the confidence appropriate to Wittgenstein's finished works. A great deal is now known about the many stages of selection, revision, and re-ordering that went into the composition of the *Investigations*. If Wittgenstein final thoughts on skepticism were ultimately intended as therapeutic in some similar sense, then extrapolating from first draft remarks would involve a considerable measure of speculation. Wittgenstein's disapproval of parts 1 and 2 and approval of part 3 adds an additional hurdle for any reading:

No matter what characteristics interpreters believe that Wittgenstein hoped his most polished writings would achieve (and

⁸ These letters are quoted in Rogers [2011], pp. 74, 1, respectively, and form only one small bit of the case made there. See also Rogers [2010], p. 360.

there is a wide range of opinions on this subject), I believe that their readings of *On Certainty* would benefit from comparing the remarks written in 1950 with those from 1951, trying to determine what characteristics the later material has that the earlier material lacks, and explaining why they believe *Wittgenstein* would think that the later work was of higher quality. (Rogers [2011], p. 128, footnote 2)

Rogers himself meets this challenge by identifying traces of therapy (as he understands it) in part 1, none in part 2, and consistent appearance in part 3. He concludes that Wittgenstein never gave up his therapeutic approach to philosophy, since it was fully present in the final writings that he valued most.

My own understanding of the structure of Wittgensteinian therapy differs from Rogers's. He sees it as loosely analogous to Freudian analysis,⁹ addressed to the particular needs of the individual philosopher being treated, so it's important that Moore is addressed only minimally in part 1,¹⁰ not at all in part 2,¹¹ and more personally in part 3 (during which time Wittgenstein actually discussed these matters directly with Moore in Cambridge). The therapeutic model I've sketched here treats intellectual tendencies more generically, diagnosing how an apparently insuperable puzzle can arise when philosophers, even those with apparently opposing views, are somehow blind to the perfectly ordinary answers to their questions. And often

⁹ See Rogers [2011], chapter 4: 'While Wittgenstein certainly didn't model his procedure on psychoanalysis, aspects of his philosophical project can be illuminated through comparison with some of Freud's descriptions of the therapeutic process' (p. 111).

¹⁰ E.g., to get him to see that he hasn't answered the skeptic's question (*OC* §§19, 20).

¹¹ E.g., *OC* §137: 'Moore's assurance that he knows ... does not interest us. The propositions, however, which Moore retails as examples of such known truths are indeed interesting'.

the philosophical views offered, as well as the presuppositions that blind their proponents, are tendencies of thought Wittgenstein himself finds, or has in the past found, captivating. If the final writings on skepticism are to be fitted to this template, the interpretive speculation mentioned a moment ago will involve imagining how this first-draft material might have been sorted, revised, and arranged into these various voices.

To begin at the beginning, the passages in part 1 come not from bound notebooks but from five loose sheets of large paper, each folded in half to form four pages, that were discovered in Anscombe's home in 1967 -- long after Wittgenstein's death and just in time to be included in the original publication of *On Certainty*. It's unknown whether Wittgenstein left them behind deliberately or had just forgotten about them when he moved to his doctor's home for those final productive months after treatment had ended. The dating of the sheets is also subject to dispute. Rogers argues persuasively that they were written either during or shortly after Wittgenstein's stay with Malcolm, as his illness was progressing but before its diagnosis and the beginning of treatment.¹² Under the circumstances, it's not surprising that there are conspicuous traces of Malcolm-like thinking about the use and misuse of the word 'know'.¹³ For a serious ordinary

¹² See Rogers [2011], pp. 54-62.

¹³ Cf. Coliva [2010], p. 2: 'Wittgenstein's reception of [Moore [1925] and [1939]] was mediated by the reading of them afforded by one of Moore's first commentators, viz. Malcolm. Yet Malcolm's reading of Moore itself was mediated by his early attendance of Wittgenstein's lectures (1938/1939) ... This complex entanglement poses a number of historically difficult questions'.

language examination of 'know', there's always Austin [1946], but in any case this isn't the therapeutic strain we're tracing here. Let's look instead at the direct confrontation with Moore in these passages.

The manuscript begins, of course, with a reference to Moore's 'Proof on an external world':

If you do know that *here is one hand*, we'll grant you all the rest. (OC §1)

Moore, famously, offered ...

holding up my two hands, and saying, as I make a certain gesture with the right hand, 'Here is one hand', and adding, as I make a certain gesture with the left, 'and here is another' (Moore [1939], p. 146)

... as proof that there 'things outside of us', an external world. If there's a voice of temptation to be found in *On Certainty*, it's a good guess that it belongs to Moore -- or better, to Moore as Wittgenstein understands him.¹⁴ To fill in the analogy, much as the discussion in the *Investigations* can be seen as addressing the question 'is there such a thing as following a rule (or meaning something by one's words)?', the discussion in *On Certainty* addresses 'is there an external world?' In each case, the voice of temptation answers 'yes': 1002 is what follows after 1000 by the rule 'plus-2'; here is a hand and here is another. So far so good.

In the *Investigations*, the skeptical voice then challenges the voice of temptation with the case of the recalcitrant student, which leads to the long dialogue between them. There is less of this in *On Certainty*, which stands to reason given that rule-following skepticism

¹⁴ From now on, I use 'Moore' to mean 'Moore as Wittgenstein understands him' unless otherwise indicated.

is a new breed, while the considerations that motivate skepticism about our knowledge of the external world are so venerable and so well-known as to need no rehearsal. In the entire book, a few passing references to dreaming¹⁵ and occasional allusions to the sense-datum inference¹⁶ are about all we hear from the traditional skeptical arsenal. What we do hear from the skeptic's perspective in part 1 are protests that 'here is a hand' doesn't solve the problem:

The statement 'I know that here is a hand' may then be continued, 'for it is *my* hand that I'm looking at'. Then a reasonable man will not doubt that I know.^[17] -- Nor will the [skeptic]¹⁸; rather he will say that he was not dealing with the practical doubt which is being dismissed, but there is a further doubt *behind* that one. -- That this is an *illusion* has to be shewn in a different way. (OC §19)

¹⁵ These occur only in part 3. The final entry in the book includes claim that 'Someone who, dreaming, says "I am dreaming" ... is no more right than if he said in his dream "it is raining", while it is in fact raining' (OC §676). (See also §383.) Perhaps Wittgenstein never experienced a lucid dream (that is, a dream in which the dreamer is aware that current experience is a dream). Researchers studying this phenomenon have devised a method for the sleeper to signal a lucid dream state by voluntary eye movements (see [2017], pp. 25-6).

¹⁶ See OC §90: ' "I know" is supposed to express a relation, not between me and the sense of a proposition (like "I believe") but between me and a fact. So that the *fact* is taken into my consciousness. (And here is the reason why one wants to say that nothing that goes on in the outer world is really known, but only what happens in the domain of what are called sense-data.)' See also §426.

¹⁷ Incidentally, Wittgenstein sometimes appears to believe that we can't be mistaken about our own hands: 'it is not true that a mistake merely gets more and more improbable as we pass from the planet to my own hand. No: at some point it has ceased to be conceivable' (OC §54). In fact there is a condition (xenomelia) whose sufferers believe that some limb is not part of themselves. Cf. §360: 'I KNOW that this is my foot. I could not accept any experience as proof to the contrary'. Apparently some experiences, for some people, do count against. Coliva [2010], §3.1.1, requires that doubts 'must have consequences in practice' (p. 104). Grizzly as it must seem, sufferers from this condition often seek to have the offending limb amputated.

¹⁸ Wittgenstein writes 'idealist', but it's clear from context that he means what we usually call the 'skeptic'.

My believing the trustworthy man stems from my admitting that it is possible for him to make sure. But someone who says that perhaps there are no physical objects makes no such admission. (OC §23)

Faced with the question 'is there an external world?', we have the voice of temptation insisting that 'here is a hand' and the skeptic, presumably backed by one or another skeptical scenario, responding that she has not addressed the sort of doubt he's raising.

Part 2 of *On Certainty* is the collection of material selected by the editors from various notebooks all dating to the period of Wittgenstein's cancer treatments. These passages contain most of the discussion of so-called 'hinge propositions',¹⁹ which include Moore's 'here is a hand':

I should like to say: Moore does not *know* what he asserts ... but it stands fast for him ... (OC §151)

Can't an assertoric sentence ... be isolated from doubt? (OC §87)

It may be ... that *all enquiry on our part* is set so as to exempt certain propositions from doubt ... They lie apart from the route travelled by inquiry. (OC §88)

At times, Wittgenstein seems motivated by a fairly straightforward foundationalism:

To be sure, there is justification; but justification comes to an end. (OC §192, see also §110)

Propositions like Moore's are these endpoints, claims for which no further justification can be offered:

I want to say: my not having been on the moon is as sure a thing for me as any grounds I could give for it.

And isn't that what Moore wants to say, when he says he *knows* all these things? -- But is his knowing it really what is in

¹⁹ The earlier §§35-36 might be considered foreshadowings.

question, and not rather that some of these propositions must be solid for us? (OC §111-112)

In fact, these propositions are constitutive of the very practice of offering justifications, of confirming or disconfirming:

The *truth* of certain empirical propositions belongs to our frame of reference. (OC §83)

All testing, all confirmation and disconfirmation of a hypothesis takes place already within a system. And this system ... belongs to the essence of what we call an argument. The system is not so much the point of departure, as the element in which arguments have their life. (OC §105)

[these propositions are] the inherited background against which I distinguish between true and false ... their role is like that of rules of a game. (OC §§94-95)

Regarding [them] as absolutely solid is part of our *method* of doubt and enquiry. (OC §151)

In addition to these metaphorical comparisons to 'frames of reference' and 'rules of a game', we hear of 'the axis around which a body rotates' (OC §152) and the 'river-bed of thoughts' (OC §97) which consists

... partly of hard rock, subject to no alteration or only to an imperceptible one, partly of sand, which now in one place now in another gets washed away, or deposited. (OC §99)

Perhaps it's some confirmation of Rogers's analysis that the now-standard terminology comes only in part 3:

That is to say, the *questions* that we raise and our *doubts* depend on the fact that some propositions are exempt from doubt, are as it were like hinges on which those turn. (OC §341)

That is to say, it belongs to the logic of our scientific investigations that certain things are *in deed* not doubted. (OC §342)

But it isn't that the situation is like this: We just *can't* investigate everything, and for that reason we are forced to rest content with assumption. If I want the door to turn, the hinges must stay put. (OC §343)

In sum, then, though Moore seems to affirm an ordinary empirical claim -- that here's a hand -- this is actually a proposition with 'a peculiar logical role in the system of our empirical propositions' (OC §136).

As has probably been obvious for some time now, my suggestion is that the theory of hinge propositions comes from the voice of correctness, analogous to Kripkenstein's community view of rule-following and meaning. Let me hasten to add that to say these aren't Wittgenstein's own considered views is not at all to suggest they lack philosophical interest: the rule-following paradox and the prospects for its solution continue to draw attention in philosophy of language and I don't have to convince this audience that hinge epistemology has an important role in the contemporary debate there! But my goal here is to lay out this particular therapeutic reading of the Wittgensteinian opus, so I hope you'll bear with me.

Notice that the appeal to hinge propositions is a 'skeptical solution'.²⁰ Moore, as the voice of temptation, has insisted that

²⁰ Something like this may underlie Pritchard's sense that the Wittgensteinian component of his 'biopic' solution to the skeptical paradoxes leaves us with a form of 'epistemic vertigo' (Pritchard [2016], pp. 184-188). It's unsettling to learn that 'Here's a hand' isn't a straightforwardly justified belief.

'Here's a hand', partly on the evidence of his senses.^{21,22} The skeptic counters one way or another that this purported evidence has no force. Much as the Kripkensteinian voice of correctness accepts the skeptical conclusion that nothing about me or my intentions or my training or anything else pre-determines that '1002' is the correct step after 1000, the hinge theorist agrees with the skeptical conclusion that Moore has no evidence for his claim. Much as the Kripkenstein goes on to offer a communitarian account of what nevertheless supports our assertion that '1002' is correct, the hinge theorist goes on to offer an account of hinge propositions that supports our right to them: they 'stand fast' for us; they form the necessary backdrop against which presenting evidence becomes possible. So the analogy clearly suggests that this strain in Wittgenstein's thought, so prominent in part 2, would eventually have found its way to the voice of

²¹ See Coliva [2011], p. 34, where we are referred to Moore [1941]: in connection with claims like 'I have in my hand some sheets of paper with writing on them' (p. 227), Moore writes, 'I had ... at the time I made it, *the evidence of my senses*. I do not mean by this that the evidence of my senses was the *only* evidence I had for [it]: I do not think it was. What I mean is that ... I was seeing or hearing or feeling things (or, if that will make my meaning clearer, "having visual, auditory, tactile or organic sensations") ... such that to see or hear or feel those things was to have evidence (not necessarily *conclusive* evidence) for part at least of what I asserted when I asserted the proposition in question' (p. 243). It should be acknowledged that Moore only published this piece when he collected his papers in 1959 and that he wrote in the introduction that 'There are bad mistakes in it which I cannot yet see how to put right' (Moore [1959], p. 13). Still, it seems likely that his reservations concerned the discussion of dreaming in the final few pages, not the passage just cited. (See Weatherall [2015] for an interesting take on this.)

²² Moyal-Sharrock ([2004], pp. 122-123) argues that Moore doesn't have the evidence of his senses: a belief may be caused by experience without being based on or derived from experience. But even if I don't note my experience first, then infer the existence of my hands, I might legitimately respond to a challenge to that belief by saying that I see them, can move them at will, etc.

correctness. In partial response to Rogers's challenge: Wittgenstein may well have felt frustrated with his work during this period at least partly because he felt he himself unable to shake off this particular philosophical theory.

So, what happens in part 3 of *On Certainty*, after a six-month hiatus, when the curtain in his brain goes up?²³ One notable point, to begin, is that the debate between the skeptic and the voice of temptation takes a new form. Part 1 left off with the skeptic insisting that 'here's a hand' doesn't establish the existence of an external world, presumably on the basis of one or another familiar skeptical challenge, and schooling the innocent Moore, the voice of temptation, on the Doubt Behind the Doubt. In the fairly early going of part 3, a more sophisticated Moore appears to have learned this lesson, now uttering his anti-skeptical claim -- 'I know that's a tree'²⁴ -- with a crucial new inflection:

²³ Rogers, with his more individually targeted notion of therapy, places the emphasis on the character of Wittgenstein's engagement with Moore in part 3. Rather than presenting a theory of meaning that 'I know this is a hand' violates (as in part 1), he pressures Moore to give sense to this claim: 'After repeatedly giving various definite senses ... yet only producing sentences that are philosophically impotent, Moore may come to [see] that this sentence only seems to become clear once it is given a practical, non-metaphysical use' (Rogers [2011], p. 157, see also Rogers [2010], p. 362). This is a development of the Malcolm-like line about the use of 'know' that's been set aside here.

²⁴ During this period, Wittgenstein had discussions with Moore in Moore's garden: 'I am sitting with a philosopher in the garden; he says again and again "I know that that's a tree", pointing to a tree that is near us. Someone else arrives and hears this, and I tell him: "This fellow isn't insane. We are only doing philosophy"' (OC §467). It's hard not to think that a little dose of Grice would have helped immeasurably, as Wittgenstein himself occasionally foresees: 'Do I know that I am now sitting in a chair? ... In present circumstances no one is going to say that I know this ... But now, even if one doesn't say it, does that make it untrue?' (OC §552). Coliva [2010], §2.4, considers Searle's version of this concern.

What I am aiming at is ... the difference between the casual observation 'I know that that's a ... ', as it might be used in ordinary life, and the same utterance when a philosopher makes it. (OC §406)

For when Moore says 'I know that that's ... ' I want to reply 'you don't know anything!' -- and yet I would not say that to anyone who was speaking without philosophical intention. (OC §407)

This theme recurs a few weeks later:

When one hears Moore say 'I know that that's a tree', one suddenly understands those who think that that has by no means been settled. (OC §481)

It is as if 'I know' did not tolerate a metaphysical emphasis. (OC §482)

Wittgenstein doesn't fill in what it is to speak with 'philosophical intention' or 'metaphysical emphasis', but it must be to assert 'here's a hand' or 'I know that's a tree' on some basis that's purportedly immune to skeptical challenge, on some incontrovertible grounds.

Meanwhile, the voice of correctness remains much as it was in part 2,²⁵ but accompanied now by some hints of hesitation. For example, the entries for March 19th begin

Here I am inclined to fight windmills, because I cannot yet say the thing I really want to say. (OC §400)

There follow four entries that sound the hinge proposition theme:

I want to say: propositions of the form of empirical propositions, and not only propositions of logic, form the foundation of all operating with thoughts (with language). (OC §401)

²⁵ Occasionally, the range of hinge propositions seems to stretch to new lengths: 'We may say we know that water boils and does not freeze under such-and-such circumstances. Is it conceivable that we are wrong? Wouldn't a mistake topple all judgment with it? More: what could stand if that were to fall?' (OC §558). (See also §§599, 613.)

... the statements in question are statements about material objects. And they do not serve as foundations in the same way as hypothesis which, if they turn out to be false, are replaced by others. (OC §402)

To say of [a] man, in Moore's sense, that he *knows* something; that what he says is therefore unconditionally the truth, seems wrong to me. -- It is the truth only inasmuch as it is an unmoving foundation of his language game. (OC §403)

I want to say: it's not that on some points men know the truth with perfect certainty. No: perfect certainty is only a matter of their attitude. (OC §404)

Then Wittgenstein abruptly returns to the hesitation at the start:

'But of course there is still a mistake even here' (OC §405).

This hesitation appears to arise when Wittgenstein asks himself if the hinge propositions are truly constitutive of confirming and disconfirming, if the language game would truly collapse without them:

What if it *seemed* to turn out that what until now has seemed immune to doubt was a false assumption? Would I react as I do when a belief has proved to be false? or would it seem to knock from under my feet the ground on which I stand in making any judgments at all? ... Would I simply say 'I should never have thought it!' -- or would I (have to) refuse to revise my judgment -- because such a 'revision' would amount to the annihilation of all yardsticks? (OC §492)

Perhaps the answer is still supposed to be the latter, but consider:

I look at an object and say 'That is a tree', or 'I know that that's a tree'. -- Now if I go nearer and it turns out that it isn't, I may say 'It wasn't a tree after all' or alternatively I say 'It was a tree but now it isn't any longer'. But if all the others contradicted me, and said it never had been a tree, and if all the other evidences spoke against me -- what *good* would it do me to stick with my 'I know'? (OC §503)

Even in connection with 'I believe my name is L. W.', he denies that 'I am infallible about it' (OC §425). These notes of concern lend at least some support to the notion that hinge propositions would have ended up in the voice of correctness.

Once the voices of temptation and correctness are in conflict, the next step is to return to our ordinary practices, to the grey rags and dust. In the rule-following case, this meant revisiting the recalcitrant student and reminding ourselves of what would actually happen if someone were to behave that way in an everyday learning situation. The strict analogy in the current case would return us to the skeptical scenarios, to point out that we have perfectly good ways of determining that we aren't dreaming, that we have no evidence, phenomenological or experimental, to suppose there are such things as sense-data, and so on.²⁶ Given that the skeptical scenarios haven't played any explicit role so far, it's perhaps not surprising that this sort of thing doesn't turn up in *On Certainty*.

Still, Wittgenstein does 'assemble some reminders' of our ordinary practices, as he does in the passages just cited: in the face of surprising evidence, we respond 'I should never have thought it!' or 'it wasn't at tree after all!' In more mundane cases:

Someone with bad sight asks me: 'do you believe that thing we can see there is a tree?' I reply 'I know it is; I can see it clearly and am familiar with it'. -- A: 'Was [N. N.] at home yesterday?' I: 'Yesterday he was -- I know he was; I spoke to him'. (OC §483)

In these cases, then, one says 'I know' and mentions how one knows, or at least one can do so. (OC §484)

If someone believes something, we needn't always be able to answer the question 'why he believes it'; but if he knows something, then the question 'how does he know?' must be capable of being answered. (OC §550)

And if one does answer this question, one must do so according to generally accepted axioms. *This* is how something of this sort may be known. (OC §551)

²⁶ See the first two lectures of [2017].

I am taught that under *such* circumstances *this* happens. It has been discovered by making the experiment a few times. Not that that would prove anything to us, if it weren't that this experience was surrounded by others which combine with it to form a system. Thus, people did not make experiments just about falling bodies but also about air resistance and all sorts of other things.

But in the end I rely on these experiences, or on the reports of them, I feel no scruples about ordering my own activities in accordance with them. -- But hasn't this trust also proved itself? So far as I can judge -- yes. (OC §603)

So, presumably, I know this is a hand, because I see it, feel it, manipulate it quite as usual.

The further diagnostic question, then, is what keeps the voices of temptation and correctness from appreciating the force of these ordinary methods of appealing to evidence in support of our claims? Presumably, as in the rule-following case, something in the skeptic's challenge has thrown them off the scent. There, the student's endless recalcitrance made both voices think they had to provide explanations of meaning that couldn't be misunderstood, rules that couldn't be misinterpreted -- guaranteeing that this sort of recalcitrance could not arise. This left them unable to rely on our natural reactions to training, on the effectiveness of our practices in pursuit of our interests, on the very general features of the world that make all this work. In the present case, the skeptic's scenarios make us think we need evidence that guarantees that the radical skeptical scenarios are false, that there is no Evil Demon, no radical mismatch between sense-data and the world, and so on. Suddenly our ordinary evidence, our ordinary methods, no longer seem good enough; we need an extraordinary kind of evidence that ratifies our belief in our hands

without appeal to anything else we think we know about the world -- without appeal to any facts, for example, about what dreaming is like, or what our visual systems are like, or any other of the ordinary realities that underlie our everyday ways of finding out about the world.²⁷

In this way, the skeptic alerts the voice of temptation to the doubt behind the doubt, the doubt that can't be turned away by observing that 'here's a hand' on the basis of perfectly ordinary evidence. This is what inspires that voice to repeat her observation but with 'philosophical intent' or 'metaphysical emphasis' -- which must mean replacing the ordinary evidence with extraordinary evidence that would guarantee the truth of 'here's a hand' all by itself, without appeal to any contingent facts about the world. The voice of correctness, in contrast, accepts the skeptic's conclusion that there is no such extraordinary evidence. In response, he goes further: there is no evidence at all for 'here's a hand', because it's one of those propositions that must stand fast before there can be any possibility of evidence, of confirming or disconfirming.

The point is that either way, the ordinary evidence has been left behind; the skeptic has convinced both voices that the only acceptable evidence must be extraordinary. The voice of temptation attempts to find such evidence; the voice of correctness gives up on evidence entirely and hopes for another way. The cure, then, would be to get

²⁷ Cf. Stroud's 'special philosophical reflection on our knowledge of the world': whose 'special features ... make it impossible to rely on the reassuring kinds of answers we find it so easy to give to what sound like similar questions in everyday life' (Stroud [1996], pp. 132-133).

both parties to realize that we don't need evidence that works in splendid isolation, without appeal to any contingencies; we just need evidence that works for us in this world:

Whether I *know* something depends on whether the evidence backs me up or contradicts me. (OC §504)

It is always by favor of Nature that one knows something. (OC §505)

Both skepticism and the rule-following paradox illustrate a general philosophical tendency that Wittgenstein diagnoses in many contexts: the impulse to insist on the ideal -- which doesn't work because it can't be found -- leaving behind the real -- which does work, for us in our world, and can be found.²⁸

That's the main story I want to tell about the role of hinge propositions in Wittgenstein's discussion of skepticism, but there was one last twist to the therapeutic reading of the rule-following discussion: the distorting presupposition shared by the voices of temptation and correctness was a doctrine Wittgenstein once embraced in the *Tractatus*, the priority of sense. A final touch for the analogy, then, would be to locate the demand for extraordinary evidence in the *Tractatus*. Unfortunately the *Tractarian* characterization of epistemology as 'the philosophy of psychology' (4.1121) -- and thus not relevant to the book's concerns -- leaves

²⁸ In response to Rogers's challenge, then: Wittgenstein was only semi-satisfied with part 1 because he was feeling his way into a new (to him) debate under the influence of Malcolm; he was dissatisfied with part 2 because he felt trapped by the voice of correctness; he was happier while writing part 3 because he was beginning to find his way back to the grey rags and dust.

little hope of anything conclusive on this score.²⁹ If the picture theory were given a verificationist interpretation, then this, in combination with the priority of sense, would immediately imply that evidential relations are part of the system of representation, independent of any contingencies, but this reading of the book has been regarded as implausible for some time now, quite deservedly it seems to me.³⁰

Still, whatever may be true about the *Tractatus*, there's no doubt that Wittgenstein was attracted to verificationism during his talks with the Vienna circle and in early post-*Tractarian* writings like the *Philosophical Remarks*:

²⁹ There may be something relevant in the discussion of probability in the 5.15s, but if so, I've been unable to find it.

³⁰ Still there is this odd passage from part 2 of *On Certainty*:

If everything speaks *for* a hypothesis and nothing against it, is it objectively *certain*? One can *call* it that. But does it *necessarily* agree with the world of facts? At the very best it shows us what 'agreement' means. ... What does this agreement consist in, if not in the fact that what is evidence in these language games speaks for our proposition? (OC §203)

Is the view being floated here that 'agreeing with the world of facts' -- truth -- is just having all evidence in favor and none against? Does a proposition's sense -- what it is for a proposition to be true -- consist of its confirming evidence? The passage concludes, after the final sentence quoted above, with the parenthetical notation -- (*Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*) -- as if the view in question is being attributed to the earlier book. (The editors remark, by the way, that the first part of the paragraph displayed here was crossed out in the manuscript, but the final sentence, with the parenthetical attribution, was not.) In contrast, Coliva [2010], pp. 162-3, takes the parenthetical to mark a departure from the *Tractatus*, not a worry that 'it sounds all too reminiscent of the *Tractatus*'. (For what it's worth, when Carnap assimilates what he takes to be the *Tractarian* lesson that some aspects of our theory are parts of the linguistic framework, not descriptive of the world -- analytic, not synthetic -- he includes the evidential rules on the analytic side of the ledger.)

How a proposition is verified is what it says. ... The verification is not *one* token of the truth, it is *the* sense of the proposition. (PR §166(5-6))

In addition, it appears that the rejoinder ...

And then the sense of one proposition depends on whether another is true or false. (PR §113(3))

... is still intended as a *reductio*, on an implicit appeal to the priority of sense. So it seems likely that the skeptic's presupposition, too, was one that appealed to Wittgenstein earlier in his career.

In sum, then, I propose that this therapeutic Wittgenstein wasn't himself a hinge epistemologist, whatever the independent merits of that position might be. Operating as we should with the grey rags and dust of our ordinary epistemic practices, we take ourselves to have compelling evidence for our belief that 'here's a hand' -- we can see it, feel it, manipulate it as usual -- in stark disagreement with notion that it's among the unconfirmed hinge propositions of the voice of correctness. On the other hand, we also don't feel the need for the voice of temptation's 'metaphysical emphasis'. Wittgenstein's diagnosis is that the skeptic has lulled both voices into thinking they need a form of extraordinary evidence that confirms our claims from scratch, with no help from any contingencies. Once again he reminds us that we don't need methods that work in a vacuum; we only need methods that work for us, given our natural ways of reacting, our interests and goals, and the world in which we find ourselves.

One last remark. On this reading, notice that Moore as Wittgenstein understands him in part 1 -- the innocent Moore who simply answers the question 'is there an external world?' by appeal to

his two hands -- is actually right. This is a perfectly good reply. In fact, I think this is the real Moore, except for the implication in part 1 that he doesn't understand the doubt behind the doubt and needs to be instructed. I would argue that Moore understands perfectly well what the skeptic wants -- understands that he wants extraordinary evidence (what Moore calls 'proof') -- and straightforwardly admits that this is something he can't provide. The key is that this Moore, whom I take for the real Moore, insists that his failure to produce extraordinary evidence doesn't undermine the ordinary evidence, the compelling evidence, he has for the existence of his hands. In other words, it seems to me that this Moore and this therapeutic Wittgenstein are actually in agreement.³¹ But that's a topic for another time.³²

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³¹ See [2017], pp. 158-175. Perhaps it's worth noting that despite his defense of common sense (Moore [1925]), Moore apparently didn't regard claims like 'here's a hand' as special, as uniquely effective in response to the skeptic. In lectures from 1933-1934, he takes scientific evidence for the existence of stars and dinosaurs as 'indirect proofs' of the existence of material objects.

³² Thanks to Annalisa Coliva and Duncan Pritchard for organizing such a lively and enjoyable conference on Hinge Epistemology. I'm grateful to several participants for helpful discussions, especially Adam Leite and Genia Schönbaumsfeld.

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