Wittgenstein on Scepticism

An Interpretation of Wittgenstein's *On Certainty*

By

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Abstract

The thesis puts forward a new interpretation of Ludwig Wittgenstein's *On Certainty* and contrasts it with the standard reading of the book, also known in literature as the Framework Reading. The Framework Reading sees hinge propositions, that is our most basic and indubitable beliefs, as framing our practice of talking about the world, and, therefore, external to this practice. As such, they are seen as not truth-apt, purely regulative in character and our relation to them as non-epistemic. According to the interpretation put forward in this thesis, we should instead see hinges as uncontroversially correct moves in our practice of talking about the world, and, therefore, we should see them as obviously true and playing both a regulative and a descriptive role.

To my parents, Anna and Marek Orłowicz

Rodzicom

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Introduction

On Certainty consists of a series of notes taken by Ludwig Wittgenstein between the end of 1949 and April 1951, the last entry dated two days before Wittgenstein's death. The notes have been published together by his literary administrators Gertrude Elizabeth Margaret Anscombe and Georg Henrik von Wright, but they were not selected by them. Rather, the notes were singled out by Wittgenstein himself as being a separate work. The book contains 676 passages, written in four separate sections. They provide a continuous treatment of the problem of global scepticism and George Edward Moore's reply to the sceptical threat. These are topics largely unique to *On Certainty* and are not elaborated on in Wittgenstein's other writings.

The publication of *On Certainty* in 1969 opened a new aspect of Wittgenstein's thought to interpretation, and, as with the rest of Wittgenstein's legacy, it has been a subject of heated debates, which have resulted in a vast amount of secondary literature. The first book-length, complete interpretation of *On Certainty* was published in 1978 by Thomas Morawetz (Morawetz, 1978), and was followed by Marie McGinn's 1989 (McGinn, 1989) publication. However, it is particularly in more recent years that *On Certainty* and the debates surrounding the book became topics of renewed interest, with publications of commentaries by Avrum Stroll (Stroll, 1994), Danièle Moyal-Sharrock (Moyal-Sharrock, 2004a) and Annalisa Coliva (Coliva, 2010), in addition to two anthologies dedicated to Wittgenstein's treatment of scepticism (McManus, 2004) (Moyal-Sharrock &

Brenner, 2005). This increased interest in *On Certainty* has given rise to the idea of the Third Wittgenstein, which is meant to suggest that *On Certainty* is a work on a par in terms of importance with *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* and *Philosophical Investigations*.

The majority of book-length commentaries of *On Certainty* put forward versions of the so-called Framework Reading of the book, which I also refer to as the “standard reading”. In this thesis, I present a new interpretation of *On Certainty*, which is intended to provide an alternative to the Framework Reading.

In order to set up the background for presenting my interpretation, some further introductory remarks are in place. I present them in the following order:

- In section 0.1 I introduce the two main philosophical positions that Wittgenstein discusses in *On Certainty*: scepticism and Moore’s refutation of scepticism.
- In section 0.2 I present the outline of Wittgenstein’s treatment of scepticism
- Section 0.3 provides an overview of different readings of *On Certainty* and locates this thesis in the space defined by these readings.
- In section 0.4 I present the outline of my interpretation.
- Section 0.5 presents the structure of this thesis.
- Section 0.6 consists of a list of abbreviations of Wittgenstein’s works cited in this thesis.

0.1. Moore and the sceptic

Moore

The starting point of *On Certainty* is Moore’s *Proof of the External World*, which is invoked in the very first passage of Wittgenstein’s book. Moore’s proof as presented in (Moore, 1959) consists in showing that the sceptical hypothesis of there not being physical objects is false. In order to show that there are in fact physical objects Moore first establishes that his hands are physical objects as

they satisfy the definition of “things, that are to be met in space” (Moore, 1959, p. 136). He goes on to state he can then prove the existence of two hands and therefore physical objects, by simply pointing to his hands.

It is clear from the very first passage of *On Certainty* that Wittgenstein finds the proof unsatisfactory. However, he also finds it philosophically interesting. Like many other philosophers, Wittgenstein finds Moore’s proof to not be an appropriate response to the challenge of sceptical doubt. However, this obvious inappropriateness of Moore’s reply might be suggestive of Moore seeing the sceptical challenge as something that cannot be simply rebutted. The task of interpreting Moore’s view in detail lies beyond the scope of this thesis, but regardless of what the motive behind Moore’s proof is, the idea that sceptical doubt is something to be diagnosed, rather than answered, is how Wittgenstein approaches the problem.

It is not only *Proof of the External World* that is a subject of Wittgenstein’s discussion in *On Certainty*. Moore’s earlier work – *A Defence of Common Sense* – is another source of inspiration. In this work, Moore enumerates common-sense statements that he claims to know with certainty, such as “there exists at present a living human body, which is *my* body”, “the earth existed many years before my body was born”, “I am a human being” for example (Moore, *A defence of common sense*, 1959).

With regard to this work, Wittgenstein seems to be in agreement with Moore, at least in the sense of devoting a lot of space to exploring the concept of propositions to which we attach maximum certainty. In secondary literature on *On Certainty* these are sometimes referred to as “Moore-style propositions” (McGinn, 1989) but are more commonly known as “hinges” or “hinge propositions” due to Wittgenstein’s metaphor from OC 341. These propositions and their status are *On Certainty*’s main theme, and are the key for Wittgenstein’s response to the sceptic. As such they are subject of heated interpretative debates among commentators. Some of the most debated questions include:

1. Why can we not doubt hinges?
2. Are hinges truth-apt?
3. Do hinges have descriptive or empirical content?
4. What is the role of hinges in our epistemic systems?
5. Does the concept of hinges invite relativism?

This thesis is not different from other interpretations of *On Certainty* in the sense that it seeks answers to the above questions. What is distinctive about my interpretation are the answers, which, with the exceptions of the last question, are all different from the ones offered by the standard reading.

The sceptic

In *On Certainty*, Wittgenstein does not talk about scepticism directly, indeed he only uses the word twice in the entire book. Instead he follows Moore (Moore, 1903) (Moore, 1959) (Moore, 1959) and refers to his and Moore's opponent as an idealist (OC 19, 24, 37). Traditionally the distinction between the two positions with regard to the existence of the external world is defined as follows: the sceptic claims that we cannot know whether there is an external world, whereas the idealist denies its existence. According to my interpretation, from Wittgenstein's perspective this difference is not an interesting one, as his point of attack is what is shared by both of these stances, namely the hypothesis that all our beliefs about the external world might be wrong. Consequently, if Wittgenstein's arguments are successful, they are successful against both: the idealist and the sceptic. This is why Wittgenstein talks about "the scepticism of the idealist" (OC 37), suggesting that the difference between the two views is not an important one for his discussion.

Cartesian scepticism, despite being the primary target of Wittgenstein's criticism, is not the only type of scepticism present in *On Certainty*. The other form of global scepticism, namely the ancient problem of the regress of justification, is also present in the book. The problem of the regress of justification is the idea that we can never be justified in any claim, as any claim

we offer as justification of another claim is itself in need of justification. Therefore, when asked for justification we only have the following three options: to present a statement that we have already stated, to say something that itself is not justified but a mere dogmatic assumption, or to continue providing justifications *ad infinitum*.

I believe that in *On Certainty* Wittgenstein addressed both problems – Cartesian scepticism and the regress of justification. However unlike the standard reading I see them as addressed separately. That is I see Wittgenstein's answer to the problem of regress of justification as consisting in pointing out that the assumption on which it rests is false, namely that it is not the case that any claim can be doubted. According to Wittgenstein, this assumption is what leads philosophers astray, and in *On Certainty* he dedicates a vast amount of space to showing why, in some cases, doubt is not intelligible.

Wittgenstein's treatment of Cartesian scepticism, on the other hand, relies on showing why global sceptical hypotheses are senseless. The intelligibility of global sceptical hypothesis, such as the dream hypothesis, the malicious demon hypothesis or the brain-in-a-vat scenario constitute the strongest argument for Cartesian scepticism, and throughout the thesis I will refer to the argument involving a global sceptical hypothesis as "the sceptical argument". As I will discuss in detail in Chapter Eight of this thesis, Wittgenstein's criticism of the sceptical argument does not rely on showing that it is based on a false premise or invalid. Instead, Wittgenstein shows that the global character of the sceptical hypotheses, the fact that they undermine all of our beliefs about the external world, makes the hypotheses, and therefore also the argument itself, senseless.

It is worth noting, that both forms of scepticism are problems, which to a large extent define contemporary epistemology. Looking at the most traditional debates in this field of philosophy, we find that they involve views that are attempts at solving these very problems. For example, the debate between foundationalism and coherentism presents two different ways of dealing with the problem of regress of justification. Cartesian scepticism, on the other hand, is

one of the main drivers of the externalism/internalism debate, as well as the emergence of contextualism. More generally – it seems fair to say that different views within epistemology are assessed according to how they deal with the threat of scepticism.

In *On Certainty* Wittgenstein approaches the problem of scepticism at a different level than traditional epistemologists and he does not engage in any of the epistemological debates. As I will argue throughout the thesis, Wittgenstein, in *On Certainty* is not interested in doing epistemology, as traditionally understood. In fact his dissolution of scepticism dissolves also many of the contemporary epistemological debates, which might be one of the reasons why *On Certainty* has received little attention from epistemologists.

0.2 Wittgenstein's reply – outline of strategy

In *On Certainty*, Wittgenstein looks at one particular linguistic practice of ours: that of talking rigorously about the world, which throughout this thesis I also call “the practice of making empirical judgments”, and “the game of describing the world”. His focus on this particular practice is not surprising, given that this is the practice which the sceptical arguments are set to undermine. It is an important feature of our practice of talking rigorously about the world that it has an epistemic layer: a layer which involves giving and asking for justification as well as reflection on, and revision of, our methods; this is where doubts are expressed, and knowledge claims are made.

The main theme of *On Certainty*, and the core of Wittgenstein's reply to the sceptical threat, is a claim that some things cannot be doubted under pain of the whole practice of talking about the world being destroyed. As Wittgenstein puts it:

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 if it were like hinges on which those turn (OC 341)

The text of *On Certainty* does not give any clear definition of what have become known as “hinge propositions”, in fact, Wittgenstein expresses doubts as to whether it is possible (OC 674). Neither does Wittgenstein refer to them as a group very often; he mostly writes about particular examples of hinges such as “I have two hands”, “My name is X.X.”, or “There is a tree in front of me” (OC 125, 133, 157, 245, 267, 328, 347, 425). Consequently, we need to look at Wittgenstein’s argument for the indispensability of hinges for insights into what the concept of a “hinge” is about, which is largely what this thesis sets out to do.

0.3 Readings of *On Certainty*

Wittgenstein’s reasoning to the conclusion that not only do we have hinges, but also we need to have them, is not presented in a form of one argument. Instead, reasons supporting it are dispersed among numerous passages of *On Certainty*, most of which leave plenty of room for interpretation.

It is not surprising that, as a result, different accounts of hinges and their role have been developed. In recent literature, most notably in (Moyal-Sharrock & Brenner, 2005), the following readings are distinguished: Framework, Transcendental, Epistemic, and Therapeutic. It is important to note, however, that these readings are not on a par in terms of prominence. The Framework Reading is by far the most widely accepted reading, and it is argued for in several-book length commentaries of *On Certainty*, whereas some of the other readings exist only in a few articles written on a particular aspect of the book. I now discuss each of the readings under a separate heading.

Framework Reading

When I refer to the standard reading of *On Certainty*, what I have in mind is the Framework Reading, which comprises most notably of commentaries written by Avrum Stroll (Stroll, 1994), Annalisa Coliva (Coliva, 2010), Danièle Moyal-Sharrock (Moyal-Sharrock, 2004a), and Marie McGinn (McGinn, 1989), though

many other scholars endorse its most central thesis, Thomas Morawetz (Morawetz, 1978) and Crispin Wright¹ (Wright C. , 1985) (Wright C. , 2004c), for example. There are important differences between the Framework commentators and there are interesting internal debates within the reading (for example regarding the propositional character of hinges). I discuss the views of individual commentators within the reading in Chapter One of this thesis. Here I focus on what they all share.

The Framework Reading owes its name to its most central thesis: the idea that hinges frame our practice of talking about the world, our game of making empirical statements. The Framework Reading sees hinges as framing the practice, and, just as the frame of a picture does not belong to the picture itself, neither do hinges belong to the game of making empirical judgments. Instead, they are seen as presuppositions of practice, something that has to be in place in order for the practice to be as much as possible.

This gives rise to the idea that hinges are very different from everything that happens within our game of talking about the world. That is, they belong to a different category of things than what happens within the practice. More specifically, the Framework Reading sees hinges as having regulative, rule-like status, whereas the moves within the practice are seen as purely descriptive. They also see hinges as constituting something akin to a conceptual scheme through which we describe the world. As such, hinges are seen as neither true nor false, neither rational nor irrational, neither known nor unknown; they are not subject to the same evaluations as the moves of the game. Moreover, hinges are seen as indubitable by virtue of their external, or frame-like, status: doubt is something that happens within the system, and therefore it cannot be applied to the frames.

What is characteristic of the Framework Reading is that it includes very general statements, such as negations of the global sceptical hypotheses, among hinges.

¹ Williams sees Wright as providing a Framework Reading (Williams, 2004, p. 96)

Consequently, the reading sees Wittgenstein's treatment of scepticism as consisting in one master argument¹: the indubitable character of hinges entails indubitability of negations of the sceptical hypotheses, and therefore allows us to dismiss the argument for Cartesian scepticism. This renders the negations of sceptical hypotheses neither true nor false, but at the same time something that we need to keep in place in order for our practice to be possible.

Another characteristic of the Framework Reading is the reliance on the investigation of the ordinary use of words such as "to know" and "to doubt" in establishing the futility of the sceptical doubt. They argue that the sceptic's use of both of those words is different from the ordinary usage, and see it as a reason to reject such doubt as illegitimate. Such an approach fails to account for seeing the sceptic as someone who suggests we should revise our practice, that is as someone who suggests not that we do doubt hinges, but that we should doubt hinges. This approach is therefore subject to the objections commonly directed at ordinary language philosophy.

I believe this to be a misinterpretation of Wittgenstein's remarks on philosophy as being tasked with describing, rather than explaining or justifying, our practices (PI 124, 126), and I see Wittgenstein's criticism of scepticism, and Moore's response to scepticism, as going deeper and showing why we cannot accommodate sceptical doubt by modifying our use of expressions. In other words, according to my interpretation we not only do not doubt hinges, we cannot doubt them.

Lastly, the Framework Reading (with the exception of Coliva) combines the view of hinges as presuppositions of our practice of making empirical judgments and constituting a conceptual scheme with a naturalistic view of them. That is, the reading sees hinges as part of our natural make up, something we believe by virtue of the kind of animals we are: hinges belong to the realm of the instinctive.

¹ Compare (Williams, 2004, p. 78)

It is this theme that I see as distinguishing the Framework Reading from the Transcendental one.

Transcendental Reading

The Transcendental Reading is put forward by (Brenner, 2005) (Rudd, 2003) (Rudd, 2005), and is characterised by seeing Kantian themes in *On Certainty*. As such, these interpretations are concerned with a slightly different debate than this thesis, and, as a result, this thesis does not engage with them directly. What is important from our point of view is that, as Moyal-Sharrock and Brenner point out (Moyal-Sharrock & Brenner, 2005), these interpretations are not very different from the Framework Reading, and that the term “transcendental’ is understood by the Transcendental Reading in a way which allows us to replace it with “grammatical”, rendering the interpretation very close to that of the Framework Reading.

Epistemic Reading

The Epistemic Reading might be the second most prominent reading, especially in light of recent works by Michael Williams, Crispin Wright and Duncan Pritchard. As I argue later in the thesis (Chapter Six, section 6.1), the Epistemic Reading of *On Certainty* is not a reading in the same sense as the Framework Reading, since the views presented by commentators listed under the Epistemic Reading are very varied and there is little they have in common. As I argue, even the thesis that our relationship to hinges is epistemic and that hinges can be known, which is seen as defining the Epistemic Reading, is not endorsed by all commentators within the reading.

It is also worth noting that some commentators within the Epistemic Reading still endorse the Framework Reading’s central thesis of hinges staying outside of our practice of talking about the world (Morawetz, 1978) (Wright C. , 2004c).

Therapeutic reading

Therapeutic reading of *On Certainty* is endorsed by (Minar, 2005) (Read, 2005) (Crary, 2005), however it is fair to say that it is only a small part of a much larger project of interpreting Wittgenstein as not endorsing any particular philosophical positions, and focusing on *On Certainty* is a part of this project.

A thorough discussion of the therapeutic interpretation of Wittgenstein's works is a dissertation topic in its own right, and, as such, lies beyond the scope of this thesis. In what follows I do not work with an assumption that Wittgenstein does not hold any positions, but with regard to the ones *On Certainty* is most interested in, namely idealism, scepticism and realism, I interpret Wittgenstein as indeed dissolving the debate rather than endorsing any of the stances.

0.4 This thesis

The main motivation behind the interpretation put forward in this thesis stems from the dissatisfaction with the Framework Reading, and from the sense that, under the Framework's interpretation, Wittgenstein's argument dissolving scepticism is not as rationally compelling as it could be.

The Framework's picture of our practice of making empirical judgements is not a satisfactory alternative to scepticism. According to the Framework interpretation, hinges cannot be doubted because they are presuppositions of the practice, and therefore, without them, our practice would not be possible. However, by seeing hinges as framing the practice, as I will argue, the Framework Reading legitimises what I call "the external perspective", that is, a view from outside the practice, which opens the door to asking questions about the legitimacy of the practice as a whole. Even though the reading recognises that such external perspective lies beyond language, and therefore we cannot express the sceptical doubt, in a way that makes our position even worse; on one hand we feel that our practice can be doubted, on the other, we cannot express such doubt. We can see this position as a different form of scepticism: that which James Conant calls "Kantian scepticism" (Conant, 2004).

This thesis rejects the Framework proposal of seeing hinges as lying outside, or at the limits of, our practice. Instead, I see Wittgenstein's remarks on rule-following as showing that in order to have a rule-governed practice, we need to have examples of uncontroversial correct application of rules governing it, and that this is what hinges are.

The consequences of this claim are far-reaching. If rules are not external to practice, but rather are a part of the practice, and therefore so are hinges, then the idea that hinges stay beyond all evaluations has no support. In the course of this thesis I argue against almost all of the Framework's theses; I see hinges as true, rational, certain, where certainty is understood as an epistemic concept, and as dissolving the scheme/content distinction rather than constituting a conceptual scheme.

The Framework Reading sees our practice as framed by hinges, and therefore creates a border between the practice and some external space. My picture, on the other hand, sees hinges as a part of the practice, and the practice itself as open-ended and all-encompassing. That is, all talking that takes place within the practice and does so not because we are limited and the talking that we would like to do outside is not legitimate, but rather because our practice simply interprets any talking as a part of it. As a result, scepticism and the sceptical argument are statements, of which we cannot make sense.

To conclude, the reading presented in this thesis is intended to provide an alternative to the Framework Reading by challenging its central thesis. At the same time it differs from the Epistemic, Therapeutic and Transcendental readings.

0.5 Structure of the thesis

This thesis has the following structure:

In Chapter One, I provide an overview of different interpretations of *On Certainty* within the Framework Reading. This is the place where I discuss differences

between the particular Framework commentators, and present the details of the Framework interpretation.

In Chapter Two, I present my argument for the indubitability of hinges. I demonstrate how Wittgenstein's insights regarding rule-following are the key to understanding why we cannot as much as entertain the idea of hinges being false. The argument portrays hinges as playing a regulative role by virtue of being paradigmatic examples of linguistically correct and true propositions.

The next few chapters flesh out the consequences of such view of hinges. In Chapter Three I argue that the fact that hinges play a regulative role does not mean that they are devoid of empirical content. On the contrary, I argue that hinges play the regulative role by virtue of being descriptive. In this chapter, I also show how this fact undermines the traditional scheme/content distinction.

In Chapter Four, I discuss a claim made by some commentators within the Framework Reading that hinges are not propositions at all, but, rather, entities of a completely different kind to those that exist within the game of talking about the world. I argue that reasons presented in support of such reading, both textual and conceptual, are not compelling.

Chapter Five takes on one of the Framework key theses, namely the idea that hinges are not truth-apt. I argue that hinges are uncontroversially true, and that the reasons offered by the Framework Reading in support of the non truth-apt reading entail a problematic view of the external perspective, that is the viewpoint from outside of our game of talking about the world.

Chapter Six discusses the issue of the knowability of hinges. In this chapter I contrast my view not only with the one put forward by the Framework Reading, but also discuss the Epistemic Reading in detail. I show that there is much less disagreement between the readings than the Framework Reading presents there to be. I also show how we can think about our relationship to hinges as epistemic without equating Wittgenstein's view with that of Moore.

Chapter Seven discusses the question of whether the concept of hinges invites relativism. In this chapter I argue, this time in agreement with the Framework Reading, that it does not, and that Wittgenstein was neither an epistemic, nor a conceptual relativist. I point out how the non-relativist reading is much harder to defend if we accept the previously discussed Framework theses.

Lastly, in Chapter Eight, I discuss the anti-sceptical strategy of *On Certainty* with regard to Descartes' sceptical argument. I argue that, in *On Certainty*, Wittgenstein shows how both sceptical hypotheses and their negations have only the appearance of meaningfulness, and are, in fact, senseless.

I finish with some concluding remarks.

0.6 Wittgenstein's works cited

OC – *On Certainty*

PI – *Philosophical Investigations*

RFM – *Remarks on the Foundation of Mathematics*

NF – *Notes on Fraser's Golden Bough*

CV – *Culture and Value*

Z – *Zettel*

TLP – *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*

BB – *The Blue and Brown Books*

Chapter 1

Framework Commentators

In this chapter I provide an overview of the work of the main commentators within the Framework Reading, leaving more in-depth discussion of the components of the reading, which I disagree with, for chapters Two to Eight. All of the main commentators within the reading have published book-length commentaries of *On Certainty*, and my presentations of their views follows the chronology of these publications. As a result the chapter has the following structure:

- Section 1.1 discusses McGinn's views.
- Section 1.2 focuses on Stroll.
- Section 1.3 is devoted to Moyal-Sharrock's interpretation.
- Section 1.4 looks at the interpretation offered by Coliva.

1.1 McGinn

Marie McGinn's 1989 book *Sense and Certainty* (McGinn, 1989) is devoted to four different replies to scepticism from a standpoint of common sense¹. In this light she discusses views of Moore, Austin and Cavell before progressing to three

¹ In this thesis I focus on (McGinn, 1989) but it is worth noting that in her more recent article (McGinn, 2008) McGinn distances herself from the Framework Reading.

chapters dedicated solely to Wittgenstein. She argues that it is *On Certainty* that provides the most satisfactory answer to the problem of external world scepticism.

McGinn starts her book with an analysis of scepticism itself. She encourages us not to think about scepticism through the lenses of the sceptical arguments, but rather to look closely at how the position is developed, how it comes to be. According to McGinn, the sceptic starts by taking up a reflective attitude to our practice of describing the world. They then notice that there is a whole class of statements with regard to which we seem to be absolutely certain, which we do not question, which go without saying. They interpret them as implicit knowledge claims and start to ask for justification or supporting evidence. At this stage they notice that, in order for those beliefs to be justified, the source of them needs to be fully reliable. This is the moment when they come up with the arguments, which undermine such reliability. They conclude that since those beliefs are not and cannot be justified we should suspend judgment with regard to them.

McGinn sees the right treatment of this class of statements, which are taken for granted, as the key to a successful answer to scepticism. In the thesis I call these “hinges”, while McGinn’s preferred terms are “Moore-type propositions” or “judgments of the frame”. The choice of terminology is not accidental. The reference to Moore makes perfect sense, given that the exposition of Wittgenstein is preceded by one of Moore. According to McGinn it is exactly the set of propositions, which Moore claimed to know, that constitute the special class which I refer to as hinges. The second name McGinn chooses for hinges is not surprising either, as it suggests the endorsement of the Framework Reading’s central thesis of hinges framing the game of making empirical judgments.

Interestingly, McGinn’s definition of judgments of the frame is consistent with the understanding put forward in this theses and does not include any claims typical of Framework Reading:

Thus the class of Moore-type propositions might be thought of as the mass of both spoken and unspoken judgements which form, in the context, the completely unquestioned background against which all enquiry, description of the world, confirmation and disconfirmation of belief, etc. goes on; they are all the judgments that are either “flamingly obvious” or which may be spoken with authority, which will be accepted without doubt, and which may be taken for granted in the justifications that we give for the knowledge claims or more interesting judgments we advance (McGinn, 1989, p. 103)

Before McGinn directly approaches the question of the status of the framework judgments she spends two chapters looking at what she takes to be two strands of reasoning that prepare the ground for the dissolution of scepticism. I will present these in separate subsections (subsections 1.1.1 and 1.1.2). I will then move to presenting her view of hinges in subsection 1.1.3 and finish with a brief discussion of the naturalist aspect of her interpretation of hinges in subsection 1.1.4.

1.1.1 First strand

The first of the preparatory threads McGinn introduces is concerned with what she takes to be Wittgenstein’s statement that we do not know the judgments of the frame; that we do not have any epistemic attitude towards them.

Wittgenstein’s view, so understood, is, of course, radically different from Moore’s. To motivate his claim, Wittgenstein, according to McGinn, looks at certain characteristics of our use of the phrase “I know” and shows how if we were to use “I know” with regard to a framework judgment, as Moore does, such use would not possess them.

McGinn identifies four such differences between our ordinary use of “I know” and that of Moore. The first one is the implication that the speaker is in possession of some information that her interlocutors are missing. This is of course not the case if we apply “I know” to a hinge. Comparing the two following examples might be helpful: saying “I know $2+2=4$ ” in the middle of a conversation between educated adults, and “I know where to have a delicious

breakfast in Taihape” when uttered in the context of a group of friends visiting Taihape.

The second characteristic of the ordinary use of “I know” discussed is the implication that the speaker is ready to give grounds in support of their statement, and that those grounds are more certain than the judgment which the speaker claims to know. Again this is not the case with philosophical use of “I know”. When I say, “I have ten fingers” there is no judgment that I could offer as justification that would be more certain than the fact that I have ten fingers. The sceptic is of course very happy with this requirement, it is exactly because we cannot offer justification in case of hinges that the sceptic advises as to suspend judgment. There is, therefore, an agreement between Wittgenstein and the sceptic that, in case of hinges, we cannot offer grounds. Where they differ is that the sceptic says that because of this we do not know them, whereas Wittgenstein says that epistemic concepts do not apply to them at all.

This is an interesting point. In my view the difference between the sceptic and Wittgenstein in this regard can be also expressed in the following way: Wittgenstein says that giving grounds (understood as propositions which are more certain than what they ground) is not something conceivable with regard to hinges, whereas the sceptic thinks that we just cannot give grounds when we should be able to. The sceptic sees inability to offer justification as failure; Wittgenstein as a reason for inapplicability of the concept of justification. According to the latter we do not even fully understand what it would mean to give grounds for a hinge, so not giving them is not really a failure of any kind.

The third characteristic states that when someone says that they know something it implies that this something can be seen as a hypothesis, which can be proven or falsified by evidence. Again, with regard to hinge propositions that is not the case.

The fourth characteristic is closely linked with the third. In cases of the ordinary use of “I know” it is possible to change one’s mind after being offered some new

evidence; it is possible to be mistaken. In the philosophical context such as Moore's, it is not the case. Mistake is not an option. If Moore were to be wrong about his hands, it would not be a mistake. It would be a disaster.

What it establishes is that the use of the phrase "I know" with regard to hinges is significantly different than our other, "ordinary", uses. According to McGinn this strongly suggests that our attitude to those judgments has to be understood in a different, non-epistemic manner¹. The second preparatory strand is what gives the idea of what it might be.

1.1.2 Second strand

The second strand of *On Certainty*, which McGinn identifies as preparing ground for the dissolution of scepticism, has to do with certainty in domains of logic and mathematics. She argues that Wittgenstein's account of certainty within those domains can serve as a pattern for the certainty we attach to hinges.

In order to clarify Wittgenstein's position in this regard, she contrasts his views of mathematical and logical certainty with what she takes to be the standard view. The standard view, according to McGinn, sees certainty of those disciplines as stemming from the fact that the propositions we are certain of are absolutely necessary and that we can somehow, through immediate intuition, sense that: we somehow grasp them as obvious. It is because of such intuition, that we feel we cannot be wrong about two plus two being equal four.

McGinn also notes that the idea of immediate intuition has traditionally often been combined with an idea that mathematical and logical judgments map some sort of reality. This traditional view is in both respects very far from how the later Wittgenstein sees logic and mathematics. The idea that logic is mapping

¹ This suggests that McGinn sees the ordinary use of a term as defining a concept, which seems to ignore the possibility of an evolution of a concept. I discuss this problem further in section 1.4 of this chapter and in Chapter Six.

reality might have been attractive for the author of the *Tractatus*, but is exactly what the later Wittgenstein rejects.

McGinn suggests that the later Wittgenstein sees the certainty that we attach to mathematical and logical statements as stemming from the role they play in establishing a technique – the technique of calculating for example. She insists that to accept that two plus two equals four is necessary for someone to learn how to calculate. If someone doubted it, they would simply fail to learn how to calculate. In this sense, the confidence we put in those judgments is an expression of our mastery of a technique.

1.1.3 Hinges

Having prepared the ground with the two previous chapters, McGinn then moves to the presentation of Wittgenstein's treatment of scepticism itself. She presents Wittgenstein as offering an alternative picture of our relation to the judgments of the frame. Instead of thinking of them as something we know with certainty, we can and should think about them being certain in the same sense that the propositions of logic and mathematics are. Just as the statement that two plus two equals four is an expression of mastery of the technique of calculating, hinges are expressions of mastery of the technique of describing reality.

To motivate the claim that describing the world requires learning a technique, McGinn draws on some of Wittgenstein's insights from *Philosophical Investigations*, especially the rule-following paradox. She argues that in the *Investigations* Wittgenstein establishes that in order for words to have meaning we need to accept certain statement with those words as certain. Those statements are exactly our judgments of the frame.

The application of the rule-following paradox to the task of interpreting *On Certainty* is also the approach I take in this thesis. The second chapter of this thesis is devoted almost solely to this task. Interestingly, the conclusions I draw about the status of hinges are very different to what McGinn puts forward. For her the fact that acceptance of hinges is a prerequisite for mastering the

technique of describing the world implies that they are not truth-apt. What she states in the quote below about the statements of mathematics she takes also to hold for hinges:

Questions of truth and falsity, correctness and incorrectness, arise within our practice of inference and calculation, but they do not arise, in the same sense, at the level at which the techniques of inference and calculation are themselves constituted or defined. (McGinn, 1989, p. 138)

McGinn offers the following reason in support of the non truth-apt reading: that the idea of agreement with reality does not make sense with regard to hinges.

I discuss the issue of truth-aptness of hinges in Chapter Five where I argue that the draw of a non truth-apt reading stems from seeing *On Certainty* as endorsing a correspondence theory of truth. Therefore, once we see Wittgenstein as rejecting any form of a representationalist picture of the relationship between language and reality, the draw disappears.

Interestingly, McGinn herself calls the framework judgments true in her book (McGinn, 1989, p. 142). This suggests that she might be using the word “true” in two different meanings; that her thesis is more that the hinges are not true in the same way as other judgments are. This is also suggested by the following quote:

It is what is asserted within our practice that can be true or false. The notions do not apply, or at least do not apply in the same sense, to the judgments that constitute our techniques of description (McGinn, 1989, p. 155)

I interpret this to be an attempt to save at least a little bit of correspondence; that since we cannot have a full-blown correspondence theory of truth we can sacrifice the level of the judgments of the frame to save correspondence at the level of empirical judgments. It clearly divides the sphere of our judgments into a framework which we adopt, and a sphere of what is inside the frame, that is the application of that framework resulting in our talking and thinking about the world. In this sense the framework provides lenses through which our looking at the world happens, although in this case the “looking” stands more for talking

and thinking, not actual perception. The question of whether framework judgments are true does not arise in the same sense that the question of whether the lenses correspond to reality does not arise, as any reality is always seen through the lenses.

This makes for quite a Kantian picture and it shares its flaws. I leave the discussion of such an approach in general until later in the thesis as this approach is not specific to McGinn, but rather it is a hallmark of the Framework Reading.

It is the same for another view McGinn expresses and one that I take to be the other side of that same coin. That is the view that hinges are completely devoid of any empirical content. She says:

We are not, therefore, to think of Moore-type propositions as stating empirical truths, in the sense of something which has turned out to be so but which may have turned out otherwise. (McGinn, 1989, p. 142)

In Chapter Three I argue that the idea of a sharp difference between rules and empirical propositions should be rejected. Again this is typical of the Framework Reading for which we need to be able to clearly distinguish between what belongs to the frame, and what is seeing the world through the frame. In contrast to the Framework Reading I argue that the very concept of hinges shows how the distinction is not a useful one and should be abandoned.

1.1.4 Naturalism

This is not all that McGinn has to say about the status of hinges. She carries on with a claim that our practice of making judgments is a natural phenomenon and that therefore the hinges themselves are of natural origin. She states that:

The practice in which our mastery allows us to participate is to be conceived as a natural phenomenon, something that emerged and evolved over the course of human history. (McGinn, 1989, p. 145)

The main disadvantage of such claim is that it makes the position susceptible to the 'begging the question' objection. Let us recall Wittgenstein's criticism of Moore's approach from the very beginning of *On Certainty*:

If you do know that here is one hand, we'll grant you all the rest.

When one says that such and such a proposition can't be proved, of course that does not mean that it can't be derived from other propositions; any proposition can be derived from other ones. But they may be no more certain than it is itself. (On this a curious remark by H.Newman.) (OC 1)

What Wittgenstein is noticing is that the problem with Moore's argument is not its validity. The problem is that the premises are exactly what the sceptic denies, and therefore it can never be a compelling refutation of scepticism.

Exactly the same can be said about McGinn's naturalism thesis. If we assume that the practice which we are engaged in is simply a part of the natural world, then we at the same time assume that the external world is there and our practice is a part of it. If that is the case then of course we can easily arrive at the conclusion that external world scepticism is not an attractive position to hold. However, just as in the case of Moore's argument, the sceptical argument undermines the premise itself.

McGinn is well aware of such a potential objection and offers the following rebuttal.

In order to see why Wittgenstein is not begging a question against the sceptic we need to go back to the diagnosis of scepticism. If we recall, the sceptic (just as Wittgenstein) starts with a reflection on our practice, on a natural phenomenon. They both notice the peculiarity of the judgments of the frame but offer a different interpretation of their status, a different picture.

According to McGinn, Wittgenstein simply offers a picture, which allows us to avoid some of the problems that the sceptical one entails. The first one is the well-known tension between the unliveable nature of scepticism and its draw. The sceptic's picture suggests that we suspend judgment with regard to Moore-

type propositions, but at the same time this is not something that we can actually do. Even the sceptic does not really feel a need to justify those judgments; they cannot help but to believe them. At the same time it is hard to find flaws in the reasoning that the sceptic offers.

Apart from this sceptical conundrum, according to McGinn, we can now see that scepticism leads to another perplexity. If we interpret the sceptic as taking on a task of reflecting on our practice, which is a natural phenomenon, then it seems perplexing that the result of such reflection should be questioning the very practice that was our starting point. McGinn concludes that the picture offered by the sceptic is simply much more problematic.

Although I agree that Wittgenstein should be seen as offering an alternative picture of our practice of making judgments, I think that McGinn's naturalist reading is problematic, and she fails to provide a satisfactory reply to the begging the question objection. The following two interpretations of McGinn's stance are possible. Either naturalism says something about the metaphysical status of the practice and the external world, or it does not. That is, when both the sceptic and Wittgenstein start their reflection on our practice, they either treat it simply as a phenomenon and do not assume anything about their metaphysical status, or they do make some assumptions about their metaphysical status and therefore also about the external world.

If they do not make any metaphysical assumptions, that is, they treat the practice as a phenomenon of unknown metaphysical status, then the sceptical picture does not lead to the perplexity identified by McGinn. Our experience and history of participating in such a practice, and therefore the ability to reflect on it, is not questioned by the sceptical conclusion. What is questioned is the source of such experience. In other words: the practice, if treated simply as a phenomenon, is still a phenomenon after the strongest of sceptic's arguments are presented. All the sceptic is suggesting is that now the status of this phenomenon is different than we thought; that it does not correspond to how things are, and that we are

just deluded to think that it is really real. But of course our experience of the practice, and of reflecting on it, is still exactly the same.

If on the other hand we take naturalism to entail something about the metaphysical status of the practice, and we therefore interpret Wittgenstein as saying something about the metaphysical status of the practice (which seems very un-Wittgensteinian), then the begging the question objection holds strong. If we assume that the practice is really real, then of course we are not going to be convinced by the sceptic, but neither have we produced a dissolution or refutation of scepticism.

I suggest that we think about both Wittgenstein and the sceptic, reflecting on a phenomenon whose metaphysical status is not assumed in any way. We can still think about it as a natural phenomenon, have an evolutionary story about it, etc. The only thing we shouldn't assume is that it exists in the sense that the sceptical arguments target. In the thesis I argue that it is not a normal sense of existence, but rather a strong metaphysical one, and that in fact we do not really understand what is meant by it. The naturalist theme in McGinn's interpretation is therefore either unimportant, at least philosophically, and belongs more to social science or, if she sees naturalism as entailing strong metaphysical thesis, it turns Wittgenstein's treatment of scepticism into a question-begging argument.

What is interesting is that without the addition of naturalism, McGinn already has what I take to be the core of Wittgenstein's reply to the sceptic. No assumptions about the status of our practice are needed to show that Wittgenstein's picture is more attractive than that of the sceptic. What is more, by showing how the acceptance of hinges is necessary for the mastery of language use, McGinn can and does show that the sceptical position cannot be consistently stated. In this sense, as far as the Framework Reading is concerned, McGinn's interpretation of *On Certainty* is probably the one to which mine shows most affinity.

1.2 Stroll

Avrum Stroll's interpretation of *On Certainty* is presented most comprehensively in his 1994 book *Moore and Wittgenstein on Certainty* (Stroll, 1994) and his views on Wittgenstein's are further elaborated on in more recent articles: (Stroll, 2004) (Stroll, 2005) (Stroll, 2009). As the title of Stroll's book suggests Wittgenstein's views are compared and contrasted with those of G.E. Moore. Stroll claims that Wittgenstein's *On Certainty* is inspired by both Moore's *Defence of Common Sense* and his *Proof of an External World*, however he suggests that Wittgenstein's opinion of these two works is radically different.

The first work, according to Stroll, serves more as a positive inspiration. It is largely concerned with what the philosophers have in common, that is, the view that there is some sort of common sense view of the world, that is both contingent and can be known with certainty. In Stroll's view it places both philosophers in opposition to the long philosophical tradition of only thinking about necessary truths as certain.

In contrast, *Proof of the External World*, is subject of Wittgenstein's severe criticism. The analysis of shortcomings of Moore's proof is, according to Stroll, one of the more dominant themes of *On Certainty*. Stroll offers an in-depth analysis of Moore's proof as well as its shortcomings before he moves to the presentation of Wittgenstein's criticism.

Stroll presents Wittgenstein as arguing that Moore's first mistake was to agree that the sceptical position and supporting arguments can be coherently stated. The status of Moore's and Wittgenstein's reply is therefore significantly different: where Moore is offering a proof, or an argument, Wittgenstein steps back and shows why no proof or argument is needed.

In the remaining parts of this section I discuss what I take to be most original and interesting themes of Stroll's book. Firstly, in subsection 1.2.1 I discuss Stroll's analysis of Wittgenstein's method. I then move to Stroll's discussion of the problem of assigning philosophical labels to Wittgenstein's views (subsection

1.2.2). In subsection 1.2.3, I look at Stroll's argument for seeing *On Certainty* as endorsing foundationalism. I finish with a brief discussion of Stroll's interpretation of Wittgenstein on the dream argument (subsection 1.2.4)

1.2.1 Method

Stroll begins the exposition of Wittgenstein's views on scepticism and certainty with a chapter on Wittgenstein's method. In this context he devotes a significant amount of space to Wittgenstein's style of writing, which he describes as "broken text", and which he defines as follows:

By broken text I mean literary style of writing that is non-systematic, rambling, digressive, discontinuous, interrupted thematically, and marked by rapid transitions from one subject to another. The broken text typically takes the form of pithy remarks such as maxims, apothegms, aphorisms, short paragraphs, or other sorts of scattered maxims (Stroll, 1994, p. 88)

Stroll describes several connections between the "broken text" style and Wittgenstein's method of doing philosophy. Firstly, by lacking structured arguments Wittgenstein's style challenges the traditional view that argumentation is the essence of philosophy. Instead of trying to provide counter arguments Wittgenstein draws an alternative picture, encourages us to look at the problem at hand from a different, or even many different, perspectives. The goal is therefore not to rebut an argument, but rather to change the way of seeing a problem. For Stroll this is exactly what *On Certainty* is set to achieve. This is how he describes the outcome of philosophy done in Wittgenstein's style:

The answer is that one's perspective on what is wrong with scepticism and how it can be defeated has shifted dramatically. One now has a different orientation toward our understanding of a network of facts that most of us, in some sense, were always aware of. The outcome is thus philosophical wisdom, a kind of deeper insight than we possessed before. (Stroll, 1994, p. 81)

Whilst I agree that argument, as such, is not the essence of philosophy, the main difference between Wittgenstein and more traditional analytic philosophers is less his language, and more the revolutionary character of his insight. He is not

just painting a different picture; he is painting a radically different picture. Arguments are much more relevant in discussions where a lot of background is shared by both parties. This is not to say that Wittgenstein's insight cannot be presented in the form of an argument: they can, and such reconstruction is largely the aim of this thesis. However, to find them rationally compelling, that is, to accept their premises, a shift of perspective might be required.

The second way in which the "broken text" is linked with Wittgenstein's method is via the lack of any uniformity or linear structure. He seems to jump from one use of a term to another, from context to context. This, according to Stroll, expresses his reaction against traditional philosophers' efforts to classify our understanding of the world in sharp categories. Instead of such attempts at imposing ideas on our understanding, Wittgenstein embraces the pluralism, complexity, and lack of sharp and neat divisions. According to Stroll it is the search for the essence that is, for Wittgenstein, the main vice of traditional philosophy, and the main cause of its troubles. It is the giving up of such a project, that is, being content with what is in front of us and resisting the urge to look deeper, that has the therapeutic effect.

I agree that Wittgenstein is not in the business of defining concepts, or of looking for necessary and sufficient conditions. This has huge impact on the way he conducts his discussion with the sceptic. Unlike a traditional epistemologist who has, or is looking for, a definition of knowledge, justification etc., Wittgenstein looks at the role particular concepts play in our language games. This requires moving from game to game, but also looking at the same game from many different angles. In this sense, Wittgenstein manages to avoid the danger of imposing ideas, or of imposing pictures, and instead looks at practice as it is. And when we do that, when we stop looking for uniformity, some of the problems no longer have their grip on us. It is this primacy of practice over ideas that create fertile ground, not only for dissolving problems, but also at deepening our understanding of these practices.

1.2.2 Labels

Imposing definitions or ideas on practice, when applied to philosophy itself, leads to what can be described as “philosophical labelling”, that is, a commonly undertaken endeavour of fitting new views into some traditional philosophical categories. Stroll expresses his disapproval of such practice in relation to Wittgenstein in the following paragraph:

It has been asserted that Wittgenstein is a relativist, naturalist, pragmatist, behaviourist, conventionalist and so on. These sorts of assessments assimilate his work to familiar philosophical categories... To settle for these sorts of understanding is to give up the exegetical ghost and minimize Wittgenstein’s originality and importance. Accordingly, all such construals are to be rejected. We need to discover the categories he is working with rather than importing them and assuming that they fit. (Stroll, 1994, p. 81)

The issue of assigning philosophical positions to Wittgenstein is a cause of controversy in at least two different ways. Firstly, there is no agreement as to whether Wittgenstein expressed any positive views at all. Secondly, there is the issue of particular labels assigned to Wittgenstein, none of which are widely accepted as adequate.

It seems that with regard to the first issue, Stroll thinks that Wittgenstein does present philosophical views, and in his book he says that there is much more in *On Certainty* than just criticism of certain positions. What he does object to is the use of old, traditional categories to describe Wittgenstein’s innovative, even revolutionary, picture.

There is, however, a fine line between distorting new views by imposing old categories on them, and trying to use the familiar to gain an understanding of Wittgenstein’s radically different outlook. An illustration of how difficult it is to draw such a line is evidenced by the fact that Stroll himself, after criticising the use of labels by other commentators, spends an entire chapter arguing that in *On Certainty* Wittgenstein expresses views that should be categorised as foundationalism.

1.2.3 Wittgenstein's foundationalism

Not only does Stroll suggest that Wittgenstein is a foundationalist, but this part of the book is where his arguments are presented with the most energy and conviction. He devotes a whole chapter to argue solely for that conclusion, and there are numerous paragraphs where he repeats the foundationalist claim (Stroll, 1994, pp. 138, 139, 158, 162, 178). He even goes as far as to count the use of “foundationalist” language in *On Certainty*¹.

It is important to understand that what is at stake for Stroll here is not just whether a certain traditional label fits Wittgenstein. It is clear that he acknowledges that Wittgenstein's alleged foundationalism is, in some important ways, different than the traditional one. It is not the issue of whether we should expand the definition of foundationalism to fit Wittgenstein's kind, or to make a new label for his view that is at stake. What Stroll is actually arguing for is a thesis that hinges, and therefore certainty, stay outside the language game; that they support it from the outside.

I understand exactly this claim to be the main characteristic of the Framework Reading. It is also exactly this idea to which this thesis is offering an alternative. It is therefore not possible to argue with it here, as most of the thesis can be seen as doing just that: as showing how we can think of hinges as not mere external supports, but as parts of the game. I would like to briefly list the reasons in support of the Framework picture offered by Stroll.

Firstly, Stroll argues that our certainty belongs to a very different domain than what happens inside the games, and it is this categorical difference that places it outside the game. Certainty belongs to the sphere of the animal, of instinct, to a realm of the primitive. As such it simply has nothing to do with our language games where we talk about truth, knowledge, evidence, doubt etc. In fact Stroll is the first commentator to suggest a non-propositional reading of hinges, which

¹ see also (Stroll, 2004)

emphasises how different they are to what happens inside the games. The debate of the propositionality of hinges is the subject of Chapter Four, and Stroll's view on the topic will be discussed in more detail there. For now it is important to note that he sees *On Certainty* as progressing from a propositional account to a non-propositional one, and that he explains this progression by Wittgenstein's realisation that if hinges are understood as propositions, the temptation to say that we do know them will be almost irresistible.

Secondly, the commentator points to the fact that everything that lies within a language game is subject to the ascriptions of truth, falsity, knowledge, doubt etc. Certainty does not (in particular it is not susceptible to doubt); therefore it must stay outside the game. In the following quote he calls it the main thesis of *On Certainty*:

It is Wittgenstein's main thesis in *On Certainty* that what stands fast is not subject to justification, proof, the adding of evidence, or doubt and is neither true nor false.

Whatever is subject to those ascriptions belongs to the language game, but certitude is not so subject, and therefore it stands outside the language game. (Stroll, 1994, p. 138)

Lastly, the placement of hinges outside the game explains why they cannot be doubted: the main problem of the traditional foundationalism. It is exactly the introduction of this inside/outside distinction that distinguishes Wittgenstein from a traditional foundationalism, and, according to Stroll, this is where the ingenuity of his view lies:

As we have seen throughout this work, he rejects the idea that what is foundational is susceptible to proof, the adducing of evidence, truth or falsity, justification or non-justification. Whatever is so susceptible belongs to the language game and thus to a *different category* of human activity than *das Fundament*. Wittgenstein's genius consisted in constructing an account of human knowledge whose foundations, whose supporting presuppositions, were in no way like knowledge (Stroll, 1994, p.145).

As I have mentioned in the introduction, this whole thesis is devoted to providing an alternative interpretation. Although I agree that certainty and knowledge do belong to different categories, the distinction between these

categories is not the same as that between what happens inside and outside the game. Neither is it a distinction between what is instinctive and animal, and what lies within the domain of reason. Rather, certainties, hinges, and the instinct do belong to the language game. Wittgenstein's pragmatism is not about separating the practical and placing it outside the game, but rather about showing how it is an important part of the game.

What is more, Stroll is not successful in showing that placing hinges outside the game is effective in dealing with the sceptic. His claim that hinges must lie outside the game because everything in it can be doubted does not explain why we need a category of things that are not doubted. A traditional foundationalism could and did say that the basic beliefs cannot be doubted, that they are somehow radically different from the rest. In this respect Stroll's interpretation of Wittgenstein is not different, and not more successful in a debate with the sceptic, than traditional foundationalism. What is needed is an argument as to why certainty is required; why we need hinges. To support Stroll's reading, such an argument also needs to show why it requires hinges to be understood as standing outside the game.

In this regard Stroll sees the indubitability of hinges as guaranteed by a transcendental argument. He sees hinges as necessary conditions for our practices. This approach is discussed in Chapter Two, where I present my own interpretation of the argument. Even if Stroll's approach is successful in showing that hinges cannot be doubted, he does not show that they need to stay outside the game and therefore is not helpful in defending the Framework Reading.

1.2.4. Problems with scepticism

Another distinctive feature of Stroll's interpretation is the amount of space he devotes to the dream argument. Stroll argues that the sceptical argument cannot be coherently stated. This, according to Stroll, is one of major criticisms of the position Wittgenstein offers in *On Certainty*. I discuss Stroll's argument in detail in Chapter Eight.

The self-defeating nature of scepticism is not the only problematic feature of the position. In Stroll's view Wittgenstein's observation that we do not doubt certain things has significant anti-sceptical implications. It shows that the sceptic has to go against our actual practice of doubting, while producing the sceptical doubt.

According to Stroll, Wittgenstein's diagnosis also shows how deviant the sceptical use of the word "doubt" is. The sceptic seems to ignore the fact that we already have a well-established practice of using the word, which involves the possibility of bringing the doubt to resolution. Sceptical doubt does not conform to the rules of the game, and therefore its use of the word is deviant.

Thirdly, according to Stroll, the sceptic confuses "any case" with "every case", in terms of the applicability of doubt. They believe that just because any statement can be doubted, we can doubt all of them at once. This is an important point and in my interpretation it also is the global character of sceptical doubt that makes it senseless (see Chapter Eight).

In conclusion, Stroll devotes a lot of space to investigating how *On Certainty* fits with Wittgenstein's metaphilosophical views and his method of doing philosophy. What is characteristic about Stroll's interpretation of hinges is his placement of them in the sphere of the instinctive. As we will see in the next section, it is this theme that Moyal-Sharrock elaborates on in her own interpretation of *On Certainty*.

1.3 Moyal-Sharrock

One of Danièle Moyal-Sharrock's many contributions to Wittgenstein scholarship is the introduction of the concept of the Third Wittgenstein (Moyal-Sharrock, 2004b), which allows readers to distinguish and separate the body of work written post *Philosophical Investigations*. The idea of the Third Wittgenstein suggests that Wittgenstein is the author of not two but three masterpieces, giving *On Certainty* the prestige it deserves.

Her interpretation is presented most comprehensively in her 2004 book *Understanding Wittgenstein's On Certainty* (Moyal-Sharrock, 2004a), which expands upon, and explores views expressed in, her earlier articles on the topic (Moyal-Sharrock, 2000) (Moyal-Sharrock, 2003). Further clarification of her position is presented in more recent articles, some of which directly engage in debates with other commentators, most notably Annalisa Coliva and Michael Williams (Moyal-Sharrock, 2004c) (Moyal-Sharrock, 2005) (Moyal-Sharrock, 2013).

It is also worth mentioning that Moyal-Sharrock's interpretation of the book is heavily influenced by that of Avrum Stroll and, as we will see, her reading of *On Certainty* can be seen as radicalised version of Stroll's.

My expositions of Moyal-Sharrock's views has the following structure. I start with the discussion of her view of certainty as both something that belongs to the sphere of instinct and at the same time as something grammatical (subsection 1.3.1). In subsection 1.3.2 I look at the features of hinges identified by Moyal-Sharrock. I finish with an analysis of Moyal-Sharrock's interpretation of the sceptical hypotheses (subsection 1.3.3), which is where her view departs from Stroll's.

1.3.1 Instinctive and grammatical

What is distinctive about Moyal-Sharrock's interpretation of *On Certainty* is the central position she gives to the naturalistic and pragmatic themes of the book. As we have seen, these themes are also present in other interpretations, however Moyal-Sharrock pushes them further than anyone else.

One of the very first things she mentions is the claim that, according to Wittgenstein, humans are not defined by language, but rather what makes human beings human beings is a shared form of life: a system of ways of acting and reacting. In this sense language does not "go all the way down", but rather is only a development of our more primitive reactions, instinctive behaviours, and non-linguistic, non-conceptual grasp of the world. As Moyal-Sharrock puts it, "in

Wittgenstein's view, the world is not primitively embraceable in thought. We embrace it non-intellectually, and then move on to a more sophisticated grasp" (Moyal-Sharrock, 2004a, p. 9).

Even more importantly, it is within this sphere of instinctive behaviour that the key to Wittgenstein's answer to scepticism lies. According to Moyal-Sharrock, what grounds our knowledge is our shared instinctive attitude of trust. It is, therefore, not just the hinges themselves that are crucial for Wittgenstein's answer to scepticism, but also that attitude which is responsible for their-hinge like character. Moyal-Sharrock contrasts the two by distinguishing objective certainties (hinges), and objective certainty (the attitude). The latter, that is the instinctive attitude of trust, is seen by Moyal-Sharrock not as a positive mental state, but rather an attitude of lack of doubt. It is this attitude that is necessary for our language games to take place, and for any knowledge claims to be made. Without it, no discourse would be possible. What is more, this attitude of trust is always implicit; it shows itself in our behaviour, and in the language games themselves, but is never stated.

The following example might help to illustrate Moyal-Sharrock's view. If we take our belief that we have a body, which Moyal-Sharrock does categorise as a hinge, we can of course mention it as I just did, but there is nothing about that particular statement which makes it a hinge. Its "hinge-like character" consists of my trust in having a body, which is not a belief that I hold and am aware of holding. Rather it is lack of doubt with regard to the existence of my body, which is exhibited in behaviours such as me reaching to grab things with my arms, dressing in the morning, and in making statements about my body such as "my neck got sunburnt yesterday " or "I injured my right foot". What Moyal-Sharrock also insists on is that there is something very primitive about this kind of trust; that in a sense there is no difference between my belief that I have a body and a lion's belief that it has a body.

For Moyal-Sharrock this is only one part of Wittgenstein's reply to the sceptic. The observation that we do have that attitude of blind trust is accompanied by a

reflection on the role hinges play. Regardless of belonging to the sphere of the “animal”, hinges function like rules; they have regulative character. For Moyal-Sharrock this automatically places them in the sphere of grammar. What this in turn means is that they are not themselves, and cannot be, part of the language game, rather they frame the language game. To illustrate it with an analogy, hinges are like rules of the game of chess: “the bishop can move diagonally” is a rule of the game of chess, but not a move within the game.

This is where Moyal-Sharrock clearly places herself within the Framework Reading. She insists throughout the book that hinges support our language games from the outside; that they themselves do not belong to language games. According to her, “grammatical rules stand outside language games ... because they make the game possible” (Moyal-Sharrock, 2004a, p. 94). This seems to be consistent with her view of hinges, which, being all about the sphere of instinct, only show themselves within our language games, but are never explicitly stated within those games. She emphasises that hinges are very different from anything that happens inside the language games, and explicitly distances herself from any interpretations that try to see continuity between empirical propositions and hinges. For Moyal-Sharrock, hinges are bounds of sense, and therefore not subject to doubt or evaluation: they are neither true nor false.

Therefore, according to Moyal-Sharrock, there are two reasons for which hinges are indubitable. Firstly, the trust we have in hinges is instinctive, and we cannot just decide to change this attitude. Secondly, doubting them would undermine the very rules of our language games. Interestingly, it is the first avenue that Moyal-Sharrock puts more emphasis on. According to her, one of the sceptic’s two major mistakes is to confuse genuine doubt with something that is mere “doubt behaviour”. Due to the animal character of hinges, it is only the latter that we can adopt with regard to hinges.

This is, in a nutshell, how Moyal-Sharrock sees Wittgenstein’s reply to the sceptic. In the rest of this section I will look at some of the conclusions she draws from this picture, mostly in terms of the features of hinges she identifies. I will

then briefly examine what answer this interpretation offers to the brain-in-a-vat argument, which will allow us to see what, in Moyal-Sharrock's view, is the second major mistake made by the sceptic.

1.3.2 Characteristics of hinges

Moyal-Sharrock identifies the following features of hinges: they are not propositions, meaningless, ineffable, enacted, non-empirical and foundational. I discuss these characteristics under separate headings.

Not propositions

Probably the most controversial feature of hinges, which Moyal-Sharrock identifies, is their non-propositional character. I have already pointed out the fact that, for Moyal-Sharrock, hinges are not really propositions, but rather belong to the sphere of belief, understood very broadly so that it includes an attitude of lack of doubt. This is a highly contentious claim as most commentators refer to hinges as "hinge propositions", and Wittgenstein himself uses the word "proposition" when discussing examples of hinges. Moyal-Sharrock, however, insists that hinges cannot be seen as propositions due to their regulative character.

A discussion of Moyal-Sharrock's arguments to that conclusion will be presented in Chapter Four. What I would like to mention now is that this view has a very tractarian flavour. So does the principle of bipolarity, which is the view that, in order to be a proposition, a statement has to be susceptible to being both false and true, which Moyal-Sharrock invokes to justify her non-propositional reading. Although it is a view held by the author of the *Tractatus*, most commentators believe it to be abandoned by the later Wittgenstein. This is a good example of where Moyal-Sharrock's interpretation indicates more continuity between *On Certainty* and the *Tractatus* than other commentators'.

One important difference between the *Tractatus* and *On Certainty* which Moyal-Sharrock does point to is the fact that, at the stage of *On Certainty*, Wittgenstein

no longer equates propositionality with sense, which leaves the question of whether hinges are meaningful open.

Meaningless

To answer the question of whether hinges are meaningful, we need to look at Moyal-Sharrock's definition of meaningfulness:

For a word or a string of words to be meaningful, it must have a use; that is, a function or a point in the language game in which it is pronounced; that is it cannot be idle. So that an identical sentence can be meaningful or meaningless depending on whether or not it does some work in the language game in which it is formulated. (Moyal-Sharrock, 2004a, p. 43)

Although some non-propositional statements might have sense, hinges are not one of those statements as they do not, and cannot, satisfy this definition. It is so because uttering them would suggest that they do not go without saying, and therefore can be doubted. It is, therefore, always out of place to pronounce them. This is not to say that sentences which are exactly the same as hinges cannot be meaningful, they definitely can, just never in contexts where they play the hinge role (the claim that the same sentence might function as a hinge in some contexts but not others is discussed in Chapters Three and Four).

It is interesting that Moyal-Sharrock invokes passage 36, in which Wittgenstein calls the proposition "there are physical objects" nonsense, to support her claim.

According to my interpretation, exactly that passage should be read as suggesting that "there are physical objects" is not a hinge proposition. The arguments supporting this stance are presented in Chapter Eight.

It is worth mentioning that this feature of hinges also shows the affinity Moyal-Sharrock sees between *On Certainty* and the *Tractatus*. She goes as far as calling hinges "pseudopropositions" (Moyal-Sharrock, 2004a, pp. 41, 47). She further claims that the distinction between empirical proposition and senseless hinges is just another way of drawing the distinction between what can be said and what

can only be shown. It is therefore not surprising that Moyal-Sharrock's reading sees hinges as ineffable.

Ineffable and enacted

Tractatus is referenced explicitly when Moyal-Sharrock invokes the distinction between saying and speaking. Because it is never appropriate to pronounce hinges (which as we have seen makes them senseless), it also means that they are ineffable: they cannot be said. If we find ourselves in circumstances where uttering a hinge might be appropriate all it means is that, in this context, it is not a hinge, but rather an empirical proposition, which happens to look exactly like a hinge (which Moyal-Sharrock calls a doppelgänger of a hinge).

Examples of hinges, which are present in *On Certainty* itself, and even more prominently in secondary literature (including Moyal-Sharrock's book), are just formulated for heuristic reasons. The main purposes of such formulations would be to conduct philosophical debates, and to use them in a teaching process. For example we might use "I have two hands" to teach a child what "two" means. Hinges can therefore be mentioned, but they never constitute a move in a language game; they can be spoken but not said.

As rules of the game, hinges have to stay outside the game; they are never a move within the game. All commentators that can be classified under the Framework Reading heading share this view. According to Moyal-Sharrock:

to formulate grammatical rules within the language game – that is in the flow of ordinary discourse- is to formulate bounds of sense as if they were descriptions of informative statements. This constitutes an intrusion in the game – the stating of the rule when no reminder was needed (Moyal-Sharrock, 2004a, p. 95).

One of the main aims of this thesis is to offer an alternative to this exact claim. A significant portion of this thesis is therefore devoted to arguing that hinges, though playing a regulative role, are still moves within the game.

How do hinges manifest themselves then? According to Moyal-Sharrock: in action. The basic certainty is, according to her, “akin to something not of the order of justification, reason or thought, but of the order of thoughtlessness, automatism and animality” (Moyal-Sharrock, 2004a, p. 98). Moyal-Sharrock provides a great illustration of her view when she talks about Moore’s proof of the external world. By saying “I know ‘here is a hand’”, Moore did not show any more certainty with regard to his hand than he already has by using it (Moyal-Sharrock, 2004a, p. 99).

Non-empirical and foundational

Moyal-Sharrock’s interpretation of *On Certainty* also goes against seeing any continuity between hinges and empirical propositions. Hinges are not just empirical propositions that we are least likely to revise, and according to the commentator any suggestion to the contrary would conflate Wittgenstein with Quine¹. The following quote captures the essence of this view well:

“our certainty is not a flowing river, but the bedrock which allows the river to flow; not a construction, but the scaffolding which makes constructions possible; the hinges on which a door can turn. The basis differs from what it supports. The revolutionary nature of Wittgenstein’s depiction of our basic beliefs is their differing from the rest of our beliefs, and they do so in being nonpropositional and nonepistemic” (Moyal-Sharrock, 2004a, p. 78).

We have already seen one consequence of this view: namely that hinges are never part of language games, but rather support them from the outside. However, the sharp distinction between empirical propositions and hinges also means that hinges are, not surprisingly, non-empirical. What it means for Moyal-Sharrock is that they are not derived from experience; they are never justified by it. They can, however, be caused by it.

¹ That there are similarities between Wittgenstein’s and Quine’s views in this respect is suggested by (Garavaso, 1998).

Although I agree with this last claim, I believe that a sharp distinction between what is empirical and what is regulative is not a useful one. The arguments to that conclusion are presented in Chapter Three.

Coming back to Moyal-Sharrock, according to the commentator, overlooking the sharp categorical difference between hinges and empirical propositions is responsible for one more misunderstanding, namely resistance to calling Wittgenstein a foundationalist. In Moyal-Sharrock's view a foundational picture fits *On Certainty* perfectly. Hinges ground our knowledge, and are themselves indubitable and in no need of justification. What is innovative about Wittgenstein's foundationalism is that the foundations are not propositions, but rather certainties which manifest themselves in ways of acting.

Interestingly, Moyal-Sharrock argues that Wittgenstein's foundationalism should not be contrasted with coherentism. Rather, *On Certainty* shows how those two views can be reconciled: hinges are foundations, but at the same time they are held together by what surrounds them¹.

I believe that, to a large extent, the foundationalist label is less controversial than Moyal-Sharrock presents it to be. Although a lot of commentators argue against seeing Wittgenstein as a foundationalist, they argue against exactly the part of this classic view which, according to Moyal-Sharrock, Wittgenstein abandons anyway (a view that certain beliefs are indubitable in virtue of the kind of beliefs they are). What Moyal-Sharrock takes to be the essence of foundationalism is that there are some things which do not require justification. In that sense there seems to be consensus that hinges have this feature. Even within the epistemic reading there is acknowledgement of the fact that the "hinge justification" would be of a totally different kind.

¹ That Wittgenstein's view combines coherentism and foundationalism is the main thesis of (Schulte, 2004).

1.3.3 Sceptical hypotheses

Lastly, I would like to discuss how Moyal-Sharrock's interpretation deals with the dream argument. She discusses sceptical scenarios, such as the dream hypothesis or the brain-in-a-vat hypothesis, in several places in the book. She argues that sceptical hypotheses, although conceivable and consistent, do not pose any threat and should not be taken seriously. This is how she describes the problem with such sceptical arguments:

Such, indeed, is- thank Descartes- 'the usual view'; that there are always evil geniuses and weird Martians at bay to undermine certainty. And it must be pointed out that it is only such imagined and imaginary threats that we have had any leverage on our certainty, for they alone remain unanswerable and unverifiable. But it should be noted that our inability to verify or preclude here is not an inability to invalidate a hypothesis, but only an inability to check flights of the imagination. This is where we should stop confusing imaginary threats with serious possibilities. (Moyal-Sharrock, 2004a, p. 133)

However, Moyal-Sharrock does not explain how we draw a distinction between an imaginary threat and a serious possibility. In particular she does not clarify why sceptical scenarios are not serious possibilities. All Moyal-Sharrock says is that they are unverifiable. Although I believe that it is an important observation, it does not seem to be enough to say that, therefore, we do not have to treat them seriously.

This however is not the only thing Moyal-Sharrock has to say about the hypothesis. A few pages later she writes:

I can imagine a world where evil geniuses constantly deceive me. The problem with sceptical scenarios is not that they lack intelligibility- indeed, it is their very intelligibility that gives them the leverage they have- but that this intelligibility is conflated with possibility, with human possibility. To imagine circumstances in which human beings are brains in vats is to imagine a scenario; it is not however to imagine a human scenario. The clash between the intelligibility and the unliveability of scepticism is clarified when we understand that intelligibility is not internally linked to liveability- fictional discourses are intelligible, this does not make them applicable to our form of life. (Moyal-Sharrock, 2004a, p. 178)

Again it seems to suggest that although we can contemplate sceptical scenarios such as the brain-in-a-vat hypothesis, we cannot take them seriously in any practical sense. There are two major problems with such a claim. Firstly, it brings us back to the unliveable nature of scepticism. As I have mentioned, this is not a new observation, and is, in fact, one that the sceptic is likely to agree with.

Secondly, this diagnosis is not simply un-innovative, but also incorrect. It misses the fact that sceptical scenarios do not require us to make any difference to our everyday life. If they are correct, our experience of the world is exactly the same as it is if they are incorrect, there is nothing in our grasp of the world that would have to change, nothing in our form of life that would need to be different.

In Chapter Eight of the thesis I argue for almost exactly the opposite conclusion to that of Moyal-Sharrock: that sceptical scenarios are not intelligible, and that the problem with them is exactly that they make no difference to our form of life.

These two quotes are good illustrations of the two lines of argument Moyal-Sharrock presents, both of which do not deal with the sceptical argument satisfactorily. However the parts of the book where Moyal-Sharrock talks about the sceptical scenarios directly are not the only ones that are relevant to her take on the sceptical argument. She also talks about it indirectly when discussing 'universal hinges'. Universal hinges are what Moyal-Sharrock calls a subset of hinges, which share a characteristic of holding for all of humanity, regardless of time or location. Unlike some other hinges, universal hinges can never lose their hinge status. She includes negations of sceptical hypotheses among these hinges.

The thesis discusses such a strategy in detail in Chapter Eight. What is interesting in Moyal-Sharrock adopting this strategy in particular (more so than other commentators), is that negations of sceptical hypothesis are highly sophisticated statements that do not seem to belong to the sphere of the primitive, animal and instinctive. We can say that a lion believes that there is an antelope in front of it (as opposed to a zebra), but we cannot say that a lion believes that there is an antelope in front of it (*really*, as opposed to him having

an impression of an antelope stimulated into it by a mad scientist). Those are two different statements, and it is very hard to believe why the second one should be a hinge.

Even more importantly, however, including negations of sceptical hypotheses among hinges distorts the concept of hinges to the extent that they are unable to perform their role in Wittgenstein's answer to scepticism. I discuss this in depth in Chapter Eight but I would like to have a look at it briefly here.

As the example with the antelope suggests, a negation of a sceptical hypothesis is a philosophical thesis. It is nothing like our everyday observations. It is a hypothesis about the source of our experience; it talks about reality underneath the world which we are acquainted with. If, like Moyal-Sharrock, we say that such a statement is one of hinges, then we make the task of arguing that hinges are indubitable unachievable. There is no reason to think that such a thesis operates as a grammatical rule, as exactly the same language uses are correct with and without it.

Introducing it to the set of hinges is like making it a rule of chess that chess is the game that we *really* are playing. Just because we say that it is a rule of the game of chess does not make it one. Not only does it have no impact on the allowed moves of the chess pieces, but also, because of that, it is not immune to doubt. Moreover, by including it we seem to legitimise the question of what game we really should be playing, and put ourselves in a position where no answer can be given. This plays exactly into the sceptic's hands.

I am aware that it is very unclear what a statement "that we should *really* play the game of chess" means. I will argue in Chapter Eight that the negations of sceptical hypotheses are no more intelligible than that. We can see, however, how someone saying that we shouldn't *really* play the game of chess starts a discussion, and not necessarily a useful one.

In conclusion, I believe that the affinity with the *Tractatus* is the key to understanding Moyal-Sharrock's interpretation of the book. Although Moyal-

Sharrock acknowledges that the later Wittgenstein emphasises the fact that we use language for many purposes other than describing the world, she still believes describing the world to be an important task. And within that sphere of language we have a picture very similar to that in the *Tractatus*. As she puts it herself:

The same image was used in the *Tractatus*: ‘the propositions of logic describe the *scaffolding* of the world, or rather they represent it. They have no “subject matter”’ (TLP 6.124; emphasis Moyal-Sharrock). The crucial difference is that the *scaffolding* of *On Certainty* is not that of the world, but only ‘of our thoughts’ (Moyal-Sharrock, 2004a, p. 92)

For Moyal-Sharrock, the regulative statements of *On Certainty* become a little like Kantian categories “through which” we see the world. Although we cannot say that hinges mirror the world, mirroring the world still remains a legitimate task done by empirical propositions, mediated by hinges. Although Moyal-Sharrock distances herself from the Transcendental reading, it is because she wants to think about the human form of life as human, and not anything more objective than that. This does not seem like a big difference, and it makes her picture open to the same criticism that a Kantian can be: it opens up the whole sphere of what is behind the phenomena that we can know nothing about. In that sense a Kantian picture is still a sceptical picture. Moyal-Sharrock opens it explicitly by legitimizing the sceptical hypotheses. She insists that we can only theorise about it; it will never have any practical consequences. Theorizing, however, is all the sceptic needs.

1.4 Coliva

Annalisa Coliva’s interpretation of *On Certainty* is most comprehensively presented in her 2010 book *Moore and Wittgenstein. Scepticism, Certainty and Common Sense* (Coliva, 2010), and it is this work, together with subsequent articles (Coliva, 2010) (Coliva, 2013b) (Coliva, 2013a) further clarifying her position, that will be the main focus of this section. It is worth mentioning that Coliva is also the author of *Extended Rationality. A Hinge Epistemology* (Coliva,

2015). The latter book, though heavily influenced by *On Certainty*, doesn't fall under the category of interpretations of Wittgenstein's work. Rather, in a similar vein to works by Williams and Wright, it treats *On Certainty* as a starting point or an inspiration for developing an original position within contemporary epistemology. Therefore, as in case of Williams and Wright, it will be given less attention.

In the introduction to both of the aforementioned books Coliva places herself explicitly within the Framework Reading, which she also sees as "the official reading" (Coliva, 2010, p. 7). She offers the following list of theses as central to the Framework interpretation.

That hinges are:

1. Neither true nor false;
2. Neither justified nor unjustified;
3. Therefore, they are neither known or unknown;
4. Hence they cannot sensibly be called into question;
5. Furthermore they aren't either rational or not rational;
6. Thus, finally, for these very reasons, they aren't empirical propositions but rules. (Coliva, 2010, pp. 6-7)

In terms of how Coliva differentiates herself from other commentators within the Framework Reading it is important to first note that, unlike Moyal-Sharrock and Stroll, she does see hinges as propositions. Her debate with Moyal-Sharrock on this issue will be presented in Chapter Four of this thesis. Secondly, unlike Glock (Glock, 2009), she believes that hinges are part of grammar, and that the notion of grammar is broad for Wittgenstein at the stage of *On Certainty*. Finally, unlike most other readings within the Framework category, Coliva devotes significant amount of space to defend seeing Wittgenstein as rejecting both conceptual and epistemic relativism.

The interpretation put forward in this thesis agrees fully only with point 4 from Coliva's list and even with regard to this point there are important differences between the Framework Reading and my view as I will discuss in Chapter Two.

My presentation of Coliva's views is divided into two subsections. In subsection 1.4.1 I look at her analysis of our ordinary language games involving epistemic concepts and at the consequences she draws from them. In section 1.4.2 I discuss Coliva's interpretation of Wittgenstein's critique of two sceptical arguments: the dream argument and the argument for Humean scepticism.

1.4.1 Language games

Out of four chapters of Coliva's book only one is devoted to Moore, and the exposition of his views plays an instrumental role to the exposition of *On Certainty* itself. After introducing Moore's considerations from both *A Defence of Common Sense* and *Proof of an External World*, Coliva starts her analysis of *On Certainty* by looking at what Wittgenstein has to say about our ordinary use of phrases "to know" and "to doubt".

The observations Coliva presents are not different from what other commentators had said and include the following statements about our ordinary game with "to know":

1. That when we say "I know that p", we have some grounds to offer in support of p.
2. That when we say "I know that p", doubt or question with regard to p is possible, and it is also possible to answer that question or doubt.
3. That it is appropriate to say "I know that p" only if p is not something that everyone knows.
4. That "I know that p" is appropriate only if we could also make sense of "I don't know that p".

Coliva further asserts that Moore's use of "I know" from his *Proof* (Moore, 1959) violates the criteria established in our ordinary game with phrases "I know" and

“to know”. She decides to call Moore’s use of the phrase “philosophical”, and claims it is illegitimate.

Apart from the philosophical use of “I know”, Coliva also distinguishes a grammatical one. She characterises the grammatical use in the same manner as other commentators do certainty, and states that it is “not based on criteria” (Coliva, 2010, p. 86). She concludes that what is actually expressed by “I know” in contexts where it is used grammatically is not an epistemic relation, but rather a non-epistemic attitude of objective certainty. This also holds for Moore’s philosophical use of “I know”.

She follows the same method with regard to the expression “to doubt”. She begins by looking at our ordinary use of the phrase, and notices some common features. Coliva’s list of those features is similar to those described earlier by McGinn (McGinn, 1989) and Moyal-Sharrock (Moyal-Sharrock, 2004a), and includes such characteristics of ordinary doubt as always being based on grounds, presupposing certainty, and having practical consequences.

What is interesting about Coliva’s treatment of the topic of ordinary doubt, and ordinary claims to knowledge, is not the description she offers (as there is no or very little disagreement on that), but rather the role she sees them play. Even though most commentators put some weight on the observations of our everyday use of terms, it is Coliva that seems to see them as central to Wittgenstein’s dissolution of scepticism. This is not to say that she believes that this strategy is the only one that Wittgenstein offers in *On Certainty*, rather that it is enough for anyone who shares Wittgenstein’s views on language. When she engages with other anti-sceptical threads of *On Certainty*, she seems to mostly do it for the sake of making Wittgenstein’s treatment of scepticism more appealing to a wider audience, in particular contemporary epistemologists who often reject Wittgenstein’s philosophy of language. In any case the close investigation of our language games is what Coliva devotes plenty of space to in her book.

According to Coliva, the observations regarding the ordinary use of the expressions “to know” and “to doubt” allow us to show that both the sceptical use of “to doubt”, and Moore’s use of “to know”, are illegitimate and therefore devoid of sense. The reason for this is that they violate the criteria of ordinary use, which is what constitutes the concepts of knowledge and doubt. As she expresses it:

Wittgenstein thinks that it is the concept it is only in virtue of the language game to which it belongs. By observing the way the latter functions, it is possible to identify the criteria of the correct employment of ‘to doubt’ that are constitutive of that concept. (Coliva, 2010, p. 104)

...the meaning of a word is, for Wittgenstein, the use of that word has in our *ordinary* language, and, in philosophy, our ordinary language tends to ‘go on holiday’. Therefore, most philosophical pronouncements have only appearance of sense (Coliva, 2010, p. 117).

So, for Coliva, our concepts are defined in ordinary context, in ordinary language games. It is there that the criteria of employment are established, and any use that violates those criteria is illegitimate. That is why both the sceptic and Moore are expressing nonsense: both the sceptical use of “to doubt”, and Moore’s use of “to know” are illegitimate, and like other philosophical pronouncements only seem meaningful.

According to Coliva, this has fatal consequences not just for Moore and the sceptic, but also for most of philosophy as we know it. The following passages, where she states that we cannot simply say that some expressions get their meaning from a philosophical language game, expresses a rather pessimistic view of philosophy:

Furthermore it goes against Wittgenstein’s conception of philosophy to think that philosophical doubts, such as those purportedly expressed by an idealist, could belong to a peculiar language game – that of philosophy – and could thus be meaningful. Given that in philosophy words tend to be employed against all criteria that govern their use in ordinary language, they simply fail to make sense – to be meaningful – according to him (Coliva, 2010, p. 112).

...sceptical doubts are really nonsense essentially because philosophical contexts, or, as Stroud would put it, 'philosophical discourse', are spurious – they are no real context or discourse at all, as they go against the criteria that govern 'ordinary' contexts or discourses- that is the only contexts and discourses we really have (Coliva, 2010, p. 117)

Before I present some objections to Coliva's account, let me first point out the parts of it that I agree with. Firstly, it is true that in *On Certainty* Wittgenstein is concerned with ordinary uses of expressions such as "to doubt", and especially "to know", and that the book offers numerous examples of ordinary uses being contrasted with philosophical ones. What is more, I think that Coliva's claim that sceptical doubt is senseless, and that the sceptic is only giving us an appearance of sense when in fact she is speaking nonsense, is correct. To some extent, the same can be said about Moore or the realist (anti-sceptic). With regard to philosophy as such, even though my own position is not as radical as hers, I agree that Wittgenstein's dissolution of scepticism implies a strong criticism of a large portion of traditional philosophy, and sees it as nonsense.

What I disagree with is that those conclusions follow immediately from Wittgenstein's observations about ordinary uses of expressions. That what we need to do is to look at the ordinary uses of the words, abstract the criteria established in the ordinary context, see that philosophical use violates them, and conclude that such use, and a lot of the philosophical discourse, is nonsense.

The main problem with this approach is that it presents Wittgenstein as endorsing a dogmatic position with regard to the distinction between ordinary and non-ordinary language games, and that it does not appreciate the complexity of the concept of a criterion of application. In particular there are a number of observations about our language use that Coliva's account ignores.

Firstly, the criteria of application change both from language game, to language game and in time. We cannot simply look at some of the criteria in some of the contexts and treat them as necessary conditions defining a concept. Some criteria are violated all the time by new uses, by whole new language games

coming into existence, etc. If Coliva's reasoning is correct, then it also takes away any evolution of language as well as all of our more technical language games, such as the language game of physics or logic for example. Coliva does not explain what difference there is between such language games and the philosophical language game. Even with regard to "to know" and "to doubt", there are not specialised, but everyday, uses which do not fulfil the criteria listed by Coliva. For example, we do say that we know things just by virtue of them being obvious, not because we have any grounds for them; we say that animals know things even though we do not expect them to produce grounds etc.

Coliva might say that in the philosophical context, unlike in the other ones I invoked, all, not just some, criteria are violated. In particular that this happens in case of "to know" and "to doubt" in their philosophical use. This, however, does not seem true either. The philosophical uses do have something in common with more ordinary ones. This is partially where our impression of understanding what Moore and the sceptic are saying comes from. For example, Moore's use of "to know" implies, just like the ordinary use, that he is ready to act on the knowledge he claims to have.

In this context, it is interesting that Coliva herself says that when "to know" is used in the grammatical way it does not really express knowledge, but rather certainty. If the use in ordinary context is the only thing that constitutes the meaning of words, and this is how the word is used, then Coliva does not have any background against which she could judge that what the term actually expresses is different to how it is used. The most charitable interpretation I can think of is that what she means is that Moore's use of "to know" has more in common with the use of "to be certain" than with other uses of "to know". It is still not clear why we should not see this as meaning that the term "knowledge" overlaps with the term "certainty", that is; they are interchangeable in some contexts.

The list of questions and problems that arise show that the observations of our ordinary language games are only the beginning of Wittgenstein's reply to the

sceptic; they are the starting point suggesting that there is something potentially suspicious about Moore's or the sceptic's use of epistemic phrases. It invites us not to assume that we understand what they mean, but to look at whether we can actually make any sense of what they are saying.

According to the view put forward in this thesis, *On Certainty* shows why there is no sense we can make of sceptical hypothesis or hinge doubt. Wittgenstein's considerations show that the philosophical language game is completely isolated, and that it is so because the meanings of words involved in the philosophical language game have nothing to do with the ordinary ones. It is that isolation that makes the philosophical game different from the language game of physics or formal logic.

It is also my view that the anti-sceptical import of *On Certainty* is intimately linked with what Wittgenstein says about language both in *On Certainty* itself and in his other later works. This link is made clear in Chapter Two of this thesis. At the same time I believe that what we need to agree on with Wittgenstein in order to follow his anti-sceptical strategy is much more appealing than what Coliva presents. In particular it does not involve the dogmatic position with regard to the status of the ordinary language games discussed above.

After the detailed descriptions of the language games, Coliva moves on to draw some more general conclusions about why the scepticism and idealism are generally nonsensical. It is worth quoting these passages as they present in a nutshell the view that the thesis set out to provide an alternative to:

Wittgenstein's answer to o idealism, up to this point, sound ultimately as follow: we simply do have a conceptual scheme – which is a product of our language – that comprises fundamental reference to physical, mind- independent objects, contrary to what the idealist would have us believe

That we do have such a conceptual scheme is shown by our linguistic and epistemic practices and its objective certainty- not truth- which, for Wittgenstein, is always a function of the role certain propositions play in our overall picture of the world. (Coliva, 2010, p. 114)

1.4.2 The sceptical arguments

Coliva devotes a full subchapter to her interpretation of Wittgenstein's treatment of the sceptical arguments. She suggests that Wittgenstein offered different replies to two different sceptical arguments. First, she takes on the dream argument, that is, the idea that even most trivial observations such as "I am now sitting on a couch" might be false, and therefore not known, because it is possible that I am only dreaming that I am sitting on a couch whereas in reality I am fast asleep in my bed.

Coliva suggests the fact that nothing speaks in favour of the dream hypothesis makes the hypothesis irrational and therefore nonsense. However she claims that Wittgenstein offers additional reasons for which the hypothesis is senseless. In this regard her analysis follows directly that of Stroll. In the same manner as Stroll, she argues that the dream argument cannot be coherently stated. The reason for this is that the statement "I may now be dreaming", which is crucial for the argument, may never be meaningful. It is so because the background conditions for meaningfulness of this statement cannot be satisfied, as these require a person to be awake and conscious so that the utterance can actually belong to a language game.

Coliva uses the following example to illustrate this point. She invites us to imagine that she is asleep and dreaming that she is sitting in front of a computer. She utters the following sentence "the computer screen is on". If anyone were to hear this utterance they would not treat it as an assertion since a person who is asleep cannot have an intention of informing them of anything. In general when one is asleep, one cannot make assertions. What is more, such utterance cannot possibly belong to a language game, which Coliva sees as equivalent to occurring "in specific circumstances where their utterance can serve the recognised aim of the communicative exchange at issue" (Coliva, 2010, p. 123). This is not the case with any utterance of someone who is asleep.

Coliva anticipates a potential objection that what the sceptical argument requires is just an entertainment of a hypothesis "I may be dreaming" in thought, not an assertion "I am now dreaming". Her response is that in order for Wittgenstein to be able to entertain a hypothesis in thought, it has to be possible for that hypothesis to be true.

I agree with most of what Coliva has to say about the example she gives: that an utterance "I may now be dreaming" is senseless, and that it is impossible for it to be true (although I also believe that under some interpretation it is impossible for it to be false). Nonetheless, I do not think that it is a successful reply to the sceptic: indeed *On Certainty* provides a more compelling one. The main problem with this line of argument is that it pushes the problem of scepticism up one level. That is, we no longer have to worry whether I am at this moment dreaming, or not; or, to use Coliva's example, whether the computer screen is on, or I am only dreaming that the computer screen is on. What we do not know, however is whether our words really have meaning, or only have an appearance of meaning: whether they are part of a real language game or just a dreamt language game.

The second of the sceptical arguments that Coliva takes on is Hume's argument from induction. She reconstructs it in the following manner. It starts with an observation that our empirical warrants depend on certain general assumptions such as reliability of our sense organs, existence of the external world, lack of any sort of massive deception, etc. Hume then notices that those assumptions are in need of warrant, but none can be offered because it would always have to take those for granted. Hume concludes that our knowledge is based on ungrounded assumptions.

Coliva believes that Wittgenstein offers what she calls a "transcendental argument against Humean scepticism". She starts with an interesting reflection that any argument that sheds doubt on the reliability of our senses in fact assumes their reliability. It is so because the reason for doubting the reliability of

the senses is usually an example for when they deceived us. But we discovered that they deceive us by further evidence coming from the senses.

Coliva states that this observation allows us to remove any reasons for doubting our senses, and the sceptical doubt becomes devoid of any grounds. Since the sceptical doubt is not based on grounds, it becomes nonsensical or illegitimate, as the criteria for the application of the concept of doubt are not satisfied. Coliva does not think that it concludes Wittgenstein's response. She claims that with regard to Humean scepticism a further reply, which is not reliant on Wittgenstein's conception of language, or what constitutes a legitimate doubt, can be reconstructed from the text of *On Certainty*.

This further reply consists of noticing that the reliability of the senses, and other "heavy weight assumptions" as she calls them after Dretske (Dretske, 2005), are conditions of possibility of our perceptual and epistemic practices and of the very concept of rationality. What the Humean sceptic rightly notices is that they are not based on grounds, what they miss is that they are rules, and, as such, not in need of justification. Coliva supports this claim with passages from *On Certainty*, which show that giving up on the assumption that our senses are reliable would make all of our perceptual practices impossible. She further asserts that because they are beyond doubt and justification they are normative rather than empirical.

This argument very much highlights the Framework character of Coliva's reading, explicitly showing its transcendental features. According to my interpretation a statement such as "our senses do not constantly deceive us", as well as their negations, like all other negations of sceptical hypotheses and the hypotheses themselves, are not meaningful statements, and therefore not rules: not pieces of grammar or logic, but nonsense. The reconstruction of arguments to this conclusion is the topic of Chapter Eight.

It is also worth mentioning that Coliva spends some time discussing the status of the proposition "There are physical objects", and she claims that it is a

grammatical proposition that expresses part of our conceptual scheme. It is worth noting that Wittgenstein himself calls it nonsense, which means that Coliva commits herself to seeing grammatical propositions as nonsense.

Contrary to such a view this thesis argues that “There are physical objects” shares the fate of all other negations of sceptical hypothesis and is seen as meaningless. Among other advantages outlined in the thesis it allows us to avoid attributing to Wittgenstein two different conceptions of nonsense, one of which is not pure nonsense (Coliva refer to it as non-semantic nonsense). This thesis also argues that any attempt at seeing either sceptical hypotheses or their negations as anything other than nonsense narrowly understood entails attributing a strong metaphysical thesis to Wittgenstein.

This concludes the presentation of the views of the four main commentators within the Framework Reading. The main motivation behind my interpretation of *On Certainty* is the conviction that Wittgenstein’s treatment of scepticism is more rationally compelling than what the Framework Reading presents it to be. In the remaining chapters of the thesis I will therefore continue referring to the Framework views and where relevant I will look at them in more detail in order to clarify and defend my position.

Chapter 2

Why Do We Need Hinges?

One of the main theses of *On Certainty* is that doubt with respect to certain judgments is impossible. This vague claim seems to be one of very few statements, if not the only one, that the commentators of the book agree on. The reconstruction and interpretation of the argument to this conclusion, which is the aim of this chapter, is commonly seen as the main task of any interpretation of the book. It is closely linked to almost all topics that have been the subject of discussion with regard to *On Certainty*, and is crucial for Wittgenstein's treatment of scepticism. If successful, it will demonstrate, contrary to what the sceptic wants us to believe, that doubt is not always applicable, that some things are certain. In the introduction I said that in the literature on *On Certainty* the judgments that are exempt from doubt are often referred to as hinges. Consequently, we can rephrase the task of this chapter as showing that we need there to be hinges.

The chapter has the following structure:

- First in section 2.1 I look at how the argument has been interpreted by other commentators. I distinguish three different approaches and motivate the one I wish to take.

- Section 2.2 presents the rule-following paradox and the consequences of it that are relevant to the reconstruction of the argument.
- In section 2.3 I look closely at our practice of making empirical judgments as a rule-governed practice. This lays the ground for the application of the lessons from the rule-following paradox to this practice.
- Section 2.4 presents the core of the argument which consists in showing how, if we apply the lessons of the rule-following paradox to our practice of making empirical judgments, we have to conclude that doubt does not apply to certain propositions.
- The final section (section 2.5) looks at how the reconstruction of the argument allows us to make sense of some of the most prevailing themes of *On Certainty*.

2.1 Commentators on the indispensability of hinges

Although there seems to be a far-reaching agreement that the indispensability of hinges is central to Wittgenstein's treatment of scepticism, there seems to be less consensus with regard to reasons supporting this claim. Before presenting my reconstruction of the reasons Wittgenstein gives, I will look at the reconstructions offered by the Framework commentators.

Given Wittgenstein's style of writing, it is not surprising that he does not present reasons in support of the thesis that some propositions have to be exempt from doubt in the form of an argument. Rather these reasons are dispersed throughout *On Certainty*, sometimes stated explicitly, at times only implied. I believe that the way these remarks have been interpreted can be clustered into the following three main strands or strategies:

1. The first strand focuses on the descriptions of our ordinary practices, and in particular our ordinary uses of the crucial terms involved in the sceptical argument.
2. The second strand looks at hinges as indubitable in virtue of being presuppositions of our practices.

3. The third strand emphasises the global character of the sceptical doubt and sees this feature as responsible for the incoherence of the sceptical position.

Most commentators include all three strands in their interpretations, but the amount of weight and importance given to each of them varies significantly from commentator to commentator.

With regard to the first strand, two claims are commonly made. Firstly, that in our ordinary practices we never doubt hinges or, in other words, that our ordinary practice of doubting is such that it keeps certain statements fixed. Stroll's interpretation is an example of a commentary which focuses on this theme. According to Stroll, the point that Wittgenstein makes is not a logical one, it is not meant to tell us what we cannot do. Such a point would be an attempt at imposing a conceptual model on human practice, and that is not something Wittgenstein is interested in. Instead, Stroll maintains, Wittgenstein shows us that our practices do not involve doubting all things at once (Stroll, 1994, p. 159).

I agree that the actual description of language games plays a crucial role in Wittgenstein's treatment of scepticism, and that his remark from OC 189 that "at some point one has to pass from explanation to mere description" is one of *On Certainty's* most important themes. However, I do not agree that Wittgenstein is suggesting that the fact that in ordinary language games we do not doubt certain propositions is enough to dismiss scepticism. A couple of pages later Wittgenstein states that "on the other hand a language game does change with time" (OC 256). That our practices are dynamic and can change over time is one reason to say that just because we do not do something in our practices does not, in itself, allow us to dismiss it. Consequently, we cannot dismiss scepticism simply by noting that we are not actually sceptics. What Wittgenstein notices is that the sceptic's suggestion that we put all of our beliefs in doubt is not simply a suggestion to change our practices a little. Rather it is something that our practices cannot accommodate, and something that we cannot even fully comprehend. It is this part of Wittgenstein's discussion with the sceptic that is

crucial. After all, the sceptic agrees that at the moment we do not doubt everything, rather, the sceptic suggests that this is what we should be doing.

In my view, when Wittgenstein talks about moving from explaining to describing (OC 189), he alludes to the fact that hinges themselves, and the fact that we keep them fixed, cannot be further explained. As he states, there are no rules according to which a proposition gains hinge status:

If, however, one wanted to give something like a rule here, then it would contain the expression "in normal circumstances". And we recognize normal circumstances but cannot precisely describe them. At most, we can describe a range of abnormal ones. (OC 27)

What is more, to look for such rules is to fail: to "realize the groundlessness of our believing" (OC 166). This does not mean that no reasons can be offered to support the claim that hinges are required, that we do not understand the idea of having a practice that would not have them. Rather it shows that once we reach that conclusion there is no more explaining to be done. In particular there are no reasons to be given as to why certain propositions and not others have hinge status.

The second observation often reported by commentators who focus on the ordinary language games (and therefore on what I distinguish as the first strand) are observations about ordinary use of the phrase "to doubt". The commentators describe the ordinary uses of the expression, and find some common features.

The list often includes the following ones:

1. That ordinary doubt is based on grounds.
2. That ordinary doubt can be (in principle) resolved.
3. That ordinary doubt has practical consequences.

They then notice that the sceptical doubt is very different, that it does not share any of these features. The conclusions drawn from that fact differ from commentator to commentator, but they generally suggest that it makes the sceptic's use of the term "doubt", and therefore the sceptical way of introducing

doubt, somehow faulty or illegitimate. Most commentators see it as insufficient to dismiss the sceptic, and complement this strategy with one, or both, of the other two. The exception here is Coliva. Coliva does mention the other two strands but claims that the observations about ordinary use of the phrase “to doubt” are enough to reject scepticism for anyone who shares Wittgenstein’s view of language (Coliva, 2010, p. 112). She further claims that because the sceptical use of “to doubt” violates the criteria of ordinary doubt it makes the sceptical doubt nonsensical. What is more, she states that any language use which violates the criteria established in everyday language games is illegitimate, and since that is exactly what philosophical uses tend to do, a big part of philosophical enterprise, if not the whole, is senseless.

The main problem with this strategy is that it begs the question against the sceptic. That is, if we assume that genuine doubt needs to be capable of being resolved, then it is not surprising that we arrive at an anti-sceptical conclusion. Even if we do not include this criterion on our list, it still seems that we end up with a dogmatic position stating that from the fact that the sceptical doubt is in some ways different from ordinary its illegitimacy follows.

I agree that the fact that in ordinary practices our doubt can be resolved is an interesting and important feature of these practices, examination of which can help us deal with scepticism. It is also definitely true that Wittgenstein pays a lot of attention to our ordinary language games, and contrasts the ordinary practice of doubt with sceptical doubt. However, in my view this is only a starting point of his anti-sceptical strategy. What the discrepancy between the ordinary and the philosophical use of “to doubt” shows is that these two cases deal with significantly different phenomena, and that we should not simply assume that we understand sceptical doubt because it superficially resembles the familiar, ordinary doubt. As Wittgenstein states in OC 24, “we should first have to ask: what would such a doubt be like? and don’t understand this straight off”. Nonetheless these observations leave the question of what is wrong with sceptical doubt unanswered. What needs to be shown, and what Wittgenstein

does show, is that the sceptical doubt is somehow faulty, not just that it is different.

The second strand is often the most prominent one for the commentators within the Framework Reading. What Coliva, Moyal-Sharrock, Stroll, and McGinn all argue is that, in order for our practices to take place, some general statements must be assumed. For example, in order to make sense of our practice of history or geology, we need to assume that the earth is more than twenty years old. Similarly, in order to understand our practice of making empirical judgments, we need to assume that the external world exists. In other words, they see hinges as presuppositions of our practices, which need to remain unchallenged for our practices to be possible. This may have an appearance of a dogmatic view. After all these are exactly the assumptions that the sceptic is challenging. According to the Framework Reading this charge can be dismissed if we acknowledge that hinges are not parts of our practices, they are not moves in our language games, but rather stand outside the games and frame or support them. As such they are not subject to epistemic evaluation.

The idea of hinges not being part of language games or practices, but rather framing them is present in all of the discussed interpretations and is a defining feature of the Framework Reading. Some of the hinges are very much exactly the negations of sceptical hypothesis, and examples given often include statements such as “There are physical objects” and “I am not now dreaming”¹. According to the Framework Reading the sceptic is wrong in asking us to imagine that these are not true, because they cannot see that the acceptance of these statements is a prerequisite of meaningfulness of our practices and therefore we cannot as much as entertain their negations in thought.

I believe this strand is a misinterpretation of *On Certainty*, and, unlike the other two, has very weak textual support. In particular, the examples of propositions, which according to Wittgenstein cannot be doubted, are very different from the

¹ See for example (Moyal-Sharrock D., 2004, p. 17), (Coliva, 2010, p. 114, 141).

general statements suggested by the Framework Reading. I discuss this in detail in Chapter Eight (subsection 8.2.2). What is more, I think that it forces us to accept strong metaphysical theses as something without which our practices could not continue. This causes two problems. Firstly, it portrays Wittgenstein as holding a metaphysical view when he is one of the most avid critics of this whole area of discourse. Secondly, even if we disregard the difficulty of attributing metaphysical theses to Wittgenstein, it still significantly weakens his stance. That is so because it needlessly opens the metaphysical discussion, which has the following consequence. If we take negations of sceptical hypothesis to be meaningful, then it is hard to see how the hypotheses themselves are meaningless. If they are not meaningless then there is a sense in which they can be entertained in thought. I will leave more thorough analysis of why that is the case until Chapter Eight, that is, until after the arguments against particular components of the Framework Reading have been presented.

The third strand present in literature on *On Certainty* focuses on the global character of sceptical doubt. What is argued is that sceptical doubt undermines all of our beliefs about the external world at once. This is seen as having absurd consequences. The main task related to this strand is therefore to explain why global doubt is absurd.

A passages that is frequently invoked in this context is OC 55:

So is the *hypothesis* possible, that all the things around us don't exist? Would that not be like the hypothesis of our having miscalculated in all our calculations?

Although this strand is frequently included in interpretations of *On Certainty*, it is usually not explored further. That is, little attention is given to looking at why it is exactly that global doubt is like miscalculating in all calculations, and what it is about the idea of miscalculating in all calculations that makes it absurd. The only exception here is McGinn (McGinn, 1989), who devotes significant amount of space to these issues. Interestingly, as I mentioned in the previous chapter, the consequences she draws from these considerations are very different from mine.

I think there are two reasons for this strand to have been neglected. Firstly, commentators do not necessarily see a need to explore it further as they see the most powerful argument for dissolving scepticism as coming from what I identify as the second strand. Secondly, it relies on insights from *Philosophical Investigations*, and there seems to be a resistance among commentators to rely on this work in order to make sense of *On Certainty*. Coliva, for example, explicitly states that the reliance on Wittgenstein's views on language is a disadvantage as it makes the position less attractive for contemporary epistemologists (Coliva, 2010, p. 118).

As a consequence, this line of argument has thus far been given relatively little attention. In contrast, I give Wittgenstein's views on language a prominent place in my interpretation of his treatment of scepticism. Consequently, I take a different approach to the relevance of *Philosophical Investigations* and his other later works and, in what follows, draw on them heavily to interpret Wittgenstein's anti-sceptical strategy. According to the view put forward in this thesis, Wittgenstein's dissolution of scepticism is intimately related to his view on language, and these two cannot be separated. Instead of seeing this relation as weakening Wittgenstein's treatment of scepticism due to it being conditional on the view of language, I see these two components of Wittgenstein's thought as providing mutual support. Together they constitute a compelling picture of our linguistic practices, which has, among others, the advantage of dissolving the problem of scepticism.

In the remaining sections of this chapter I will reconstruct Wittgenstein's argument to the conclusion that we cannot doubt hinges in a way which explores the global character of sceptical doubt. At the same time the reconstruction will avoid opening the metaphysical discussion, which is the main problem of the Framework Reading. Instead it will draw a conclusion that both sceptical hypotheses and their negations are senseless.

2.2 The rule-governed character of practices and the rule-following paradox

The first step we need to take in order to see why our practices, and in particular “the practice of making empirical judgments” (OC 140), require us not to call certain things into doubt, is to acknowledge that they are rule-governed. In fact, for Wittgenstein, all our linguistic practices have this feature. The feature of being rule-governed can be understood in many different ways. However all that is required for Wittgenstein’s argument is a very minimal notion of normativity: that is, that the moves in our language games are judged as correct or incorrect, that not everything “goes”. It is also this minimal notion of normativity that I will reference when describing our practices as rule-governed, treating the terms “rule-governed”, “normative” and “regulative” as synonyms throughout the thesis.

As such, the idea seems highly intuitive. We do indeed judge our linguistic performances according to a variety of criteria: we talk about true and false statements, we describe someone’s attempt at telling a joke as unsuccessful if it does not get many laughs, we call people out if they misuse a sophisticated word or phrase, we correct speakers when they make a grammatical error. It is this normative aspect that turns our practices from instinctive, biological reactions into what they are: rule-governed enterprises. If we remove the normative aspect, all we have are dispositions to behave a certain way.

The normative character of our practices is epitomised by Wittgenstein’s concept of a language game. Games are paradigmatic examples of rule-governed enterprises. In the case of ordinary games, like chess or card games, a lot of the rules are easily identifiable, often explicitly stated in the form of a list of instructions. It is, therefore, not surprising that in order to elucidate some aspects of our linguistic practices, Wittgenstein, as well as his commentators, often use game metaphors and analogies. In this respect this thesis is no different.

Before we go any further into the reconstruction of Wittgenstein's views from *On Certainty*, let's briefly go back to the *Philosophical Investigations*, and the famous rule-following paradox. The paradox is an extremely complex and controversial topic with immense secondary literature. It is therefore important to note that its presentation will be limited, and only the aspects strictly necessary for the purpose of the argument will be mentioned. Anything else would present problems which would lead us well beyond the scope of this thesis.

What is required, for the argument that some propositions must be immune from doubt, is the observation of the crucial role that the actual practice of applying rules plays in Wittgenstein's answer to the rule-following paradox. The paradox itself is introduced in one of the most discussed paragraphs of *Philosophical Investigations*:

This was our paradox: no course of action could be determined by a rule, because every course of action can be made out to accord with the rule. The answer was: if everything can be made out to accord with the rule, then it can also be made out to conflict with it. And so there would be neither accord nor conflict here. (PI 201)

What Wittgenstein points to here is that a general formulation of a rule can always be interpreted in many different ways. In particular, it can always be interpreted in a way which incorporates any application we choose. Consequently, it cannot determine the rule. It is important to note that this undermines not our knowledge of a rule, but rather the rule itself; it is, therefore, not only an epistemological problem. That it is the actual practice of applying rules that saves us from this paradox is suggested by Wittgenstein in the very same passage of *Philosophical Investigations*:

It can be that there is a misunderstanding here from the mere fact that in the course of our argument we give one interpretation after another; as if each one contented us at least for a moment, until we thought of yet another standing behind it. What this shows is that there is a way of grasping a rule that is *not* an *interpretation* but which is exhibited in what we call 'obeying a rule' and "going against it" in actual cases. (PI 201)

It is then echoed in *On Certainty*, where Wittgenstein writes:

Not only rules, but also examples are needed for establishing a practice. Our rules leave loop-holes open, and the practice has to speak for itself. (OC 139)

What those passages show, is that it is not the formulations of rules such as “bishops can move diagonally” or “do not turn left” that make a game of chess or our driving practice into something normative. Those rules could be interpreted in an infinite variety of ways, as the paradox shows, and therefore cannot serve that role. Although we can, in many cases, formulate such rules, it is because we already have a rule-governed practice not the other way round; this is what the second quote from the *Investigations* suggests.

We can therefore distinguish between moves within the game, which is what brings normativity into the picture, and abstract formulations of rules, which we can formulate because the normativity is already there. I will call the latter “general formulations of a rule”. The main lesson of the paradox can now be expressed as follows: general formulations of rules are not enough to constitute a game or practice; what is required are actual cases of rule-following.

Before discussing how this lesson relates to the indispensability of hinges, I would like to first limit our discussion to one specific practice: that is, our practice of making empirical judgments. It is this practice, and in particular the rules governing it, that are the topic of the next section.

2.3 Our practice of talking about the world and different kinds of rules

Wittgenstein’s remarks on rule-following are valid for all rule-governed practices, however, in the context of *On Certainty*, we are interested in a specific practice or set of practices. Wittgenstein, the realist, and the sceptic are not arguing about our practice of playing chess, or our practice of reviewing performances. They are concerned with something more generic, namely, our practice of producing statements about the world with empirical judgments. Additionally, they are concerned with our game of claims to know and our

practice of epistemic¹ doubt. Since Wittgenstein's concepts of language games and practice are not particularly sharp, it is difficult to know if we should see the epistemic game as part of the game of making empirical judgments, or as a separate one. Fortunately, this has no bearing on the overall argument, and therefore we can leave this question unanswered. For the sake of simplicity, in what follows, when I refer to the game of making empirical judgments, I mean it as incorporating also the epistemic layer.

Now we can have a look at the rules governing this practice. The first sense in which the practice is normative, and therefore also the first set of rules, stems from the fact that the practice of making empirical judgments is a linguistic practice, that is, it involves the use of language. The idea that language use entails normativity is related to Wittgenstein's idea of understanding meaning in terms of use. For Wittgenstein, a meaning of an expression is exhibited in the way the expression is used. This idea is, of course, present in Wittgenstein's other later works, but it is also restated in the following passages of *On Certainty*:

A meaning of a word is a kind of employment of it. For it is what we learn when the word is incorporated into our language. (OC 61)

That is why there exists a correspondence between the concepts 'rule' and 'meaning'. (OC 62)

What Wittgenstein is suggesting is that a meaning of a word can be understood in terms of a rule which allows us to distinguish between correct and incorrect use or "employment". The first set of rules that are relevant for Wittgenstein's argument are exactly these "meaning-rules".

These rules however, are not the only ones that govern our game of making empirical judgments. Another set of rules, which are relevant for our purposes, is associated with the goal of the game of making empirical judgments. These rules allow us to distinguish moves which achieve the goal of the game, or bring us

¹ I use the word "epistemic" to distinguish it from psychological doubt.

closer to achieving it, from those which do not. In the case of the game of making empirical judgments, the goal of the game can be described as something like “getting things right” in the sense of producing a statement “there is a cow on the hill” only if there is a cow on the hill. The fact that in the game of making empirical judgments getting things right is our main, or only, concern is what saying that we are engaged in pure enquiry means. The question of whether such enquiry is possible is, of course, a matter of debate, and Wittgenstein might be seen as one of the philosophers who would deny such a possibility. This is one way in which his pragmatism can be understood. However, I maintain that, in *On Certainty*, Wittgenstein is happy to concede to the sceptic the possibility of pure enquiry, or, at least, that doing so that does not make his treatment of scepticism any less successful. It is also controversial whether “getting things right” should be equated with truth. I take this to be another concession Wittgenstein makes to the sceptic. The issue of which theory of truth is endorsed in *On Certainty* is discussed in Chapter Five (section 5.4) of this thesis.

It is often thought that the linguistic rules and the rules associated with the goal of the game, that is, in the case of the game of making empirical judgments, the “getting things right” rules are independent from each other, at least in the sense that it is always possible to judge a proposition as correct according to the meaning rules, but incorrect according to the “getting things right” rules. This independence became a popular topic partially due to its role in the debate on normativity of meaning. One of the reasons given against normativity of meaning is a strong intuition that knowledge of a word’s meaning does not oblige one to, nor guarantees that one will, produce only true statements containing that word (Hattiangadi, 2006), (Wikforss, 2001). To illustrate it with an example: I can know exactly what the word “cow” means and still say “there is a cow on the hill” when in fact it is a horse. I might do this either because I want to mislead my interlocutor, or because, for example, I could not see very well and I mistook the horse for a cow. The first case is of little interest to us, since in the case of the game of making empirical judgments we are interested only in honest assertions. That is because if the goal of the game is to get things right, then to intentionally

lie is either an extremely bad move in this game, or, perhaps, we cannot even interpret it as belonging to the game of making empirical judgments at all¹. The second case is the one we are interested in, and the important thing to note is that in such a case, although I do make a mistake of some sort, it is not a linguistic mistake, I just “get things wrong”.

To further illustrate this point, let's consider two examples presented in the literature on the normativity of meaning which are meant to elucidate this independence. The first one comes from Hans-Johan Glock, who compares our linguistic practice to the game of chess. Glock states that just as it is possible to play chess correctly (that is without breaking any chess rules) but badly (that is never getting even close to winning), it is also possible to make judgments that are linguistically correct but nonetheless false (Glock, 2005).

Another example that will allow us to further clarify the difference in question comes from Alan Millar (Millar, 2002). Millar asks us to imagine a patient with pain in her legs that is not caused by arthritis² but some other disease. The patient himself has a wrong understanding of the word "arthritis", he believes that any pain in the extremities is called "arthritis", and on this basis says: "I suffer from arthritis". His doctor, on the contrary, has a perfectly good understanding of the word "arthritis", however she makes a mistake in her examination, and on the basis of a wrong diagnosis says: "My patient has arthritis". We have a very strong intuition that both of them make a mistake, but those mistakes are of different kinds; that by making the same judgment, one of them breaks linguistic rules, and the other extra-linguistic rules. The author of this example advises us, therefore, to distinguish between correct use and correct application of a word: in the example the patient both misused and (as a result) misapplied the word "arthritis", and the doctor only misapplied it.

¹ We can actually say that in the game of making empirical judgments there is not much difference between someone lying and someone making a mistake – these two are equally bad moves.

² Millar's example is a modification of an example from (Burge, 1996).

Although I disagree with the claim that these two sets of rules are independent, and in fact see the most important step in the argument to consist in showing that they are closely linked, the distinction is useful for the presentation of the argument. In the next section I will apply the lessons of the rule-following paradox to the two sets of rules, and in the process show that it is only if we think about those two sets of rules as dependent that we can fully make sense of Wittgenstein's case for the indubitability of certain judgments.

2.4 Some propositions have to be exempt from doubt.

This section presents what I take to be the core of Wittgenstein's argument for the indispensability of hinges. To make the exposition of this step clear, I divided the section into four subsections. The first two subsections are concerned with the application of the learning of the rule-following paradox to "getting things right"-rules (section 2.4.1) and meaning-rules (section 2.4.2). Subsection 2.4.3 goes back to the analogy with miscalculating in all calculations, which I mentioned in the first section of this chapter, and looks at how it is helpful in appreciating Wittgenstein's argument. The last subsection (2.4.4) briefly looks at some anticipated objections to the reconstruction of the argument.

2.4.1 Part One: "getting things right"-rules

Let's start with applying the learning of the paradox to "getting things right" rules. What the learning of the paradox to these rules means is that in order for us to have them, in order for them to be constituted, we need to have actual examples of following them. In other words, we need examples of propositions or judgments which do indeed get things right.

This is an important observation, and I believe this is what Wittgenstein means when in OC 149 he writes: "My judgments themselves characterize the way I judge, characterize the nature of judgment". What the paradox teaches us in this context is that the meaning of what it is to judge successfully in the game of making empirical judgments cannot be established by any explanations or

definitions (even though we might use them for practical purposes). Rather, it is constituted by the actual practice, in which certain moves are seen as successful, and others are not. In other words, what it means to judge correctly is exhibited in the judgments themselves, in the moves of the game, not by something external to the game. Consequently, unless we have actual examples of successful judgments, we cannot really make sense of what it means to “get things right”.

The above considerations alone pose a problem for the sceptic. What has been shown is that a hypothesis that all of our judgments might be unsuccessful questions not just the judgments themselves, but also any understanding of what success is in the first place. Doubt is often understood as an expression of being epistemically responsible, as being cautious not to make a mistake. However, if we doubt everything we no longer have any reason to doubt anything, as there is no idea of what such doubt would protect as from. This is one of the reasons why we find Wittgenstein saying:

If you tried to doubt everything you would not get as far as doubting anything. The game of doubting itself presupposes certainty. (OC 115)

The most likely response from the sceptic would be a refusal to accept that “getting things right”, as defined by the game, is the same as truth. That is, the sceptic is likely to insist, that apart from what is established in the practice, there is also some other concept of getting things right, which allows for a situation where we globally get things wrong. In other words, if we have such a game-transcendent notion of truth, it is possible that we “get things right” according to the standards of the game, and still are wrong in terms of the transcendent criterion. Therefore, we can interpret the above considerations as highlighting the sceptic’s commitment to a game-transcendent notion of truth. This point of disagreement between Wittgenstein and the sceptic is further explored in Chapter Five, where I discuss the question of the truth-aptness of hinges. We can already see, however, how such a notion would go against Wittgenstein’s insight that all normativity has to belong to, and be constituted by, a practice.

2.4.2 Part Two: meaning-rules

The second part of the argument focuses on the meaning-rules. What the paradox teaches us in this context is, that in order to have linguistic rules, we need to have correct applications of those rules, that is, linguistically correct statements. Unless we have such examples, our words have no meaning. This means that, for the word “cow”, for example, to have any meaning we need linguistically correct judgements with the word “cow”. In fact, we need a practice of making judgments which involve the word “cow”, and which exhibits which judgments we treat as linguistically correct, and which we treat as incorrect.

At the first glance, the consideration presented above does not imply that we need to exempt any proposition from doubt. According to what we have established thus far, all that needs to be exempt from doubt is that certain propositions are linguistically correct. All we can conclude at this stage, with regard to the second part of the argument, is that some propositions have to be uncontroversially accepted as linguistically correct, otherwise they would not be able to play the meaning-constitutive role. It is only in this sense that their correctness is exempt from doubt.

We can use Millar’s terminology to describe our current situation: thus far we have established that in order for there to be linguistic rules, and therefore for our words to have meaning, we need examples of correct uses of words.

However, if we want to argue that what we need are hinge propositions, that is propositions which are exempt from doubt, we need to show that we need judgments that are examples of both correct use, and correct application of words.

To do exactly this, that is, to show that in order for our words to have meanings, we need to exempt certain propositions from doubt. I will further explore Millar’s example: let’s imagine we have a statement “X has arthritis”, which we know is false. In such a situation we cannot determine which kind of mistake was made: misuse or misapplication. In order to build up our intuition that the two

cases are different, Millar had to explicitly assume that the doctor does and the patient does not know the meaning of the word. If we do not have that information, then, from the statement itself, it is not possible to decide which kind of mistake was made (Millar, 2002, p. 60). Those kinds of statements, that is, linguistically correct but false statements, cannot perform the meaning constitutive job, because in a way they are a myth. That is, when we have a false statement, it does not make sense to talk about different kinds of mistakes; both statements are wrong in the same sense. It is just the cause of the mistake that is different. To use Millar's example again: in the case of a doctor, our grounds for claiming that she understands the word "arthritis" consist only in the fact that in the past she produced plenty of true statements involving that word, including correct diagnosis of the disease in patients.

What is more, when we think about the meaning constitution process, we cannot think only about individual examples of incorrect applications. Instead, we need to imagine a game in which there are only incorrect applications, and whether we have any idea what a correct or incorrect use would be in such a practice. In other words, can we conceive of a game where all moves are linguistically correct, but at the same time false? In my view, the answer "no" to this question is the most crucial of Wittgenstein's insights from *On Certainty*.

The close relationship between the meaning-rules and "getting things right"-rules, and the fact that false but linguistically correct judgments are not enough to serve as examples of correct uses of words, shows that Glock's chess analogy is not exact. In the case of a chess game, even if we have an uncontroversially bad move (for example someone is in a position to do check mate, but does not), we can still determine whether their bad move was correct or not in terms of not breaking the rules of the game.

A better analogy holds between the game of making judgments and a slightly modified game of three cards (assuming it is an honest game, not a crooked one). The game takes place between two players: the Player and the Dealer. The game starts with three different cards lying on the table face up. The first stage of the

game consists in the Player reading the names of the cards from left to right. Then the Dealer reverses the cards and starts rearranging them very quickly. The task of the Player is to guess the correct order of the cards after the dealer stops rearranging. After the Player makes his guess the dealer reverses the cards, and if the sequence accords with what the Player claimed the Player wins, otherwise they lose.

Now we can think of hinge propositions as analogous to those expressed by the Player at the first stage of the game, when they simply read the names of the cards. We can see that it is necessary that the players agree on those judgments for them to be able to communicate later on when the Player makes their guess. If one of them were to doubt those propositions the whole game would not be possible; we would not have a way of understanding the Player's answer. On the other hand, there is no reward at this first stage of the game because the fact that they are true is trivial. The same holds for hinge propositions; it is awkward to state them because they are so obvious. There is also no "reward" for stating them; it is not regarded as an achievement at all. Nonetheless, if we are to doubt them we make the whole game impossible. They have to stay fixed.

This example also allows us to further clarify why it would not be enough to have linguistically correct judgments. If, at the first stage of the game, we could not be sure if we are reading the names of the cards correctly, for example, because the cards were facing down, the whole process would not help us establish the meanings of "king", "queen" etc.

Lastly, the example allows us to illustrate the first part of the argument as well; if we are not certain of our "guesses" in the first stage of the game, then we do not really have a good idea of what the aim of the game is, what it means to make a correct guess.

The choice of example might be seen as suggesting that naming is somehow a privileged, or more important, linguistic activity. It is not meant to imply that. We can easily construe an example which does not rely on naming. We can, for

instance, imagine a game of guessing which plank of wood is longer, from a certain distance, where planks are shown one at a time, so it is a reasonably difficult task. After a player makes their guess both planks of wood are brought closer and compared. If the player was right, they receive a point. The equivalent of hinges, in this case, would be again the first part of the game, which here was omitted, but implicitly present, where the planks are in front of the player and they describe their length.

2.4.3 Why sceptical doubt is like a hypothesis that we have miscalculated in all calculations.

In the first section of this chapter I said that the strand or strategy I am perusing in my interpretation of Wittgenstein's argument is the one that focuses on the global nature of the sceptical doubt, and the one which has been associated with the passages of *On Certainty* which talk about analogy between the sceptical doubt and the idea of miscalculating in all calculations. The analogy is present not only in the one passage I quoted in the first section, but rather is an important thread of *On Certainty* (see OC 26, 447, 496, 651).

Now we have all the pieces of the puzzle necessary to see the connection between these passages and the indispensability of hinges argument. What is interesting in the case of calculations is that the meaning of the expressions involved is more obviously (than in the case of making empirical judgments) connected with the correctness of particular calculations. To illustrate this point more clearly, let's limit the discussion to just cases of addition of natural numbers. If we were to call into question the results of all of our additions, then the whole concept of addition and the meaning of "+" would be dissolved. This does not mean that we cannot make mistakes in isolated cases of addition, in harder cases we often do. However, we can make sense of thinking about those cases as mistakes only because the meaning of plus is fixed by numerous calculations which, like $2+2=4$, are never doubted, but rather seen as paradigmatic examples of success in the game.

The analogy with calculations also allows us to illustrate the relationship between the two different kinds of rules. In the “game of addition” we can distinguish between two kinds of mistake. If we have someone who, when asked how much is $1897 + 300$, answers 1597, it might be because they confused ‘+’ with ‘-’, but it also might be because they miscalculated. However, what is different in those cases is the origin, or cause, of producing a wrong answer. The statement itself is wrong in exactly the same way in both cases. Therefore, if we think about the practice as a whole and we imagine that we have only incorrect calculations, it is clear that we have no meaning for the sign “+”, and there is no way to understand what the practice is actually about and what someone involved in it should be doing.

Moreover, to say that we might have miscalculated in all calculations is to suggest that there is some external criterion, according to which it can be said that we played according to wrong rules; that we have understood addition wrongly, and it is not what addition really is. It assumes that there is some understanding of addition, or rules of the game, that is independent from the actual game, which the game is trying to track. It is exactly the same with meaning. There is no external meaning, which is like a platonic form or an idea in our minds to which our use must correspond. Rather, meaning is constituted in use. It makes no sense to say that the whole practice is wrong, because there is nothing according to which we could judge it as such. All assessment only makes sense within a game, as that is where the rules are. This is why, in OC 496, Wittgenstein talks about showing that some propositions cannot be doubted in the following way: “This is a similar case to that of showing that it has no meaning to say that a game has always been played wrong”.

Lastly, it is important to note that there is nothing intrinsic about a hinge that makes it a hinge, just as there is nothing about any particular calculation that makes it any more certain than the others. Hinges are propositions that are kept fixed, but to try to say anything more about them would be to slip into traditional foundationalism with all its flaws. This is exactly where Wittgenstein draws a

line and says that nothing more can be said, that this is simply what we do. Which propositions are kept fixed is a matter of description, not explanation.

To summarize, the analogy between calculating and the game of making empirical judgments holds, because these are both examples of rule-governed linguistic practices. The case of calculations simply allows us to see more easily how the rule constituting process takes place within the game, as opposed to being somehow imposed from outside. The certainty of mathematics is, therefore, in a sense, not different from that within the game of making empirical judgments. Wittgenstein expresses this thought in the following way in OC 447:

Compare with this $12 \times 12 = 144$. Here too we don't say "perhaps". For, in so far as this proposition rests on our not miscounting or miscalculating and on our senses not deceiving us as we calculate, both propositions, the arithmetical one and the physical one, are on the same level. I want to say: The physical game is just as certain as the arithmetical. But this can be misunderstood. My remark is a logical and not a psychological one.

2.3.4 Potential objections

I hope that I have shown that if we apply Wittgenstein's remarks on rule-following and meaning to the rules governing our practice of making empirical judgments, then we have to conclude that we need propositions which are uncontroversially correct according to both meaning rules and "getting things right" rules, that is, moves which are uncontroversially successful. In the next section, I will look at how the argument allows us to make sense of some of the prominent theses of *On Certainty*. However, before I do so, I would like to look at two potential misinterpretations of my reconstruction of the argument.

Firstly, it might be useful to clarify that the requirement to have examples of correct applications is not the same as the requirement to have instantiations of a concept¹. Although we need to have some correct statements with the word

¹ Compare (Malcolm, 1992).

“cow” in order for that word to have meaning, it by no means implies that there have to be any cows; that any of those statements needs to have a form “this is a cow”. All that is required from the word true to have meaning is some correct applications of the word “true”, not necessarily anything actually being true. They could be statements such as “Yes, it is true, he stole that apple. I know, it is shocking”, etc.

Secondly, it is also useful to distinguish the argument presented above from the following version of the paradigm case argument. According to the paradigm case argument, having a practice of applying a concept to some cases, but not others, is a sufficient condition for that concept not being empty. This is different from what I put forward, in that I am not suggesting that having a rule governing a use of a term is enough for it not to be empty, but rather, that having a rule-governed practice involving a word is a necessary condition for it to have meaning.

2.5 Some consequences of the argument

The argument presented above shows how, if we look at Wittgenstein’s insight on rule-following, we can start to appreciate that our practice is, and has to be, such that it keeps certain propositions fixed: if it was not the case then the whole game would not be possible. At the same time it presents hinges not as some external presuppositions of practice. On the contrary, hinges are the most trivial of the moves of the game, which are kept intact not because they are standing outside of the practice, but because of the practice itself. We can think of them as a by-product of our game of making empirical judgments. In the last few paragraphs of the chapter I would like to look at how the argument allows us to make sense of four other themes of *On Certainty*. For the sake of clarity each of the themes is discussed in a separate sub-section.

2.5.1 How we become competent language speakers

The first of these themes derives from Wittgenstein's remarks on how we learn a language, and what it means to be a competent language speaker. The first important thing Wittgenstein has to say on the topic is expressed in the following two passages:

As children we learn facts; e.g., that every human being has a brain, and we take them on trust. I believe that there is an island, Australia, of such-and-such a shape, and so on and so on; I believe that I had great-grandparents, that the people who gave themselves out as my parents really were my parents, etc. This belief may never have been expressed; even the thought that it was so, never thought. (OC 159)

The child learns by believing the adult. Doubt comes after belief. (OC 160)

What Wittgenstein is pointing to is that when we learn language, we also learn to accept certain facts. A child who would resist believing anything would be unable to learn a language, as the truth of certain statements is part of the meaning of the words involved.

Consequently, the process of learning a language involves learning not to doubt certain propositions. However this is not to say that we in any way learn hinges explicitly. In fact, they are very rarely stated. If we go back to the analogy with the game of three cards, we can see that the first stage of the game can be completely omitted, even if we are teaching a person how to play the game. It is through learning how to play that we, completely implicitly, learn not to question hinges. Wittgenstein states it in the following two passages of the book:

We do not learn the practice of making empirical judgments by learning rules: we are taught judgments and their connexion with other judgments. A totality of judgments is made plausible to us. (OC 140)

When we first begin to believe anything, what we believe is not a single proposition, it is a whole system of propositions. (Light dawns gradually over the whole.) (OC 141)

Additionally, Wittgenstein writes:

If you demand a rule from which it follows that there can't have been a miscalculation here, the answer is that we did not learn this through a rule, but by learning to calculate. (OC 44)

We got to know the nature of calculating by learning to calculate. (OC 45)

What he suggests here is that, when we learn the game, we learn everything there is to learn about a given practice, that there is not some other nature of the game to be discovered.

What Wittgenstein says about learning a language has consequences also to what the outcome of such learning is, that is, the topic of what it means to be a competent language speaker. Just as a child had to accept certain judgements as certain, so the competent language speaker has to continue accepting them as such.

Moreover, we can now appreciate why, for Wittgenstein, the knowledge of a meaning of a word entails the ability to apply the word correctly in the sense of producing or endorsing statements that are both linguistically correct and true. This is an important theme of the book, which Wittgenstein brings up several times, most directly in the following passages:

The truth of my statements is the test of my understanding of these statements (OC 80).

That is to say: if I make certain false statements, it becomes uncertain whether I understand them (OC 81)

What this shows is that, in the same way as meaning could not be constituted without hinges, there is also no mastery of language by an individual unless they are ready to accept hinges.

2.5.2 Why making a mistake presupposes certainty

The second theme that the indispensability of hinges argument allows us to make sense of, is concerned with the concept of mistake. I believe that Wittgenstein offers two main insights with regard to this topic.

The first of these consists in the observation that, in order to be able to talk about a mistake, we need to have rules according to which a move can be understood as such. Wittgenstein writes about this in OC 29 where he states that “practice in the use of the rule also shows what is a mistake in its employment.” However, in order to have rules we need to keep some propositions fixed. It is in this sense that mistake presupposes certainty.

The second insight offered by Wittgenstein is concerned with the individual level, that is, with what it means for someone to make a mistake. Since the acceptance of hinges is a prerequisite for being a competent language speaker, contesting or even questioning them, cannot be seen as a mistake in the same sense that endorsing a false empirical statement is. Rather, it shows a lack of mastery of a language. The more obvious a statement is, and therefore the harder it is to make an extra-linguistic mistake, the more doubt we would have about the speaker’s linguistic competence. If someone was to say that they do not know how many hands they have, for example, we would be deeply worried about whether they actually understand the words involved, or even about their sanity. Wittgenstein contrast the two cases, a case of making a mistake, and a case where things go wrong in a more significant way, in the following passage:

Would this be correct: If I merely believed wrongly that there is a table here in front of me, this might still be a mistake; but if I believe wrongly that I have seen this table, or one like it, every day for several months past, and have regularly used it, that isn't a mistake? (OC 75)

That is why, for someone to make a mistake, she has to already be a competent language speaker, and therefore accept certain judgments. As a result any attempt at doubting hinges cannot be understood as doubt, but rather as expression of linguistic incompetence. Wittgenstein describes this in the following series of passages:

There are cases such that, if someone gives signs of doubt where we do not doubt, we cannot confidently understand his signs as signs of doubt. I.e.: if we are to understand his signs of doubt as such, he may give them only in particular cases and may not give them in others. (OC 154)

In certain circumstance a man cannot make a mistake. ("Can" is here used logically, and the proposition does not mean that a man cannot say anything false in those circumstances.) If Moore were to pronounce the opposite of those propositions which he declares certain, we should not just not share his opinion: we should regard him as demented. (OC 155)

In order to make a mistake, a man must already judge in conformity with mankind. (OC 156)

2.5.3 Stroll revisited

The third theme brings us back to the topic I introduced in the first section of this chapter, namely the problem of the status of the conclusion of the argument. When I discussed Stroll's position, I said that, according to the commentator, Wittgenstein's conclusion should be stated as follows: "we do not doubt certain propositions", rather than "we cannot doubt certain propositions".

Stroll bases his view on the following passage from *On Certainty*:

"We could doubt every single one of these facts, but we could not doubt them all."
Wouldn't it be more correct to say: "we do not doubt them all". Our not doubting them all is simply our manner of judging, and therefore of acting. (OC 232)

In a different part of *On Certainty*, Wittgenstein suggests that the conclusion of the argument, that is the indispensability of hinges, has a rule-like status:

(part) though it is right enough to say that as a rule some empirical judgment or other must be beyond doubt (OC 519)

"I cannot doubt this proposition without giving up all judgement." But what sort of proposition is that? (It is reminiscent of what Frege said about the law of identity.) It is certainly no empirical proposition. It does not belong to psychology. It has rather the character of a rule. (OC 494)

At first glance these two views seem inconsistent; Wittgenstein seems to think of the conclusion of the argument as both descriptive and belonging to logic. We can now see that these two approaches can be reconciled. The statement that some things have to be exempt from doubt is what I call a general formulation of

a rule. As such, it is a rule, and it does have a logical status. At the same time, as with all other rules, it gets its force from the actual practice, in this case the practice of not doubting certain things. All normativity comes from the actual practice, and that includes our understanding of what is, and what is not, comprehensible, intelligible or possible. This shows that, for Wittgenstein, the line between normative and descriptive is significantly blurred. I see this blurring as a very important consequence of the argument and discuss it more fully in Chapter Three.

2.5.4 Hinges are not special

The fourth and final consequence of the argument is concerned with the fact that the propositions which play the role of hinges are in no way special, that it is not in virtue of the kind of propositions they are that they can play the role of hinges, that in a sense they are not different from the “normal” empirical propositions. In other words, the triviality, obviousness and certainty of hinge propositions has nothing to do with them, but rather is guaranteed by everything else that is happening in the game.

We can use the game metaphor to clarify why that is the case. As we have seen the first stage of the game would have been completely omitted and we might have never been asked to produce judgments, which are analogous to hinges in the game. Nonetheless, the course of the game would keep those statements fixed. It is the way in which the game proceeds that makes it clear that statements such as the ones from the first stage of the game are not doubted. There is nothing external to the game that keeps them fixed. Even more importantly, they themselves are not external to the game.

This is an important point for Wittgenstein, as suggested by the fact that he repeats it several times in the book. The following three passages all emphasise the systemic character of the practice:

It is not single axioms that strike me as obvious, it is a system in which consequences and premises give one another mutual support. (OC 142)

I do not explicitly learn the propositions that stand fast for me. I can discover them subsequently like the axis around which a body rotates. This axis is not fixed in the sense that anything holds it fast, but the movement around it determines its immobility. (OC 152)

I have arrived at the rock bottom of my convictions. And one might almost say that these foundation-walls are carried by the whole house. (OC 248)

I see these quotes as absolutely central to my interpretation of the book, and I believe it to be what distinguishes my interpretation of the book from the one of the Framework Reading. To see hinges as trivial, paradigmatic examples of correct and successful moves in the game entails that they are not completely different kinds of creatures than non-hinge empirical statements. This sits in clear contradiction to the standard view of hinges, and challenges the thesis central to the Framework Reading.

The rest of my thesis is devoted to fleshing out the consequences of such an approach. In order to do that, I discuss the thesis put forward by the Framework Reading, and present my view on the issues in question, that is, the view which follows from my reconstruction of the argument. In the next three chapters I look in particular at the view that hinges are radically different from other moves in the game. In the next chapter I take on this general statement, and look closely at claims made in relation to the distinction between hinges and empirical proposition. In the following two chapters I look at particular characteristics that hinges are to have, and empirical propositions are to lack, namely being a proposition and being truth-apt. In the chapter following that I argue that the special status of hinges does not prevent our relation to them being epistemic. Then I get side-tracked to the issue of relativism as the previously discussed issues of scheme/content distinction and knowledge of hinges allow me to discuss both conceptual and epistemic relativism. I finish with a chapter which looks at how the indispensability of hinges argument relates to Wittgenstein's treatment of the dream argument.

Chapter 3

Hinges, Rules, and Empirical Propositions

In the last chapter I presented my view of hinges as a special type of moves in the game of making judgments about the world. The difference between them and empirical propositions was portrayed as a difference in epistemic status only. As a result, the only characteristics specific to hinges are their indubitability and certainty, and even these are not as much features of the propositions that play the role of hinges, as they are descriptions of our attitude to hinges, and of their role within the game of talking about the world.

As such, my view is very different from the Framework Reading. Commentators within the Framework Reading tend to present and analyse various features of hinges that make them different from empirical propositions. This line of analysis is consistent with the Framework Reading's thesis that hinges are fundamentally different from empirical propositions, that they belong to a different, non-empirical sphere, and that therefore they are not part of the game of making judgments about the world.

In the next three chapters I will look at particular features identified by the Framework Reading as distinguishing hinges from empirical propositions, that is:

1. a claim that hinges are normative rather than descriptive (Chapter Three);
2. a claim that hinges are not propositions at all (Chapter Four);
3. a claim that hinges are not truth-apt (Chapter Five).

The first feature that the Framework Reading sees as differentiating hinges from empirical propositions is their rule-like status, or, in other words, their regulative character. All of the main commentators within this reading (McGinn, 1989) (Stroll, 1994) (Moyal-Sharrock, 2004a) (Coliva, 2010) emphasise this feature of hinges, and see it as the reason for which hinges can enjoy a privileged epistemic status. In this chapter I look closer at what is meant by this claim, and argue that the distinction between regulative and descriptive should be understood differently than what the Framework Reading takes it to be.

The chapter has the following structure:

- First, in section 3.1, I present in more detail the Framework Reading of the distinction. I focus especially on the claim that whatever plays a regulative role must be placed on the borders of our practice and seen as framing it.
- Section 3.2 presents two problems with the Framework picture.
- In section 3.3 I offer an alternative picture which follows from my interpretation of the dispensability of hinges argument.

3.1 Framework Reading and the regulative/descriptive distinction

The distinction between regulative statements and descriptive statements is commonly attributed to later Wittgenstein. It seems closely related to, and

perhaps implied by, the concept of grammar, which is seen as the part of language dealing with the regulative aspect¹. It is also the omnipresent use of game analogies that support the intuition that it is useful to distinguish between rules of the game and what is governed by those rules.

In *On Certainty*, Wittgenstein is concerned with the game of making empirical judgments and therefore when talking about the distinction he contrasts rules with empirical statements. At the same time *On Certainty* introduces the notion of hinges which presents the following challenge to the distinction: if empirical propositions are descriptive, and grammatical propositions regulative, then where does the concept of the hinge propositions fit?

The Framework Reading's answer to this question is that even though hinges look very much like empirical propositions they have rule-like status. At the same time empirical propositions are seen as playing a purely descriptive role. Since *On Certainty* is less concerned with the concept of grammar, the regulative/descriptive distinction in the book takes the form of the hinges/empirical propositions distinction.

Even though commentators within the Framework Reading agree that hinges should be seen as staying on the regulative side of the regulative/descriptive divide, there is a lot of variance within the reading regarding the details of the relation between hinges and the distinction. I would like to distinguish and discuss briefly three different approaches as exemplified by Stroll and Moyal-Sharrock, Coliva, and Glock

3.1.1 Stroll and Moyal-Sharrock

The first approach is the one offered by Stroll and Moyal-Sharrock, who see hinges simply as an extension of the concept of grammar (Moyal-Sharrock, 2004a, pp. 68, 91) (Moyal-Sharrock, 2004c) (Stroll, 1994, p. 115). What the

¹ See for example (Glock, 2009)

concept of hinges shows, according to these scholars, is that grammar is a less homogenous group of things than we might think.

At the same time the distinction between normative and descriptive is very sharp for these scholars. That is, the feature of playing a descriptive role and a feature of playing a normative role are mutually exclusive. As a consequence, whatever plays a normative role is completely devoid of any descriptive content, and anything descriptive cannot play regulative role. This leads to the understanding of hinges as completely non-descriptive, and Moyal-Sharrock devotes a section of her book to the discussion of their non-empirical character (Moyal-Sharrock, 2004a, pp. 80-81).

One problem with such view is that it is very counter-intuitive to say that the phrase “I have two hands” does not describe anything when it is a hinge, but does when it plays a role of an empirical proposition. In both cases it seems to be saying something about me and the number of hands I’m in possession of. Moyal-Sharrock, however, believes that such intuition is just a matter of habit, and one that we should change. I discuss this aspect of Moyal-Sharrock’s view in more depth in the next chapter (Chapter Four).

3.1.2 Coliva

Coliva, in contrast to Moyal-Sharrock and Stroll, sees hinges as slightly blurring the regulative/descriptive distinction. She sees *On Certainty* as showing that not only purely grammatical propositions, but also propositions which play descriptive role can function as rules. For her, what the concept of hinges shows is that a thing that looks very much like an empirical proposition, and can even be seen as having descriptive content, can also have a rule-like status. In that sense, this view is closest to the one I put forward in this chapter. Coliva does, however, seem to be a little on the fence with regard to the descriptive content of hinges, and often emphasises that they are not empirical in the same sense.

A crucial difference between Coliva’s view and mine is that Coliva insists that, because they play a regulative role, hinges should be placed outside the game, or

on the border of the game of making empirical judgments, and not seen as moves within the game. In that sense even though, for Coliva, the distinction between descriptive and regulative is slightly blurred, the distinction between moves in the game and rules of the game, which stand outside of it, remains just as sharp.

3.1.3 Glock

Even though Glock is not a traditional member of the Framework Reading, his interpretation of hinges as presented in (Glock, 2004) (Glock, 2009) endorses the most important thesis of the Framework Reading, that is, that hinges frame the game of making empirical judgments. In this article Glock addresses the question of the place of hinges in the regulative/descriptive distinction and offers the following account.

As far as hinges are concerned, Glock sees them as having a status different from both empirical propositions and grammar. According to him, they still play a regulative role, though different from grammar. This is how he defines grammar:

The system of its constitutive rules, those rules which define the language. Grammar in this sense includes not just rules that are grammatical in the received sense, but any rule which determines what it makes sense to say in a particular language, including rules which are commonly described as syntactic, logical, or pragmatic (Glock, 2009, p. 656).

Hinges, on the other hand, describe conditions that have to be in place for our game to be able to take place. Hinges are therefore different from grammatical propositions because of their form, which is that of an empirical proposition, and because of the fact that their negation makes sense. They are different from empirical propositions in that they cannot be doubted. The reason for this, according to Glock, as well as the rest of the Framework Reading, is that doubting them would undermine the whole system of my beliefs.

To illustrate his view Glock compares the role hinges play in the game of making judgments to the role certain empirical facts such as the existence of gravity, or certain facts about human body play in the game of tennis; they simply have to

be in place for the game to take place, they are conditions of possibility of our practice.

Understood in this way, hinges have no impact on the pre-*On Certainty* version of the regulative/descriptive distinction. According to the metaphor of measuring provided by Glock, we can see the grammatical propositions as expressing rules of measuring that give as the meaning of terms involved, empirical propositions as actual moves within the game (actual measurements), and hinge propositions as a scaffolding or framework describing conditions which are, and have to be, in place for the game of measuring to take place.

Interestingly, the author explicitly claims that hinges are not semantically constitutive (Glock, 2009, p. 664), which is a role reserved for grammatical propositions. It is a problem for his reading as there are numerous passages in *On Certainty* where Wittgenstein talks about hinges as meaning constitutive (114, 126, 369, 370, 456).

Another problem with this view is revealed by the examples of hinges used by Glock. He chooses statements such as “This thing that looks like a hand isn’t just a superb imitation—it really is a hand”, and, as such, changes Wittgenstein’s example into a proposition that has a status of a negation of a sceptical hypothesis. This strategy is not exclusive to Glock, and I argue against it in Chapter Eight (subsection 8.2.2)

3.1.4 Shared ground

Even though there are important differences between the scholars within the Framework Reading, what I would like to challenge in this chapter is the view which is shared by all of them. Although I agree that the distinction between descriptive and regulative is present in *On Certainty*, and that there are passages in which Wittgenstein contrasts empirical propositions with rules, I do not agree that such distinction can be seen as identical with, or somehow entailing the distinction between, what happens inside the game and a different sphere of what frames or conditions the game of making empirical judgments. In what

follows I will offer an alternative view, which sees hinges as sitting inside the game of making empirical judgments, as already indicated by my interpretation of the indispensability of hinges argument. I will also argue that being inside the game does not prevent them from playing the regulative role they play, but rather enables it. Before I present my view, however, let's look at the reasoning behind the Framework claims.

According to this reading, rules, and in particular hinges, can be sharply contrasted with the moves in the game. In a way it is the very core of Framework Reading; the thesis that hinges frame the game of making empirical judgments by not belonging to the game itself, but rather belonging to a different category, is where the reading takes its name from. It is crucial for the Framework Reading that having a regulative character means staying outside the game. This thesis is shared by all Framework readers: rules are not moves within the game, rules describe, or frame, a game.

This picture can be supported by the following analogy: a statement that "bishop can move diagonally" is not part of the game of chess, it is not even a movement of a chess piece, but a linguistic entity, something of a completely different kind. Moreover, a rule of chess cannot be questioned or confirmed, it can only be obeyed or disobeyed, and the disobeying of such rule results in excluding ourselves from the game. Since, in the case of the game of making empirical judgments, it is the only game we have where we can talk about the world, the Framework Reading often talks about the result of an attempt to doubt hinges as "cognitive paralysis", and sees it as clearly a less desirable outcome than obeying the rules and playing the game. In other words, according to the Framework Reading, the sceptic, by questioning the rules of the game, simply preclude themselves from playing the game, and place themselves in a state of paralysis. Just as unless we are happy to accept that bishop moves diagonally we cannot play chess, unless we are willing to accept that the Earth did not spring into existence 5 minutes ago, we are unable to play the game of talking about history,

and unless we accept that there are physical objects, we are unable to part take in the game of talking about the world.

The examples of hinges I just invoked are not coincidental, that is, they are ones often used by the Framework commentators, and are themselves expressive of the reading. It is important to note that they are very general in their nature, and, as such, different from the examples given by Wittgenstein. In particular, Wittgenstein never uses the statement “There are physical objects” as an example of a hinge, and most of his examples are much less general, and include statements such as “My name is LW”, “I have two hands” etc. I will talk about this discrepancy more in the final chapter of the thesis (Chapter Eight).

Before I move to the presentation of what I find to be the problems with the picture offered by the Framework Reading, let me also point out that hinges understood in this manner can be seen as constituting something akin to a conceptual scheme, in the sense that they lie on the concept side of the very traditional distinction between concepts and intuitions. As in the case of a conceptual scheme, there is a certain necessity to them that is contrasted with the contingency of empirical propositions. Moreover, hinges are seen as our ways of acting as opposed to what is given by experience; under the Framework Reading hinges shape our experience in a way not enormously different to the way a conceptual scheme traditionally would. In other words, the Framework Reading, through placing the regulative outside or on the border of the game of making empirical judgments, arrives at a picture which entails a well-known dichotomy between what is given in experience and what we add to experience.

From that perspective, the concept of a universal hinge is particularly interesting, and allows to see clearly how the Framework Reading views hinges, and rules more generally, as prior to practice. Universal hinges, that is, hinges which hold for all language games, past, future or present, are postulated by Coliva (Coliva, 2010), Moyal-Sharrock (Moyal-Sharrock, 2004a) and Stroll (Stroll, 1994). The idea that there are rules which have to hold even for future practices

shows that rules are understood not only as framing the games, but also as in an important sense prior to those games.

This is the extent to which the Framework Reading sees rules as independent from the practice of applying them. It is important to note that this association is not controversial, and is often directly acknowledged by commentators, as evidenced by the following quotations from Coliva, Glock.

That we do have such a conceptual scheme is shown by our linguistic and epistemic practices and its objective certainty – not truth – which, for Wittgenstein, is always a function of the role certain propositions play in our overall picture of the world (Coliva, 2010, p. 114).

And it can be empirically ascertained how certain words are actually used in our language and thus what features our conceptual scheme does in fact have (Coliva, 2010, p. 115).

There are obvious parallels between what the later Wittgenstein calls a ‘grammar’ and what contemporaries call a conceptual scheme (Glock, 2009, p. 657).

In the next section I present my objections to this picture, but let me just note that the idea of a conceptual scheme, or more generally of distinguishing between concepts and intuitions, opens a traditional problem of whether there can be many different conceptual schemes. The issue of the relationship between hinges and relativism is a complex one, and there are various views on this topic within the Framework Reading, which is why I devote a separate chapter to the discussion of this topic (Chapter Seven).

3.2 Objections

The view of hinges as framing the game of empirical judgments by virtue of their regulative character is very different from the interpretation advanced in this thesis. Part of the motivation behind providing an alternative picture are two major problems with thinking about hinges in relation to the regulative/descriptive distinction in the Framework way. I will discuss each of them in a separate subsection.

3.2.1 Subject to the rule-following paradox

The first problem with the Framework picture, which portrays hinges as external to the practice by virtue of their playing a regulative role, is that it commits the Framework Reading to understanding normativity as external, or on the border of practice, and therefore in an important way independent from it. This is, of course, something that the Framework Reading explicitly endorses, and sees as intuitive. We can now see that it is this underlying assumption, that to regulate is to stay outside or on the border of what is subject to such regulations, that is what leads the Framework Reading to thinking about hinges as framing.

Such a picture, however, is subject to the rule-following paradox and in that sense misses the main lesson concerning the concept of a rule from *Philosophical Investigations*. If we think about a rule as external to practice, then with every move of the game we will be faced with the following question: which course of action, or move in the game, is in accordance with the rule? This, however is a matter of interpretation, and, as the paradox shows, the question does not have an answer as any course of action can be made to agree with the rule.

Let's use one of the examples of hinges that the Framework Reading uses that is a statement that the earth did not spring into existence five minutes ago to illustrate this point. Let's assume with the Framework Reading that it is a rule which frames our practice of making empirical judgments. How are we to distinguish between a move which accords with this rule and one which does not? What does the rule mean for particular applications? This question is hard to answer even without constructing "quus"-like examples as Saul Kripke does (Kripke, 1982). This is exactly why in *On Certainty* Wittgenstein asks:

What use is a rule to us here? Mightn't we (in turn) go wrong in applying it? (OC 26)

3.2.2 Opens door to scepticism

The vulnerability to the rule-following paradox, however, is not the only problem with placing hinges outside the practice of talking about the world. As discussed

in section 3.1, hinges understood as rules devoid of empirical content are very much akin to a conceptual scheme. The concept of conceptual scheme, in turn, implies the Kantian distinction between concepts and intuitions; that is, the concept of conceptual scheme does not make sense unless it is contrasted with something that does not belong to the scheme, but to which the scheme is applied, or which it filters or shapes (depending on what metaphor we like to use). I posit that it is this endorsement of the concepts/intuitions distinction that is the second major problem with the Framework Reading of rules.

According to the Framework Reading, our claims to knowledge are safe from the threat from scepticism because the negations of sceptical hypothesis, that is, statements such as “there are physical objects”, and “our senses are reliable” are hinges, and hinges have status of a conceptual scheme; we cannot step outside them any more than we can get out of our own heads. In that sense, our knowledge of the world is saved by limiting what the concept of knowledge applies to. Since the concept only applies to experience as shaped by our conceptual scheme, the possibility of knowledge is saved. This strategy is of course very similar to Kant’s own.

This solution to the problem of scepticism comes at a cost. To see why that is the case let’s look a little closer at the sceptical challenge. As I mentioned in the introduction, sceptical doubt is not the same as ordinary doubt. One of the things that distinguishes the two is that sceptical doubt is not directed at one particular belief, but rather at our whole practice of making empirical judgments. To put it in a different way, the sceptic does not challenge the statement that the battle of Waterloo took place in 1815 as opposed to for example 1819. The reasons for doubt that the sceptic presents hold for any statement in the domain (the past or the external world). In that sense they question our whole practice of making empirical judgments.

Thinking about hinges as framing the practice, and in particular as constituting a conceptual scheme, opens exactly the perspective that the sceptic needs, that of our practice as a whole. Once we see our practice as somehow limited, the

questions about the practice as a whole and whether it is legitimate naturally arise.

This is not to say that the Framework Reading has no further reply to the sceptic. In this sense the Framework Reading of *On Certainty* might be more appealing than some other versions of this view; what the Framework Reading draws the sceptic's attention to is that, since all talking takes place within the game, they do not have resources to express their doubt. In other words, the sceptic's perspective is a perspective beyond language, and simply something we cannot talk about. This does not, however, make the perspective illegitimate as the perspective takes some legitimacy from the very perspective that the Framework Reading opens. The sceptic's only mistake is that they try to express their doubts, rather than acknowledge that it is something we need to remain silent about.

Even though the view might have some appeal, it still creates a sense of discomfort. Our cognition of the world is still limited in this instance, this time by our language. Talking about the practice as framed and limited naturally makes us want to call into question the accuracy of the practice as a whole, but at the same time prohibits us to do so. As such, it produces more a sense of unease and claustrophobia than liberation. It places us in a situation where we are inside a framed practice, cannot get outside of it, but are constantly tempted to do so. In some ways this is Wittgenstein's struggle, but, as I will argue in the next section, in *On Certainty* Wittgenstein offers us a picture of our practice which frees us from this trap.

Apart from the above problem with this view, it also seems to have weak textual support in the sense that Wittgenstein never contrasted our practice of talking about the world with anything. Neither does he talk about its limits.

Interestingly, nowhere in *On Certainty* does Wittgenstein talk about hinges as framing our practice. The only passage in which he talks about framing is OC 83, and that is to discuss frame of reference. He does talk about rules as the riverbed (OC 97), but this analogy can be understood as distinguishing between

what moves and what stays fixed, as opposed to bordering, limiting or framing. It is safe to conclude that framing is not one of Wittgenstein's metaphors.

3.3 My view

I believe that the understanding of normativity, which is implied by my interpretation of the argument from hinges and the way Wittgenstein talks about it as meaning constitutive, allows for a very different picture of our practice of talking about the world. The picture consists of a different understanding of the regulative/descriptive distinction, which results in a picture where there is no place for the scheme/content distinction, and therefore sees Wittgenstein as providing a different reply to the sceptic. It also, as a side issue, sees grammar differently from what the Framework Reading takes it to be. For the sake of clarity I will discuss each of these components of the picture in separate subsections.

3.3.1 Regulative and descriptive

The distinction between regulative and descriptive is clearly something which preoccupies Wittgenstein in *On Certainty*, at least in the sense of contrasting empirical propositions with rules. However, unlike the Framework Reading, I do not take it to mean that we need to think about playing a regulative role and playing a descriptive role as mutually exclusive features. On the contrary, the very concept of hinges shows how something can play a regulative role because of, and due to, also playing a descriptive role.

To see why this is the case we need first to acknowledge that playing a regulative role in our game of making empirical statements is about two main things: constituting meanings of words¹, and about determining which moves are seen as successful. Since meaning is use, the first task is similar to establishing that a

¹ That is why there exists a correspondence between the concepts 'rule' and 'meaning'. (OC 62)

word can be used a certain way. The second task consists in showing what the aim of the game is, what we are about in the game. In this chapter, I will focus on the former, leaving the discussion of how hinges constitute the concept of truth for Chapter Five.

Now we can introduce the following analogy. Let's say we want to find out whether a particular wooden object with some metal attached can be used as a hammer. We can do that by taking a nail and inserting it with this object into a wall. By this action we have achieved two following things:

1. We have shown that the object can be used as a hammer.
2. We have inserted a nail.

It is also important to note that, in order for our experiment to have the desired outcome, that is, to show that this piece of equipment can be used as a hammer, we need to conduct it in circumstances in which the inserting of the nail is easy and not near impossible due to, for example, the wall being constructed of steel, or the nail being completely blunt. In those cases, if we did not succeed we would not know if it is those circumstances that are to blame, or that the object is not really suitable for the inserting of a nail.

The most important learning from this analogy is that, in this experiment, the action of hitting the nail allows us to do both: fix the nail, and also show that an object can be used to do so. It is exactly the same with hinges: they reveal that the words used in them can be used a certain way, but at the same time they play a descriptive role. A hinge "I have two hands" helps to constitute the meanings of terms involved, while also is saying something about the number of hands I have.

As with the hammer example, in everyday life we do not actually go around making experiments to try to figure out whether something can be used as a hammer. Rather, we just go about our lives, and when we need to insert a nail we just do it. As a by-product of this practice we learn that certain things can be used as hammers. In the same way we show how a word "cow" can be used by making successful statements about cows. It is the practice of talking about the

world that fixes the hinges. To return to the hammer analogy, we have a practice of fixing nails, and in that practice we establish that certain objects can be used as hammers. If we ever need to prove to someone that something is a hammer, or how to fix nails, we take the object in question, and fix a good nail into an “easy” wall. Similarly we might use hinges as an aid in teaching someone a language, or explaining a meaning of a particular word.

In that sense, it is hinges that follow from practice, not practice from hinges. What is more, the action of fixing a nail is still the same action if we do it on an easy wall to show someone how to use a hammer, or to show that something can be used as a hammer, or when we do it with the purpose of having a nail in the wall. In the same sense hinges are not that different from empirical propositions.

This is how we can think about hinges as both descriptive and regulative, or regulative by virtue of being descriptive; they perform the descriptive role so well that they constitute rules by virtue of being a paradigmatic example of their applications. This is what I take Wittgenstein to be saying when he asks:

Is it that rule and empirical proposition merge into one another? (OC 309)

and when he even more strongly states that:

though it is right enough to say that as a rule some empirical judgment or other must be beyond doubt. (519)

It is important however to note that while hinges in my interpretation constitute the rules, they do not fully express them. Just as a particular, even obviously correct, move in chess does not express a rule of chess. For the expression of rules we use what I call general formulation of rules. It is important, however, that these are only formulated as abstraction from already existing practice, and do not themselves have regulative force, rather they simply describe normativity already present in practice. Their only use is that of a shortcut which we may use to explain something to someone who already shares enough ground with us.

3.3.2 Practice instead of scheme and content

Seeing hinges as regulative by virtue of being descriptive has far-reaching consequences for the picture of our practice, and the conceptual scheme/content distinction. The main change with respect to the Framework picture, is that now both the normative and the descriptive sphere are happening in the same space: in practice. The distinction between what is external or framing, and what is inside loses its usefulness, and can be completely abandoned.

As a consequence, the parallel between the regulative/descriptive distinction, and the scheme/content distinction disappears. We can still talk about two different roles: the descriptive and the rule-constitutive. It is worth noting that I use the term “rule-constituting role” because it is not the case that hinges play a regulative role in the sense that they are not the regulative force. Rather, their staying fixed is a by-product of a rule-governed practice, a practice where not everything goes. In other words, our practice proceeds in such a way that when we talk about the world we keep fixing certain propositions as indubitable.

I believe that one advantage of this view is that it is consistent with the fact that, in *On Certainty*, Wittgenstein is not interested in the distinction between what comes from us and what comes from the experience. Instead of this dichotomy Wittgenstein offers the unity of practice, suggesting that what we should investigate is the practice itself, the relationships between moves in the game.

Wittgenstein’s departure from the traditional concepts/intuition distinction is seen in the way he uses the word “experience” throughout *On Certainty*. Even though he does talk about experience, he does not use the word in a sense required to validate the scheme/content distinction. That is, “experience” as used in *On Certainty*, has nothing to do with experience as the source of the given. Rather, he often talks about experience similarly to the way we would in a job interview, or when we talk about life experience, that is, in the ordinary, non-metaphysical way (see for example OC 60, 134, 224).

To summarise, the difference between my interpretation and that of the Framework Reading is accurately captured by a difference in following pictures: the Framework Reading looks at our practice as framed, which, whether we want it or not, opens the sphere of what is beyond the practice, and makes the practice itself limited. My preferred picture is that from *On Certainty* 152, that is, a picture of a practice, which keeps turning and as such fixes its axis:

I do not explicitly learn the propositions that stand fast for me. I can discover them subsequently like the axis around which a body rotates. This axis is not fixed in the sense that anything holds it fast, but the movement around it determines its immobility. (OC 152)

According to this picture, hinges are fixed by practice almost as a coincidence. It so happens that, as we go around our lives, we fix things. When things turn around, an axis is naturally created, and is crucial for the turning, but it is not the case that the turning is somehow limited by it. It is because things turn the way they turn that the axis is where it is, not the other way round. What is more, the practice, understood in this way, is all-encompassing and limitless in the same way in which our life is, according to the following, surprisingly fitting, quote from the *Tractatus*:

Death is not an event in life: we do not live to experience death. If we take eternity to mean not infinite temporal duration but timelessness, then eternal life belongs to those who live in the present. Our life has no end in the way in which our visual field has no limits. (TLP 6.431)

3.3.3 Very different answer to the sceptic

As a consequence of abandoning the scheme/content distinction, my view offers a very different understanding of Wittgenstein's answer to scepticism. If we see practice as all encompassing, the sceptical worry is also seen as part of the practice. That is, according to the picture I propose, as soon as someone starts to speak, we try to treat them as taking part in our practice. The sceptic's case is not different. The problem with the sceptical doubt is not that it undermines an assumption which makes our practice possible. Rather, we genuinely do not

understand what the sceptic is saying. If anyone was to doubt the existence of their hands, we would doubt their understanding of the terms involved, and all they would achieve is the exhibition of the lack of understanding of how to partake in practice. In other words, it is not that the sceptic does try to speak about what we have to remain silent about, but rather it is that we genuinely have no idea what is meant by a general or wholesale doubt. Of course, in order for such a treatment of scepticism to be successful, it requires further explanation as to why we have an impression of understanding the sceptic. I discuss this issue in Chapter Eight (section 8.4).

To return to the chess metaphor, the sceptic is like someone who, in the game of chess, recognises a checkmate situation, but decides not to make an appropriate move. Such behaviour would leave us perplexed enough to suggest that they watch others play for a few games to get a better understanding of the game before they try again. Our reaction to sceptical doubt should be exactly the same.

3.3.4 Grammar

Lastly, as a side note, I would like to address the question of the status of grammar in *On Certainty*. I would like to start with an observation that Wittgenstein says very little about grammar directly in *On Certainty*. When he does talk about it, he uses the phrase “grammar” in the same ways as in the *Philosophical Investigations*, that is, to talk about the use of an expression, as for example in “the grammar of *to imagine*”¹. He therefore talks not about propositions of grammar, or grammatical propositions, but rather about the grammar of particular propositions or expressions.

This is consistent with my understanding of rules; the grammar, that is, the regulative aspect of an expression or proposition, is not given in grammatical propositions any more than rules of any game are given in general formulations

¹ See PI 38 and OC 313, 433

of rules. Rather, it is constituted by a practice of using the language, and in particular by grammatically correct propositions.

As far as grammatical propositions as we know them, that is, statements like “Nothing is green and purple all over”, or “black is darker than white” (Glock, 2005, p. 656) are concerned, they are in the same relation to the practice as dictionary definitions. That is, they have the status of a general formulation of a rule. As such, they do not frame the practice, are not positioned on its border or outside it, but are rather a description of it that itself is a part of the practice. In that sense they are simply moves in the game that we might use if we want to explain one particular rule to someone with whom we already share enough ground. Just as we can look up a definition of a particular word in a dictionary when we have already mastered a language well enough to use such definition as a shortcut to learn how we use a new word.

The rule-following considerations show that these kinds of propositions are secondary to the practice, that is, they only make sense by virtue of the practice; they can be abstracted from the practice, but they are not the source of this normativity. Therefore, they do not support, or frame, or constitute, or explain anything, neither are they necessary to learn a game. Rather, once we have the practice we can extract them from it for purposes of self-reflection, or to make teaching more convenient. In that sense we can talk about our practice, we can reflect on it. The important point is that this is not where the normativity of the game comes from. General formulations of rules describe the rules rather than constitute them.

To conclude, I agree with the Framework Reading that the distinction between regulative and descriptive role is present in *On Certainty*. Unlike the Framework Reading, I see the concept of a hinge as showing how these two roles can be played by the same move in the game of making empirical judgments. This allows to see the regulative role as played by the moves in the game, not something external to the game, which therefore renders the distinction useless. Without the distinction between the internal and external, we do not have a

reason to read Wittgenstein as endorsing the scheme/content distinction, which changes significantly the interpretation of sceptical doubt, and its treatment by Wittgenstein. The lack of the external/internal distinction will have significant impact on other topics discussed in this thesis, in particular the problem of truth-aptness of hinge, which I discuss in Chapter Five. Before I move to this topic, however, in the next chapter I will discuss a claim that hinges are not propositions.

Chapter 4

Hinge Propositions?

In this chapter I look at the second of the features presented by the Framework Reading as distinguishing hinges from empirical propositions, namely their propositionality. For most commentators, thinking about hinges as propositions is a matter of course, and, in secondary literature, hinges are often referred to as “hinge propositions” (Bilgrami, 2004) (Coliva, 2010) (Glock, 2004) (Koethe, 2004) (Phillips D. , 2005) (Pritchard, 2005). This is not surprising given that seeing hinges as propositions has strong textual support; Wittgenstein uses the word “propositions” in reference to hinges throughout all of *On Certainty* (see for example OC 1, 52, 83, 88, 93, 95, 101, 112, 136, 168, 225, 245, 273, 341, 416, 494, 599, 628). Nonetheless, it has been argued that we should think about hinges not as propositions but, rather, as something radically different. It is the analysis of these arguments that is the aim of this chapter.

The idea that we should not think about hinges as propositions was first introduced by Stroll (Stroll, 1994). More recently the idea that hinges are not propositions has been put forward by Moyal-Sharrock (Moyal-Sharrock, 2004a), and it became a significant point of disagreement between proponents of the Framework Reading, mostly due to the debate between Moyal-Sharrock and Coliva. The chapter looks at the arguments presented in this debate.

The chapter has the following structure:

- In section 4.1 I introduce Stroll's argument against propositionality of hinges, and I present my reply.
- In section 4.2 I introduce Moyal-Sharrock's argument as based on two premises, which I then discuss in the subsequent two sections.
- Section 4.3 is concerned with her claim that hinges are not bipolar, that is, that it is not the case that they are capable of being true, and capable of being false.
- Section 4.4 examines the so-called bipolarity principle, that is, a claim that, in order for something to be a proposition, it has to be bipolar.
- In the last section (Section 4.5) I look at the motivation behind the non-propositional reading, namely, the idea that hinges belong to the realm of the instinctive.

4.1 Stroll's argument

In his book, Stroll puts forward a thesis that Wittgenstein had two different accounts of hinges, propositional and non-propositional, and that throughout *On Certainty* he slowly progresses from the former to the latter (Stroll, 1994).

According to him, the reason for which Wittgenstein abandons the propositional account is that, if we think about hinges as propositions, the temptation to think about them as something that can be known is almost irresistible.

This is not a desirable outcome for Stroll as it is the idea that hinges cannot be known that he sees as the core of Wittgenstein's reply to the sceptic. It is also the non-epistemic character of hinges that, according to Stroll, distinguishes Wittgenstein from a traditional foundationalist. In other words, for Stroll, the biggest flaw of the propositional account is that it leads to an epistemic account, that is, an account that sees hinges as capable of being known. A non-propositional reading, on the other hand, emphasises that hinges are completely different in kind from empirical propositions. For Stroll, this is an advantage, as he believes that the difference in kind between hinges and empirical

propositions allows to avoid a traditional dilemma between either seeing them as known, or as not known and therefore lacking justification. According to Stroll, it is the thinking of them as different that constitutes Wittgenstein's "third way", a stance which is different from those of both Moore and that of the sceptic.

Pritchard, in his exposition of different readings of hinges (Pritchard, 2011), fleshes out a similar consequence of thinking about hinges as not-propositions. Like Stroll, Pritchard also sees a tension in thinking about hinges as propositions, and at the same as something that cannot be known. Pritchard suggests that if we think about hinges as propositions, and at the same time do not endorse an epistemic reading, then we need to accept that there are propositions that we do not know. This makes the position dangerously similar to that of the sceptic.

It therefore seems that, according to Stroll and Pritchard, if we think about hinges as propositions, then we are faced with a traditional dilemma: we either have to follow Moore in saying that we do know hinges, or we need to accept that the sceptic is right in saying that there are propositions, which we cannot know. The connection between the propositional character of hinges and the inevitability of assigning epistemic categories to them is something both scholars see as intuitive.

It is important to note that in the same article Pritchard argues that the position is problematic only if we think about hinges as fact-stating propositions. If we think about hinges as propositions, but normative rather than fact-stating, then even if we say that they cannot be known, it does not make our position the same as the sceptic's as it does not follow from it that there are some facts which we cannot know.

I think that Pritchard's solution allows us to avoid some of the most radical consequences of non-propositional account, such as senselessness and ineffability of hinges, which I talk more about later in this chapter. However, it relies on the distinction between fact- and norm-stating propositions, and still

sees hinges as radically different from empirical propositions, and, as such, it is not consistent with my interpretation as presented in the last two chapters. Pritchard's solution is therefore not available to me as a way of avoiding the problem pointed out by him and Stroll.

What I put forward instead is a thesis that thinking about hinges as propositions, and at the same as something that is not known, is neither inconsistent nor unintuitive, and it does not make Wittgenstein's stance any closer to scepticism. I agree with Stroll that the ingenuity of Wittgenstein's reply to the sceptic consists largely in providing a third way. This third way, that is, a stance different from both the sceptic's and the dogmatist's, relies on showing that, in some sense, the category of knowledge does not apply to hinges, and that in that sense they are neither known nor unknown. However, I do not agree that this option is any less consistent with the propositional account of hinges than the non-propositional one.

It is hard to argue directly against Stroll's thesis that if we think of hinges as propositions then the idea that they are subject to epistemic evaluation is irresistible, as he does not provide any reasons for such irresistibility. Presumably it is not just a psychological difficulty, but rather is based on reasons; these however are missing from Stroll's interpretation. What I offer instead is a presentation of how we might think about hinges as propositions, yet also something to which a concept of knowledge does not apply.

How can we think of hinges as something that is not evaluated in this sense and yet is still of the same kind as other moves in the game? By definition hinges are the propositions to which maximum objective certainty is attached. It is precisely because of the maximum certainty that is attached to hinges that it is not possible to offer grounds for them, as grounds, in Wittgenstein's view, have to be more certain than what they ground. It is important to note, however, that the fact that hinges are not grounded is not a lack. The reason why we need justification for the other propositions is because they were not like hinges.

The following analogy might help build the intuition that we do not need to see hinges as different kind of entities in order to see them as not in need of grounding: we can think about asking for justification as analogous to asking why a move in a game of chess is a good move. In the case of a “normal” move (equivalent to an empirical proposition), we can show how it helps to win the game, how it leads to a checkmate situation for the player. However, if we asked the same question about a “checkmate” move itself, there is not a way in which we could answer it. Someone who would question soundness of such move would simply not understand the game. It would not, however, mean that the “checkmate” move is not a good one, nor does it mean that it is not a move within the game, it just does not make sense to offer grounds for it. To make a decision to make a checkmate move when we recognize it as available, rather than some other move not leading directly to winning, is a test of whether we understand the game.

We can also use the analogy with the game of three cards to illustrate this point. After the Player made their guess, we may ask them why they think that this is a queen when the person points to a card. The person can offer justification in the form of explaining how they could see the card move from the initial position when the cards were face up, and that it ended up there. If the same question was asked when the cards were facing up, no such explanation could be offered, but also none would be needed. However, it does not follow that saying what the name of the card is when the cards are facing up (in the first stage of the game) is somehow so different that it turns it into a completely different kind of entity. The only difference between an answer when the cards are facing up and when they are facing down is that, in the first situation, the answer is obvious, not that somehow it is not an answer at all.

It is also important to note that it is a very technical concept of knowledge that does not apply to hinges, which makes the claim that hinges are not known much more intuitive. In *On Certainty* Wittgenstein talks about knowledge in many different senses, and I devote a whole chapter (Chapter Six) to their analysis.

What is important for our current purposes is that it is only one of those concepts that does not apply to hinges. The concept in question is knowledge understood as being able to offer grounds, which are more certain than what they ground. In other words, according to such an account, to know that p requires p to be based on grounds, that is, to follow from q where q is more certain than p . The fact that hinges cannot be known in the technical sense does not mean that they are not certain. Neither does it mean that no evidence of any kind can be offered in support of hinges. The only concept of knowledge which does not apply to hinges is the one that requires a claim to be based on grounds that are themselves more certain than the claim they ground. This allows us to avoid a common objection against non-epistemic readings which states that it is very unnatural to say that “I don’t know that I have two hands”; that naturally we want to treat statements like “I know I have two hands” and “I know that two plus two equals four” as meaningful and true statements. I leave further discussion of the concepts of knowledge until Chapter Six. For now, hopefully, appreciating the technical character of this notion makes the urge to apply it to all propositions less powerful.

To summarise, Stroll’s argument for non-propositional character of hinges relies on noting a difficulty with something being a proposition, and yet the concept of knowledge not applying to it. Hopefully the clarification of the concept of knowledge that is involved here, as well as looking at some analogies, allow us to dissolve or weaken this intuition. In the rest of this chapter I will focus on Moyal-Sharrock’s argument, leaving the in-depth discussion of the epistemic status of hinges until Chapter Six.

4.2 Moyal-Sharrock’s argument

Moyal-Sharrock, whose interpretation is heavily influenced by Stroll’s, also acknowledges that Wittgenstein contemplates the propositional account in *On Certainty*. However contrary to Stroll, Moyal-Sharrock argues that the move from propositional to non-propositional account of hinges is not linear. In her book (Moyal-Sharrock, 2004a) she argues that the propositional account of hinges, or

basic certainties, is merely something that Wittgenstein contemplates in *On Certainty*, but finally, rightly, rejects.

One of Moyal-Sharrock's contributions to the debate addresses the exegetical issue of Wittgenstein using the word "proposition" in relation to hinges. The fact that Wittgenstein refers to the things that need to stay beyond doubt as propositions until the very end of *On Certainty* is not discussed by Stroll. Moyal-Sharrock's explanation of this fact relies on the ambiguity of the German word "Satz", which Wittgenstein uses when talking about hinges. The word "Satz" can function as both English "proposition" and "sentence", and it is supposedly the latter that Wittgenstein has in mind when writing about hinges. The problems with such translation have been convincingly presented by Coliva (Coliva, 2013a, p. 84), and in what follows I will not dwell further on the translational issues. I believe that, even if we accept Moyal-Sharrock's explanation of the textual difficulties, there are still substantial reasons to reject her account. In what follows, I will concentrate on what I take to be her main argument for the non-propositional reading of hinges.

The main reason for which, according to Moyal-Sharrock, we cannot think about hinges as propositions is that, for Wittgenstein, the word "proposition" is highly technical and entails bipolarity. That is to say that, for Wittgenstein, for something to be a proposition it has to be capable of both being false and of being true. The idea that propositions are bipolar (also known as the principle of bipolarity) was first expressed by Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus*, and is the reason for which tautologies as well as contradictions are deemed not to be genuine propositions. Moyal-Sharrock sees this idea as still valid at the stage of *On Certainty*. She also claims that hinges are, by definition, not capable of being false (after all we cannot even conceive of what it would mean to doubt them)¹. Moyal-Sharrock's argument can be presented as the following simple syllogism:

(1) Hinges are not bipolar

¹ Stroll calls this characteristic of hinges "negational absurdity" (Stroll, 1994, p. 153).

- (2) All propositions are bipolar
- (3) Therefore, hinges are not propositions.

The validity of the argument is apparent, however both premises are disputable. I will consider them separately.

4.3 Hinges are not bipolar

Although I see the main problem with Moyal-Sharrock's argument as lying in the acceptance of the bipolarity principle, I do not think that the claim that hinges fail at bipolarity is uncontroversial either. Of course, the importance of showing that hinges can be seen as bipolar is much lessened by the fact that it is unnecessary for refuting the argument. Nonetheless, it does offer some insights into the concept of a hinge that are interesting in their own right.

The principle of bipolarity states that, for every proposition, it is possible for it to be false, *and* it is possible for it to be true. As such it is different from a better-known principle of bivalence, which states that every proposition (if we assume propositions to be truth-bearers) has exactly one of the two truth-values, that is, is *either* true or false. The bipolarity principle is not about there not being truth-value gaps, but rather about propositions being contingent. As such, the principle played a hugely important role in the *Tractatus*, whose author saw only the purely contingent empirical propositions as propositions. Since at that stage of Wittgenstein's thought, he saw content as given via representation of the world, anything that is devoid of it, statements of logic for example, were seen as pseudo-propositions.

It is largely taken for granted in this thesis that the later Wittgenstein rejects the representationalist picture of the relationship between language and the world. In fact it is this rejection, which is epitomized in the meaning-is-use maxim, which leads Wittgenstein to the dissolution of external world scepticism. We have already seen the role it plays in the indispensability of hinges argument. I leave further discussion of its role until the last chapter of this thesis.

In the next section I discuss the principle of bipolarity itself, however in this section we are interested in the question of whether hinges are, in fact, bipolar. Given the definition of bipolarity, as well as what Wittgenstein has to say about hinges, at first glance it seems that Moyal-Sharrock must be right in claiming that hinges fail at bipolarity. After all, we have just argued (in Chapter Two), that it is not possible to even as much as entertain a thought of hinges being false, that it is not something we can conceive. It seems, therefore, that just as “propositions” of logic, hinge “propositions” are not propositions in the technical sense of the word.

This, however, fails to fully acknowledge a very important feature of hinges: their context sensitivity, that is, the fact that the same proposition can play the role of a hinge in one context, and that of an empirical proposition in another (OC 25). For example, “There is a tree in front of me” is a hinge in a context when I can clearly see a tree in front of me but not in a context where due to fog I can see only an outline of something resembling a tree. Consequently, the same proposition, when used as non-hinge, can easily be capable of being false. These propositions are, of course, also capable of being true in the non-hinge context, however this feature is less important as they are also capable of being true in the hinge context¹.

Of course, Moyal-Sharrock is well aware of this feature of hinges, however she does not think that it changes anything with regard to the question of their bipolarity. According to her, the fact that there are contexts in which these propositions can turn out to be false does not mean that any hinge can turn out to be false. The reason for that is that the contexts in which, for example, “I have two hands” can turn out to be false are exactly the contexts where it is not a hinge. Moyal-Sharrock claims that, in such contexts, “I have two hands” is a “doppelgänger” of a hinge, where a doppelgänger of a hinge is a different

¹ I argue that hinges are truth apt and true in Chapter Five.

proposition that looks exactly like a hinge (is expressed by the same sentence) but does not play a role of a hinge.

In short, Moyal-Sharrock's doppelgänger account states that the same sentence expresses a different proposition in a situation where it acts as a hinge to one where it is not a hinge. If this is correct we cannot use the fact that the same proposition can be used as a hinge in some situations, and not as a hinge in others, as an argument that hinges can be seen as bipolar.

The doppelgänger account, however, is far from uncontroversial. It has been challenged by Coliva, who rightly points out that there is nothing in the text of *On Certainty* that would suggest such an account (Coliva, 2010, p. 159). Coliva also notes that parts of *On Certainty* (OC 318-320) do not make sense if we accept the doppelgänger thesis, and the translation of "Satz" as "sentence" (Coliva, 2013a, p. 84).

As far as Coliva's own account is concerned, in her *Moore and Wittgenstein*, she suggests that *On Certainty* allows for all of the three following situations:

1. That the same sentence type is used to express a rule in some contexts and an empirical proposition in others.
2. That one and the same proposition while being a description is hardened into a rule.
3. That a unique string of phonemes and graphemes can be used to express different propositions or even nothing at all in different contexts. (Coliva, 2010, pp. 158-159)

This means that, although it is the case that the same sentence can express different propositions depending on the way it is used, it is also possible for a single proposition to function as both a rule and an empirical statement. It is this latter possibility that Coliva emphasises in her *Précis* of the book (Coliva, 2013b, p. 6). In the article she insists that it is possible for the same proposition to play both a descriptive and a normative role, and suggests that we should think about the propositions that play a role of hinges as "Janus-faced" propositions. This

account would support seeing hinges as bipolar in the sense that it allows for contexts in which they are false.

It is interesting that both Coliva and Moyal-Sharrock invoke Wittgenstein's idea of meaning as use within a language game (PI 43) in support of their respective views.

For Coliva, it is the idea that meaning is use that allows to see the three options presented above as compatible, and therefore allows for the same proposition to function sometimes as a rule and sometimes as an empirical proposition. It is so because, as she writes:

It is use that determines whether a string of graphemes is meaningful, and hence a sentence of natural language. It is again use that establishes whether that sentence expresses an empirical proposition or a rule. Finally it is use that determines whether a given proposition, with its descriptive content, is actually removed from doubt, in context, and thus plays a normative role. (Coliva, 2013b, p. 7)

For Coliva it is the use of a proposition that determines its status in a given context and this allows the same proposition to be used as a hinge and non-hinge in different contexts. Coliva's view relies on assuming that the proposition itself stays intact; that the meaning of the proposition does not change, even though its function changes. What allows Coliva to maintain such a view is her distinction between content and use of a proposition.

She insists that even in the context, where, for instance, "I have two hands" is a hinge, it still has descriptive content, and this content stays the same when it is not an empirical proposition, that is, when it plays a role of a hinge. For Coliva, the difference between hinges and what she calls "purely empirical propositions" is not the question of descriptive content, but rather it is a matter of them not being subject to verification and control.¹

¹ It is worth noting that Coliva does not suggest that her view could support a claim that propositions functioning as hinges can be bipolar. It might be because she does not think that all

Moyal-Sharrock draws almost exactly the opposite conclusion from the meaning-is-use maxim. She understands the idea of meaning as use as saying that what a word or sentence means depends on a context, and on the reason for which it is uttered, which is why, for her, utterances without a point have no meaning (Moyal-Sharrock, 2004a, p. 43). Therefore, when the function changes, so does the meaning. This is why she concludes that we cannot talk about a proposition being a hinge in one context and an empirical proposition in another; being an empirical proposition is to play a completely different role, and therefore to have different meaning.

I agree with Coliva that the same proposition can play a descriptive and a normative role, however, I do not agree that it is useful to think about use and content as separate and independent from each other. Coliva's concept of content, without further clarification, suggests that it is use-independent, and therefore entails something close to a representational picture of the relationship between the language and the world. It could be seen as "limited representationalism", which would be a form of representationalism that is somehow restrained by also understanding meaning in terms of use, but mainly in terms of use-independent content. Like Moyal-Sharrock, I think that, for Wittgenstein, meaning is constituted solely by use, however I do not agree that it means that one proposition cannot play both a descriptive and a regulative role. As I argued in Chapter Three, in the case of hinges, this is exactly the case, and they only can play the regulative role because they also play the descriptive one.

Playing such a double role is possible, because, as I discussed in the previous chapter, hinges play their meaning and norm-constitutive role by virtue of being paradigmatic examples of relevant rules (meaning-rules and truth-rules). As such they have rule-like status, but at the same time they are still an application of those rules. Unlike Coliva's, my understanding of hinges as playing both a

of hinge propositions can also function as empirical propositions. Following other commentators she distinguishes "universal hinges" for which we cannot find a context in which they would be falsifiable.

descriptive and a normative role does not require us to postulate use-independent content. Yet it allows us to see the sentence in a hinge and non-hinge context as expressing the same proposition. This in turn means that such propositions are bipolar, that is, capable of being false and capable of being true.

We can illustrate this point with our chess analogy again. It seems acceptable to say that a particular move of a chess piece on a chessboard, when done as a checkmate move at the end of the game, and when done at another point during the game, have enough in common to call them “the same kind of move”, even though it is obviously a very good move in the former context, but can be a bad one in the latter. It is important to note, however, that my interpretation does not depend on placing the identity of a proposition at exactly this place. It has the advantage, however, of making sense of those passages of *On Certainty* which Coliva pointed out as problematic (OC 318-320). What is crucial for my interpretation is that there is something in common between those two uses. Whether we want to say it is enough to call them the same proposition is not a very interesting question, especially given Wittgenstein’s lack of interest in defining the concept of a proposition.

This captures an important feature of hinges: the fact that for all of them we can find a context in which they are empirical propositions, also means that there is a context in which we can imagine them being false. This is important as it shows that they are still contingent propositions. It is completely imaginable that I do not have two hands or that my name is not Agata. All we need to imagine is that my parents went with their second choice of “Jagoda”, or that due to large amount of typing that I do I decided to add an additional artificial arm and hand to my body. To conclude, the indubitability of hinges does not mean that they are necessary truths; it means that we cannot be wrong about them.

These considerations, although helpful in clarifying my interpretation of hinges, are not crucial to reject Moyal-Sharrock’s argument for the non-propositionality of hinges. The argument fails anyway, because of the implausibility of its second premise, the discussion of which will be the subject of the next section.

4.4 All propositions are bipolar

We can now turn to the next premise, which simply states the principle of bipolarity, that is, a claim that, in order for something to be a proposition, it has to be capable of being both true and false. In this section I will assess reasons for and against accepting this principle, as well as for attributing it to Wittgenstein at the stage of *On Certainty*.

The principle of bipolarity played an important role in the *Tractatus*. Wittgenstein relied on it to define a “genuine proposition”. In other words, bipolarity was supposed to capture the essence of propositionality. As I mentioned, the idea that a proposition has to be capable of being both true, and capable of being false, was related to the idea that the role or function of the proposition is to represent reality; the proposition determines a possibility which the world either satisfies or does not satisfy. The consequence of adopting this principle was that “propositions” of logic and metaphysics were rendered to be pseudo-propositions. Although these groups have a different status, what they both share is that they are not sayable, but rather, they represent what is showable.

Regardless of the fact that neither “representing reality”, nor “essence of a proposition” were one of the later Wittgenstein’s expressions, Danièle Moyal-Sharrock claims that “no discernible departure is made from the *Tractatus* about the bipolar nature of the propositions”. (Moyal-Sharrock, 2004a, p. 35)

She justifies this claim by arguing that Wittgenstein’s distinction between saying and showing is just as present in the later as in the earlier period. In the former (that is later), Wittgenstein’s philosophy allows us to distinguish between moves within language games, and what is descriptive of them. Consequently, according to the Moyal-Sharrock, we still have a very narrow definition of a proposition, even at the stage of *On Certainty*. Furthermore, Moyal-Sharrock insists that, in *On Certainty*, Wittgenstein still has the same concept of senselessness, which means that all attempts at saying what can only be shown are senseless. The difference

the commentator points to between the early and late treatment of the issue, is that showing becomes very closely related to acting in the later period. This is where her insistence on understanding hinges in a pragmatic vein, as ways of acting, as something that is essentially ineffable and senseless in the technical sense of the word¹, comes from.

The issue of the relationship between *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein's later work, and *On Certainty* is a particularly complex and difficult topic. Moyal-Sharrock is known for interpreting *On Certainty* as more continuous with the *Tractatus* than other commentators within the Framework Reading. My interpretation sees *On Certainty* very much as Wittgenstein's strongest rebuttal to anything like representational semantics and the tractarian view of the relationship between language and the world. This radicalism of Moyal-Sharrock's finds its expression in her views on the bipolarity principle, and illustrates how different our projects are.

It is important to note that such a view is seen as radical, even within the Framework Reading, and that the bipolarity principle is not endorsed by many other commentators (Hacker, 1996) (Coliva, 2010) (Glock, 1996). In fact, the concept of hinges is seen as a proof of Wittgenstein's rejection of the bipolarity principle. They read Moyal-Sharrock's syllogism in contra-position, that is, they agree that hinges are not bipolar, but they also do not question that they are propositions, and claim that, therefore, those two claims together prove that bipolarity is no longer endorsed.

¹ It is interesting that when Moyal-Sharrock looks for textual evidence for her reading of the hinges she very often refers to the parts of *On Certainty* where Wittgenstein calls a statement "there are physical objects" nonsense (OC 35, 37). I think that it is a fundamental misunderstanding to treat this propositions as an example of a hinge, and nothing in the text suggests that this is what Wittgenstein takes it to be. There is no passage in *On Certainty* where he would claim that we attach any certainty to this statement or that it is indubitable. In fact, anything he ever says about it is that it does not make sense. To choose this to suggest that all hinges are nonsense, rather than that the negations of skeptical hypothesis are not hinges, is extremely controversial. I will argue against such interpretation in Chapter Eight; here I would just like to point out that the textual support Moyal-Sharrock gives is questionable.

Moyal-Sharrock's stance is most directly addressed by Coliva in a recent exchange between the scholars. Coliva offers two arguments against the claim that Wittgenstein still endorsed the bipolarity principle in his late writings (Coliva, 2013b, p. 5). Firstly, she makes an observation that, for later Wittgenstein, the concept of a proposition is a much more relaxed notion. Anything that we can find a use for can be a proposition, and there is no need or room for a technical definition.

This seems to be the case given the introduction of the notion of family resemblance, and a reluctance to talk about essence of anything by the later Wittgenstein. Generally, the later Wittgenstein¹ is not interested in providing necessary conditions for any concept. In regard to the concept of 'proposition' itself he notes:

Here one must I believe. Remember that the concept 'proposition' [Satz] itself is not a sharp one. (OC 320)

Even more importantly, Coliva emphasises the cost of endorsing bipolarity principle. According to the scholar, who agrees with Moyal-Sharrock that hinges are not bipolar, it would mean that hinges were not propositions, and therefore could not function as "suppositions in order to consider, for instance, what follows from them" (Coliva, 2013b, p. 5), and could not be entertained in thought. I agree with this point as well; it seems crucial for the hinges to be able to function as premises if their role is to block the regress of justification. It is important, however, to distinguish two claims in Moyal-Sharrock's account. One of them is the bipolarity principle, which states that something has to be bipolar in order to be a proposition. It leaves open the issue of what kind of being hinges are. In particular, theoretically, they could be pseudo-propositions that can somehow enter into inferential relationships. However Moyal-Sharrock does not

¹ In *The Blue and Brown Books*, for example, Wittgenstein writes: "We are unable to clearly to circumscribe the concepts we use not because we don't know their real definition, but because there is no 'real' definition to them. To suppose that there *must* be would be like supposing that whenever children play with a ball they play a game according to strict rules (BB, p. 25)

take this option, rather, complements the bipolarity principle with a second claim, that hinges are radically different from propositions. Since the difference consists in hinges belonging to the sphere of the instinctive and the animal, it is hard to see how they could function as premises, which makes Coliva's criticism relevant.

Moyal-Sharrock states, in reply to Coliva's objection, that the criticism stems from a flawed understanding of the support hinges offer to our language games in the right way. The support they provide is not of an inferential nature. Hinges support our games from the outside. Since they belong to the realm of the animal and the instinctive, they cannot be doubted. Hinges themselves are something like an attitude of trust, and therefore their relation to other propositions is not inferential. I already argued against such an approach in the section on Moyal-Sharrock's interpretation in Chapter One. I think it weakens Wittgenstein's treatment of scepticism by reducing it to something like Hume's reply to the sceptic, that we cannot make ourselves doubt everything: that it is simply psychologically impossible. If interpreted this way, Wittgenstein only provides a pragmatic reply to the sceptic which is neither new, nor is it satisfactory.

The issue of the way in which hinges support the rest of our enquiry brings us to a much more general level of discussion, which I would like to leave until the concluding section of this chapter. There is, however, one other interesting aspect of the discussion of the bipolarity principle that is worth mentioning. Regardless of the fact that most commentators disagree with Moyal-Sharrock's argument, there is a point regarding the bipolarity that Coliva, Moyal-Sharrock, and Glock agree on. It is a claim that whether a proposition is bipolar or not marks some very important distinction. To make this point clear it might be useful to restate again the role of the principle of bipolarity in the *Tractatus*, which was twofold:

1. to distinguish between fact-stating and other kinds of "propositions", including norm-stating "propositions".

2. to show the latter to be senseless; that is to justify treating only the first ones as fully effable.

This is exactly the job that Moyal-Sharrock claims that the principle of bipolarity still does in Wittgenstein's later philosophy. Although Moyal-Sharrock's opponents disagree that the second task is something Wittgenstein is interested in at the stage of *On Certainty*, they still agree that the first task needs to be done. The difference is that they do not want it to be done in a way that would imply the senselessness of the normative statements, that is, in a way that would not entail (2). According to these scholars, it is still important to draw the distinction between what is norm and what is fact stating, it is just that the norm-stating becomes linguistically expressible, or effable. The scholars express this desire in their insistence on the bipolarity of truly empirical propositions.

To conclude this section, it seems that the motivation for interpreting *On Certainty* as endorsing the bipolarity principle is two-fold. Firstly, it aligns with Moyal-Sharrock's project of seeing Wittgenstein's last set of notes as not radically different from the *Tractatus* (which according to me is its biggest flaw). Secondly, although it does not entail, it is consistent with, and perhaps encourages, the placing of hinges within the realm of the animal. It is this second motivation that I discuss in the concluding section of this chapter.

4.5 Concluding remarks – do hinges belong to the realm of instinct?

Moyal-Sharrock's endorsement of the bipolarity principle, and Stroll's considerations on the non-propositionality of hinges, very clearly show how different our approach is, and therefore also how differently we understand the indispensability of hinges. Both Stroll's and Moyal-Sharrock's non-propositional accounts require the indubitability of hinges to rely on the fact that we cannot help but believe in them, that we have an ingrained attitude of trust. Both scholars seem to believe that placing hinges within the sphere of the animal is making them immune to the sceptical challenge, that since it is something that we cannot help but believe, our belief cannot be challenged.

In my opinion this strategy changes Wittgenstein's position into a more dogmatic one. The charges against it are the same ones that I discuss with regard to McGinn's naturalism in Chapter One of the thesis. The sceptic does not say that we can help believing hinges, the sceptic just challenges our perceived satisfaction with this situation. She wishes us to acknowledge the complete lack of any justification we hold for them, which is irrational. Explicitly placing them in the sphere of the irrational does not help with that worry.

Aside from not allowing us to successfully deal with the sceptical worries, seeing hinges as something completely different from propositions has other disadvantages. One of them, that is, the fact that hinges, when understood this way, cannot enter inferential relations, has already been discussed. The second is concerned with the meaning constitutive role of hinges. Even though the non-propositional account does not rely on this role of hinges for the argument of their indispensability, it still should be able to make sense of the numerous passages of *On Certainty* where Wittgenstein talks about the relation between hinges and linguistic meaning, such as for example OC 114, 126, 369, 383, 456. Since non-propositionality, for Moyal-Sharrock, entails ineffability, it is difficult to see how such a role could be played by something belonging to the completely different, non-linguistic realm. This prominent theme of *On Certainty* seems to be vastly neglected in Moyal-Sharrock's interpretation.

Lastly I would like to address Moyal-Sharrock's claim that her interpretation does justice to the pragmatic theme of *On Certainty* by seeing hinges as a form of know-how (Moyal-Sharrock, 2004a, p. 172). The commentator places hinges outside our game of making empirical judgments in the realm of the instinctive, which frames the game, and sees it as an expression of Wittgenstein's pragmatism (Moyal-Sharrock, 2004a, pp. 97-99, 171-173) (Moyal-Sharrock, 2003). She therefore warns against any form of intellectualisation of the hinges.

I believe that the opposite is true, and that insisting on hinges staying outside the game of making empirical judgments makes the interpretation more distant from pragmatism. Ironically, I believe that my account is more pragmatic than

what Moyal-Sharrock offers. For her, we need to place hinges of our enquiry directly within the sphere of action and instinct, in order to do justice to the pragmatic theme of *On Certainty*. According to my interpretation this sphere is already part of the game; it is incorporated in our game of making judgments about the world.

This finds its expression again in the way the pragmatic theme of *On Certainty* is present in our understanding of the indubitability of hinges. For Moyal-Sharrock, the problem with scepticism is practical in nature: we cannot help but believe in hinges, or have hinge-like attitude. According to my interpretation, the way we act and talk, which takes certain things for granted, is not a purely practical issue. It shows how, when we do what we do, when we live the way we do, we keep certain things fixed, and we have theoretical reasons to keep them fixed. In other words, certainty does not come from the fact that we do things in a certain way and we cannot do them differently. We have certainty with regard to certain things because when we do things and go about our lives, we do fix things whether we want it or not. We all do, including the sceptic.

It has been established that we have no reason not to think about hinges as propositions, or at least not unless we want to endorse the problematic reading of hinges as something animal. In the next chapter I look at another claim regarding the difference between hinges and empirical propositions, namely, the idea that hinges are not truth-apt.

Chapter 5

Are Hinges Truth-apt?

According to the argument presented in Chapter Two, hinge propositions are paradigmatic examples of linguistically correct and true propositions. Seeing hinges as true is, however, not the standard view. In fact, it is one of the distinctive features of the Framework Reading that it sees hinges as non truth-apt, and the purported non-truth-aptness as distinguishing hinges from empirical propositions. In what follows I will discuss reasons presented by the Framework Reading for thinking about hinges as non truth-apt, and argue that they are not convincing.

The issue of the truth-aptness of hinges is closely related to the question of what theory of truth Wittgenstein endorses at the stage of *On Certainty*. This is a difficult interpretative issue as Wittgenstein says very little on the topic directly. I will argue that the same reasons which allow us to think about hinges as truth-apt are also reasons to interpret Wittgenstein as endorsing some form of deflationism about truth.

The chapter is structured in the following manner:

- First, in section 5.1, I look at the Framework interpretation of the themes of *On Certainty* related to the concept of truth.

- In the next two sections I focus on the analysis of what I take to be the strongest argument in favour of the non-truth-apt reading of hinges, that is, Coliva's argument from her *Moore and Wittgenstein* (Coliva, 2010). I take the argument to have two premises:
 - hinges cannot be evaluated from within our practice;
 - no other way of evaluating hinges is possible;
 I discuss the former statement in section 5.2 and the latter in 5.3.
- In the final section (section 5.4.) I argue that the only theory of truth available to Wittgenstein is a form of deflationism.

5.1 The Framework Reading and *On Certainty* on truth

In this subsection I discuss the Framework Reading of the issues related to the concept of truth. For the sake of clarity the section is further divided into subsections. Subsection 5.1.1. looks at different views within the Framework Reading on why hinges are not truth-apt. In subsection 1.5.2. I discuss textual evidence provided by the commentators in support of the non-truth-apt reading. Lastly, in subsection 5.1.3 I look at the Framework discussion of *On Certainty's* relation to different theories of truth.

5.1.1 Hinges are not truth-apt – substantial support

Although there seems to be far-reaching agreement within proponents of the Framework Reading as to whether hinges are truth-apt, the details of the view differ from commentator to commentator. What is shared is a belief that there is an important notion of truth and that, given this notion, hinges are not truth-apt. However, however commentators differ in the reasons they give in support of this claim. I will briefly look at what individual commentators have to say on this topic, and then look at what is a common theme in all of the presented views.

Stroll and Moyal-Sharrock

For both Stroll and Moyal-Sharrock the non-truth-aptness of hinges follows seamlessly from their other views on hinges. It is so because, as we have seen in

Chapter One, and in more detail in Chapter Four, for them, hinges are so radically different from anything that can have a truth-value that it is hard to see how they could function as truth-value bearers. This does not mean, however, that these commentators do not address the issue of truth-aptness directly. In his book Stroll writes:

It is Wittgenstein's main thesis in *On Certainty* that what stands fast is not subject to justification, proof, the adding of evidence, or doubt and is neither true nor false. Whatever is subject to those ascriptions belongs to the language game. But certitude is not so subject, and therefore it stands outside the language game. (Stroll, 1994, p. 138)

And Moyal-Sharrock, in a similar vein, states:

To say that hinges are logically indubitable is not to say that they are necessarily true. There is no question of truth or falsity in the bedrock. (Moyal-Sharrock, 2004a, p. 74)

Both of them suggest that, by virtue of belonging to the framework of our practice, hinges are not evaluable; that belonging to the bedrock of our beliefs excludes hinges from any semantic evaluation. It is worth noting that this is as deep as Stroll's and Moyal-Sharrock's arguments go. This suggests that they see the claim as uncontroversial.

McGinn

In the section on McGinn's interpretation of *On Certainty* in Chapter One, I briefly presented her view on truth-aptness on hinges. We now have an opportunity to analyse her argument in a different context.

The following quote captures the essence of McGinn's view well:

It is what is asserted within our practice that can be true or false. These notions do not apply at all, or at least do not apply in the same sense, to the judgments that constitute our techniques of description. Our practice of describing the world in language is simply a phenomenon of human history. The techniques of description that have been developed are no doubt conditioned by the nature of the creatures who use them and by the nature of the environment they inhabit. But the relation of our practice to these facts is to be understood as akin to the relation between a species and an

environmental niche, and not in terms of mirroring and matching. These techniques are the ones that proved themselves. (McGinn, 1989, pp. 155-156)

The main reason that McGinn gives in support of the non truth-apt reading is that hinges stand outside the practice in which such assessment takes place. What is more, she claims that with regard to hinges the notion of representing reality or, as she puts it, “mirroring and matching” does not make much sense. This is an interesting statement as it precludes hinges from being truth-apt by virtue of them not being capable of mirroring the world. As such, the statement suggests that McGinn sees Wittgenstein as perhaps thinking about truth in terms of correspondence. I believe that the first of McGinn’s statements is correct; it does not make sense to think about hinges as corresponding to reality. However, the reason for that is not that they are somehow different to other propositions to which the concept of correspondence does apply. Rather, as I will argue in Section 5.4, the concept of correspondence to reality is a useless one, and *On Certainty* should not be understood as endorsing any form of the correspondence theory of truth.

Coliva

Coliva presents an idea very similar to McGinn’s with regard to truth-aptness of hinges. In her book (Coliva, 2010, pp. 163-164) she states that hinges are not true in the sense required by the correspondence theory of truth, and therefore not truth-apt, which seems to suggest that this theory of truth is seen as the default one. I will come back to this topic in subsection 5.1.3.

It is also Coliva who offers the most explicit argument against truth-aptness of hinges. What is consistent across these commentators, Moyal-Sharrock, Stroll and McGinn, is the idea that, because hinges belong to the framework of our practice, they cannot be true or false, as those concepts only apply to what is inside the practice, and not the frames. Coliva not only reiterates this claim, but also offers an explanation for why the frame of the practice is not truth-apt. This is the argument she provides:

According to Wittgenstein, our world picture is neither true nor false because it consists of propositions which aren't descriptive but normative. Hence, they simply aren't in the business of semantic evaluation. We have inherited it and it determines our form of representation as well as our method of enquiry. It therefore determines what is true or false – a correct or an incorrect description which is, in its turn, supported or disconfirmed by evidence. For this very reason, it can't itself be true (or false). For in order to be assessed as true or false, we should dispose of another form of representation and of assessment of empirical evidence, which could determine whether our present ones are true or false. Yet this is simply not attainable for Wittgenstein, who, throughout his entire philosophical production has always been opposed to the idea of a metalanguage and we may now add, of meta-epistemic methods. (Coliva, 2010, p. 182)

Even though Coliva is the only commentator who puts the argument in an explicit form, she seems to capture well the sentiments expressed by other Framework commentators. The reason for which hinges are not truth-apt is their special status as the limits, or framework, of our practice, and part of the role of the framework is to provide standards for what is true and false. Hinges are therefore seen as not belonging to the game itself, where the evaluation by the standards they constitute takes place. At the same time, these are the only standards we have; there are no external measures according to which we could assess hinges, and therefore they have to remain neither true nor false.

Consequently, the Framework Reading sees standards as construed by something that itself is not evaluated or measured by these standards. This brings us back to the problem already discussed in Chapter Three, and the Framework view of rules discussed there. One of the issues discussed in relation to the Framework view of rules was the Framework Reading's simultaneous insistence on both: seeing the practice as framed and therefore as somehow limited, and seeing the practice as providing the only available perspective. We see the same strategy in Coliva's argument, which can be divided into two following claims:

- (1) That hinges cannot be assessed as true or false by the standards they themselves constitute.

(2) That no other standards (meta-standards) are available to us.

These two statements refer to two different perspectives we may want to take while assessing the truth-aptness of hinges: the first one, which I will call “internal”, is a perspective from within the practice; the second one, which I will label “external”, the availability of which is questioned by Coliva, is a perspective from outside of our system, that is, a perspective from which we are not bound by the rules of our practice, thus we can assess the practice as a whole.

Such division can be seen as supported by the following passage from *On Certainty*:

“But is there then no objective truth? Isn’t it true or false, that someone has been on the moon?” If we are thinking from within our system, then it is certain that no one has ever been on the moon...(OC 108)

Interestingly, Wittgenstein does not go on to say what happens if we do not think from within our system, and this fact might be seen as support for Coliva’s second claim. As far as the internal perspective is considered, however, Wittgenstein does seem to say that we can think of hinges as truth-apt. I will discuss this issue in more detail in the next section (section 5.2), and this discussion will complement my critique of the Framework’s internal/external distinction from Chapter Three. Before I move to that section, however, I would like to first discuss the textual evidence provided by the Framework Reading in support of the non truth-apt reading of hinges, as well as look at the Framework view of the notions of truth endorsed in *On Certainty*.

5.1.2 Hinges are not truth-apt – textual support

Before I start the discussion of Coliva argument, I would like to address an exegetical issue; Coliva refers to numerous passages (Coliva, 2013b, p. 5) of *On Certainty* as evidence for her claim that hinges are not truth-apt. The other commentators also refer to specific passages of the book in support of their reading of hinges as not evaluable in terms of truth-value. It is important to note that none of the passages support the non-truth-apt reading straightforwardly.

The following two passages are the ones that come closest to providing such support:

In general I take as true what is found in text books, of geography for example. Why? I say: All these facts have been confirmed a hundred times over. But how do I know that? What is my evidence for it? I have a world picture. Is it true or false? Above all it is the substratum of all my enquiring and asserting. The propositions describing it are not all equally subject to testing. (OC 162)

If true is what is grounded, then the ground is not true, not yet false. (OC 205)

It is worth emphasising that in neither of these two passages does Wittgenstein claim that hinges are not truth-apt; one is a conditional claim dependent on a particular theory of truth (which, as I argue in section 5.5, is not a theory that Wittgenstein does or should endorse), the other simply states that there are things that are more important about hinges than their truth-value, but does not explicitly deny that they have one. It is the same in case of OC 222, which has a form of a question. Other passages quoted by Coliva (OC 404, 500) contain claims that hinges are not known to be true, which could be read as Wittgenstein denying the knowledge of hinges rather than their truth-aptness.

Moreover, there are a number of passages in *On Certainty* where Wittgenstein does talk about hinges as true or their negations as false. This is one such example:

The truths which Moore says he knows, are such as, roughly speaking, all of us know, if he knows them. (OC 100)

Given that Wittgenstein speaks about hinges in this way in many other passages (see OC 87, 100, 145, 191, 514), it seems fair to say that the Framework claim that the text presents hinges as not truth-apt is unwarranted, and that the text of *On Certainty* suggests exactly the opposite.

5.1.3 Framework Reading and theories of truth

As I mentioned in this chapter's introduction, the issue of which theory of truth Wittgenstein endorses at the stage of *On Certainty* is not a clear-cut one as the text of the book does not address it directly, which, while in itself might be telling, does not make the question any easier to definitively resolve. Most of the commentators within the Framework Reading do not engage with the question directly, but their views on the truth-aptness of hinges reveal their attribution of a certain conception of truth to Wittgenstein. The exception here is Coliva¹, who does focus on the issue directly, and is therefore the commentator who will feature most prominently in this section. Within the Framework commentaries we can find discussion of the following three theories of truth: the correspondence theory of truth, a version of the epistemic theory of truth, and minimalism about truth. I will discuss them under separate headings.

Correspondence

The passages from Coliva and McGinn, which I quoted in subsection 5.1.1, present the fact that the concept of correspondence does not apply to hinges as a reason for which hinges should not be seen as truth-apt. This suggests that it is truth understood as correspondence that would apply to hinges, were they truth-apt. In other words, it is this concept of hinges that is a suitable but unsuccessful candidate for a concept of truth applicable to hinges. Apart from the previously quoted passage, McGinn states this idea a few pages later where she writes:

Indeed, his insistence on distinguishing truth from certainty is aimed at resisting the interpretation of 'objective certainty' as qualifying what truly (or otherwise) mirrors the world. (McGinn, 1989, p. 70)

And Coliva makes an even stronger claim when she writes:

¹ Morawetz (Morawetz, 1978) also addresses the issue directly, however his reading is not classified as belonging to the Framework group and Morawetz does not preclude hinges from having a truth-value. His view was discussed in Chapter Six.

the propositions which belong to the 'ground', to the 'foundations', of all out thinking and acting aren't themselves grounded in, and made objectively true by mind-transcendent facts. Rather they are held fast by everything which rotates around them – our system of judgment – and yet owes its status of system of evidence to their being held fast (Coliva, 2010, p. 164)

Coliva contrasts here the idea of being made true by mind-transcendent facts, and the idea of being held fast by what rotates around them, and seems to suggest that it is only their correspondence to facts that can make propositions true. As such, the quote can be seen as a rejection of truth understood as coherence, and an endorsement of truth understood as correspondence, even though such a concept does not apply to hinges. As a consequence, what we learn from both of these passages is that the idea of correspondence between propositions and reality is not necessarily flawed, but that it cannot be applied to hinges. These remarks on correspondence, however, are not enough to construct the full framework picture of truth in *On Certainty*. To get a more complete picture we need to look at the Framework discussion of the epistemic notions of truth.

Epistemic theory of truth

A page prior to the quoted passage referenced above, Coliva speaks about truth in *On Certainty* as epistemic (Coliva, 2010, p. 163). She suggests that within our practice we see propositions as true when they are supported by evidence. Hinges cannot be in that position, as any evidence that we can gather will always come from within our practice, which in itself presupposes hinges. She expresses her view directly in the following passage from her *Replies*:

Yet whenever he seriously addresses the issue of truth in OC, he does give an epistemic twist to it. Only contingent propositions can in fact be true or false because they are the only ones which can be confirmed or disconfirmed by empirical evidence. (Coliva, 2010, p. 228)

There is one passage in *On Certainty*, the already quoted in this chapter OC 205, where Wittgenstein talks hypothetically about truth as synonymous with being

grounded. I believe that while it might be something he considers, the overall picture painted by *On Certainty* allows us to reject this approach, and I will argue to this conclusion in the last section of this chapter (section 5.4). The fact that we cannot give grounds in support of hinges, on the other hand, is a crucial insight of *On Certainty*, and I will discuss it in the next chapter (Chapter Six).

Thinking about truth by virtue of justification, however, has a disadvantage: it diminishes Wittgenstein's picture as an answer to scepticism. If we think about truth as what we have evidence for, then of course the sceptic will not be able to unhinge or destroy our knowledge of these truths. Such a view, however, entails some form of anti-realism, and, as such, is not a new way of dealing with the sceptical challenge. It is also dubious as an interpretation of *On Certainty*, where Wittgenstein calls his opponent, "the idealist" (OC 24, 37), and, more generally, in the context of Wittgenstein's reluctance to endorse any metaphysical theses.

Minimalism

In her *Précis* to the book (Coliva, 2013b, p. 89) Coliva suggest that another, minimal, notion of truth is present in *On Certainty*, and that such concept is applicable to hinges. She insists that this does not make them empirical and therefore not truth-apt in the second sense of "truth" present in *On Certainty*¹. The minimalist notion can apply to hinges, as it does not ascribe to them any essential property. As such, it merely serves a purpose of enabling hinges to enter entailment relations. Since entailment is traditionally understood in terms of truth-preservation, the explanation of how hinges can entail and be entailed by other proposition poses a problem for non truth-apt reading, which Coliva's dual view avoids. In contrast to Coliva's position, in my view, a minimal notion of truth is the only notion available to Wittgenstein. I argue to this conclusion in the last section of this chapter (section 5.4).

¹ Outside of the Framework Reading a minimalist or deflationist notions are advocated by (Williams, 2004) and (Stoutland, 1998). Horwich suggests it in his book on Wittgenstein's metaphilosophy (Horwich, 2012).

Overall picture

The overall picture painted by the Framework Reading, and in particular Coliva, is, therefore, somewhat puzzling. On one hand, we have the idea that within the practice truth should be understood as an epistemic notion, but there is little support for such reading. The fact that such a notion of truth does not apply to hinges is not really discussed much, perhaps because it is seen as uncontroversial. It is truth understood as correspondence, that is, the notion discussed in relation to truth-aptness of hinges, and it is the fact that the notion of correspondence does not make sense with regard to hinges which is seen as a reason to see hinges as not truth-apt.

I believe that the Framework view can be clarified using the tools from Coliva's argument, which I discuss in detail in the next two sections. As I suggested, it allows us to distinguish between two perspectives: the internal and the external. We can see the Framework Reading as looking at the problem of truth from these two perspectives. If looking from the internal perspective, they claim truth should be understood as epistemic and focus on passages of *On Certainty* which (vaguely) suggest this notion. As I already pointed out, this strategy weakens Wittgenstein's position as an answer to scepticism. I will also argue in the last section of this chapter that it is not a coherent position, given the indispensability of hinges argument and Wittgenstein's understanding of rules.

Additionally, the Framework Reading considers the correspondence theory of truth and rejects the idea that hinges correspond to reality. This claim is analogous to the claim that we need to reject the external perspective. As I pointed out in Chapter Three, the problem with the Framework views on the external perspective is that on one hand they open the external perspective by talking about the "internal" and the "within the system", on the other they then try to delegitimise it. This conflict shows up in the Framework thinking about correspondence; hinges are not true in the sense of the correspondence exactly because thinking about them from the external perspective is not allowed and yet suggested by the internal/external distinction.

Even though I agree that *On Certainty* has passages which might be read as supporting an epistemic notion of truth, I will argue that a deflationary notion is, in fact, the only one available to Wittgenstein. What is more, I will argue that this is a virtue of Wittgenstein's account rather than its limitation. Before I present my argument to that conclusion, however, let's go back to Coliva's argument against the truth-aptness of hinges.

5.2 The internal perspective

The first of Coliva's claims is that hinges cannot be true or false since they themselves determine what is true and false. I fully endorse the claim that hinges determine what is true and what is false; according to my interpretation they do, in fact, constitute the meanings of our expressions, and our concept of truth. To be precise, not doubting certain propositions is constitutive of linguistic meaning and the concept of truth. The part of Coliva's view that I disagree with is that, because of that, hinges themselves cannot be truth-apt.

This disagreement is largely just a variation of the difference between the Framework Reading's understanding of rules, and my own. As I argued in Chapter Three, rules can, and should, be understood as constituted by the practice of applying them, and trivial and uncontroversial correct application of them plays a particularly important role in this constituting process. Just as hinges play that role in the case of semantic rules, they also do the same for what I call, truth-rules. That is, statements such as "I have two hands" in a hinge context.

Hinges show not only how we can use the words involved, but also what success in the game of making empirical judgments is. Just to briefly invoke the game of three cards analogy: naming the cards in the first stage of the game, where everyone could see what cards they were, was a trivially correct move in the game. In that sense, the first stage provided us with the standard of a correct answer, and was crucial for our understanding of how to judge a guess in the

second stage of the game. In my interpretation, this is what Wittgenstein means when he writes:

This statement appeared to me fundamental; if it is false, what are 'true' and 'false' any more?! (OC 514)

The reason for which Coliva believes that we cannot think about hinges as themselves assessable as true or false is that she thinks about them as our forms of representation. That is, if hinges function as the metaphorical glasses through which we see “reality”, or as what organises our experience, then it makes sense to question the possibility of assessing the glasses themselves.

I already argued in Chapter Three that there are significant problems with thinking about hinges as constituting a conceptual scheme or a form of representation. We can now see that the idea of rules as external to practice also has impact on thinking about hinges as non truth-apt. It also emphasises that, viewed in this way, rules are independent from, or prior to, the practice that they govern.

It is so for the following reason: if we do not allow for propositions that constitute rules of evaluation to be themselves subject of evaluation, then we do not really allow for the practice to have constitutive impact on the rules that govern it. In other words, if we accept Coliva’s claim, then we are obliged to see the rules of evaluation as prior to, in the sense of being constituted independently of, the practice of applying them.

It might also be useful to look at the counter-positive of the claim. If we were to allow for the actual practice of evaluation to play a part in the process of constituting rules of evaluation, then we would allow the actual application of the rules to feed back into the rules themselves. That is, in that case, it would be the propositions that are in fact evaluated by the method, and which help to constitute the method, which is exactly what Coliva denies is possible.

The idea that rules are prior to the practice of applying them is something Wittgenstein was against not just in *On Certainty*, but in all of his later writings. Interestingly, in the introduction to her book Coliva defines her interpretation of *On Certainty* as endorsing, among other things, the primacy of use, and therefore also thinking about rules as “what we can recognize ex post as held fixed by our actual practices” (Coliva, 2010, p. 10). It seems that the point missed by Coliva is that, in order for use and therefore also application of rules to have primacy over rules in the sense required by Wittgenstein’s considerations, they actually have to have constitutive impact on rules, as opposed to rules simply being later abstracted. The primacy of applications is not merely epistemic, which is all that would be possible were hinges not truth-apt

To summarise this section, it is only if we understand rules in the Framework way, which, as I argue in Chapter Three, we have independent reasons to reject, that we might be inclined to not think about hinges as truth-apt. Under my interpretation, seeing hinges as trivially true is not only not problematic, but is exactly what explains how they play their rule-constitutive role.

5.3 The external perspective

The second of Coliva’s claims is that we cannot have any other perspective from which we could possibly assess hinges; that it is not the case that some other meta-perspective is available to us. Coliva does not elaborate on this point, taking it to be one of essential parts of Wittgenstein’s later outlook. I fully agree that the unavailability of meta-perspective is a theme present throughout Wittgenstein’s later writings, however, I think that my understanding of it is different than that of the Framework Reading, and therefore I will discuss it in more detail.

What is understood by an external or meta-perspective in this context is an outlook where we can talk about a game without being bound by its rules; where we are able to see and describe a system, without endorsing it. In the case at hand it would be a standpoint from which we could say things about hinges

without accepting them, without being bound by them. Given this definition, the external perspective would provide a good alternative to evaluating hinges by the standards they themselves constitute.

Since, in order to describe something we have to be using language, and the use of language, for Wittgenstein, means playing a language game, we have two following ways of understanding what is meant by the external perspective and how it could be achievable. If we understand games as small entities, for example, we want to talk about a “game of ordering things in a restaurant” and a different “game of having a small talk” etc., then we can think about external perspective as a different game, a sort of meta-game, which is governed by different hinges than the ones we are intending to assess. We can also understand language games as much bigger entities, like a “game of asking for reasons” or a “game of describing the world” etc. In that case we can think about the external perspective as a region of the game where the hinges, which we want to talk about, are not relevant. Whichever perspective we adopt is not going to play any role in the argument, which is more general. What is more, the two options are not mutually exclusive (perhaps we can define games by their subject or their purpose), and both of them are warranted by Wittgenstein’s text¹. In fact, in *On Certainty*, Wittgenstein uses the term “language game” in both of these ways (see OC 3, 82, 204, 392).

Why is such a game, or a region of a game, an illusion? There is a sense in which it is not, in which we can have a (fragment of a) game where we say things about hinges and where they do not confine us. That is, for example, we can have a game in which I can talk about “I have two hands” without committing myself to the truth of this statement. However, such a (fragment of a) game is never going to be a meta (fragment of a) game in the required sense. In order for that to be the case, the mentioned proposition would have to have its original meaning, that is, the meaning it has in the game it originally comes from. In case of hinges,

¹ It perhaps might be argued that one of these option is more Wittgensteinian than the other.

however, it is part of their meaning that they are true, or at least that they cannot be questioned; hinge use of a proposition is a use where that proposition is indubitable. Hence, we cannot both suspend hinges, and have the same meaning to discuss or evaluate. To put it yet another way, even if we only want to mention hinge propositions, not to use them, we still cannot abstract from their use, as that would also mean abstracting from their meaning. As a result, all we can have is a game where we can talk about sentences as opposed to propositions, where meaning is not relevant, or games which change the meaning of the propositions from what they had in the games or part of the games where they were hinges. Neither of these options provides us a meta-perspective in the required sense.

This is why even though we might have different language games in the sense that different hinges are relevant, we cannot have a game in which we talk about hinges with their original meaning, and at the same time their truth-value is a matter of discussion and is not taken as obvious. This is the sense in which all our language games are a part of the same, all-encompassing practice. In this sense, under my interpretation, as opposed to the Framework one, the unavailability of the external perspective is not a lack or a limitation. It stems from the fact that the practice is all encompassing, that is, that whenever we utter words, we are interpreted as part-taking in the practice. The only situations in which we are not bound by particular hinges or rules is where they are not relevant.

In other words, to talk about a hinge is to talk about a proposition in a specific context, what is more, a context in which it is true. This is not to say that we cannot reflect on our practice; it is part of our practice to reflect on our practice. *On Certainty*, as well as any commentary on it, including this thesis, can be seen as such reflection. This, however, does not take us outside the game; such reflection is not conducted from a meta-perspective in the sense described earlier. It is still bound by hinges, even if it discusses them; it is still performed in language, and as such is part of the practice.

Neither am I suggesting that the rules of our practices cannot change. The words change their meanings, and our hinges do change. Such change, however, is not conducted by a process of doubting hinges. I will discuss this complex issue in Chapter Seven.

The difference between my interpretation and Coliva's, or the Framework Reading more broadly, can therefore be summarised in the following way. For Coliva, the only available perspective is the internal one, yet from that perspective we somehow see its frames or limits; this limited system is the only one in which evaluation of propositions takes place. In my interpretation the distinction between external and internal does not make sense, as the system that we have does not have any clear limits.

Let me finish the discussion of the truth-aptness of hinges by noting two more advantages of the truth-apt reading. The first of these is the fact that we do not need to come up with a new logic in order for our hinges to be able to enter entailment relations. If hinges were to be devoid of truth-value, we would have to understand entailment somehow differently from the standard truth preservation. Interestingly, the problem with hinges entering entailment relations is a reason that Coliva gives against Moyal-Sharrock's non-propositional approach. It is also why she concedes that hinges might be minimally true. This, however, commits Coliva to a claim that *On Certainty* operates with more than one concept of truth, and is not a useful solution to the entailment problem. If, as Coliva suggests, we understand hinges as true in the minimal sense, and empirical propositions as true in the epistemic sense, then it is not clear what it is that is preserved when hinges entail empirical propositions and vice versa.

The second advantage of the truth-apt reading consists in the fact that it allows us to avoid the consequence of having to somehow explain away our intuition that we do have a right to say that, for example, " $2+2=4$ " is true. That is, it accounts for our tendency to think about our most certain beliefs as true.

5.4. *On Certainty* and deflationism

We can now use the considerations from the previous two sections to show that some form of deflationary theory of truth is the only notion available to Wittgenstein. To see why this is the case we need to consider the following three statements:

- (1) “p” is true if and only if “p” is a correct move in our practice.
- (2) “p” is true if and only if p.
- (3) “p” is true if and only if [insert any robust notion].

All of these statements have a similar form, and can all be seen as somehow defining the concept of truth. There are, however, very important differences between them and I will argue that only statements (1) and (2) are meaningful.

Let’s consider statement (1) first. It states that we use the word “true” to describe a move in our practice as correct. It captures the idea that in the game of pure enquiry truth is all we are interested in. It is important to note that this is not a claim that Wittgenstein has to be committed to. It is already a concession to the sceptic to accept that we do have language games where all we care about is the truth. If we were to deny this, then scepticism cannot even take off. In any case, statement (1) has a status of a general formulation of a rule; it describes our game, and its truth-value depends on our use of the word “true”, as well as on how we judge moves as correct.

With regard to statement (2), its triviality means that the word “true” is defined not only via moves in the game involving that word. Because it is uncontroversial that “p” is true if and only if p, every single claim in the game of pure enquiry involves that concept. The instantiations of the statement itself seems to be a hinge proposition, something which we cannot really question or put in doubt. To accept “This horse is black” is true, if and only if this horse is black” is trivially true, is a prerequisite for participating in our conversations about truth.

Lastly, we have the instantiations of (3), such as “‘p’ is true in and only if it corresponds to reality”, or “p” is true if and only if we are justified in accepting p, or “p” is true if and only if it is agree on it at the end of enquiry”, etc. Regardless of superficial similarities, these statements are significantly different from both (1) and (2). This is because the aim of any robust theory of truth is a discovery of the underlying nature of truth. In other words, a robust definition of truth is trying to find an explanation of why all true propositions are true; it is looking for a property that all and only true propositions have (other than that of being true). Any such attempt, however, is doomed to fail. It is so for the same reason that talking about the external perspective does not make sense. Simply, by virtue of presenting their claims in language, robust theorists of truth are bound by hinges. They cannot, therefore, abstract from the notion of truth as defined by hinges and the practice itself. There simply is nothing else to say about it. Their attempts may end in one of two following ways: we either fail to make sense of their claims, or we interpret them in a way which deprives these claims of their intended metaphysical status. That is, we can, in our attempt to be charitable interpret a robust theorist of truth as saying something akin to (1). It would however mean that “‘p’ is true if, and only if, it corresponds to reality” leaves everything the same, in the sense that it changes neither of the following: the extension of “true”, by providing a different criterion, nor which moves in the game are correct. Any attempt at doing that would be an attempt at forcing rules at the practice, which cannot be done since rules are only constituted in practice, and any general formulation of a rule can only describe the practice, not force anything on the practice. In that sense, we can say whatever we like about truth, but it will not change what counts as true in the game; it simply does not have “changing powers”. I discuss the way in which our practice and its hinges can change in Chapter Seven.

In that sense, the question that the robust theorists of truth ask, that is, the question of what truth really is, or what does “true” really mean, are not more comprehensible than questions of what the word “dog” really means. The full answer, with regard to the notion of truth, is given in the practice itself, in exactly

the same way that all there is to discover about the concept of a dog is given in our practice of encountering dogs, interacting with them, talking about them, writing books about them, etc.

It is important to note that the presented reasoning is general, and therefore works for any robust theory of truth including the epistemic notions. These, as well, are trying to find the underlying nature of truth, and are subject to the same criticism. The only difference with regard to the epistemic notion may be that it might be easier to interpret them as something like statement (1), that is, simply descriptions of how we use the word in our practice. Such interpretation, however, is not what is meant by the epistemic theorists of truth, whose claim is much stronger.

The only notion of truth we have, is, therefore, captured by the hinges of the form “‘p’ is true if and only if p”. We can express it in a form of a general formulation of a rule by saying that a statement is true, if and only if, it is a correct move in the game. That statement describes our use of the word “true” as similar to “good move – I’m making it too”. It is worth noting that such understanding of truth allows us to avoid the usual disadvantages associated with both: the correspondence, and the coherence theories of truth. Unlike the correspondence theory of truth, it does not cause a problem with explaining why we want our theories to have qualities such as simplicity, elegance, giving priority to the *a priori*, etc. These are simply the rules of our practice; this is how we judge theories. Unlike coherence, it does not run into the problem of relativism, because, as I will argue in more detail Chapter Seven, we only have one all-encompassing practice. Neither does it entail idealism like epistemic notions, since the realism/anti-realism debate simply becomes obsolete.

To conclude, it has been established that any reservations about the truth-aptness of hinges stem from the idea of thinking about practice as limited or framed by external rules by which it is governed. If, instead, we think about practice as unlimited, in the sense of all-encompassing, there is no reason not to think about hinges as trivially true. What is more, such a picture allows us to see

what is wrong with all robust theories of truth, which can be seen as unsuccessful attempts at talking about the practice as a whole, and forcing other external rules on it. We can now move to the next interpretative issue that has been subject of heated debates, that of whether hinges can be known.

Chapter 6

Are Hinges Knowable?

In the previous chapters I contrasted my account of hinges with the one offered by the Framework Reading, and argued that hinges should be seen as paradigmatically correct moves in our game of talking about the world, and, as such, should be seen as trivially true propositions. In this chapter I look at different views regarding the question of whether hinges can be known.

The importance of the problem of the knowability of hinges for Wittgenstein's treatment of scepticism stems from the fact that his departure point is Moore's reply to scepticism. As I discussed in the introduction, Moore's reply to the sceptic consists in claiming to know what came to be called hinges, and the standard interpretation of *On Certainty* sees Wittgenstein as criticising such an approach. That is, Wittgenstein is seen by the Framework Reading as saying that epistemic concepts do not apply to hinges; that hinges are neither known nor unknown.

At the same time, there are passages in *On Certainty* where Wittgenstein expresses doubt about the non-epistemic character of hinges and these have given rise to the idea that perhaps Wittgenstein is not in complete disagreement with Moore. The most famous of these passages is OC 397 where Wittgenstein says:

Haven't I gone wrong and isn't Moore perfectly right? Haven't I made the elementary mistake of confusing one's thoughts with one's knowledge? Of course I do not think to myself "The earth already existed for some time before my birth", but do I know it any the less? Don't I show that I know it by always drawing its consequences? (OC 397)

In this chapter, I discuss this issue and argue, this time in agreement with the Framework Reading, that there is an important notion of knowledge present in *On Certainty* such, that, given this notion, it is not the case that hinges are known. In contrast to Framework Reading, however, I present this thesis as not particularly controversial, and show that it is endorsed also by commentators within the so-called "Epistemic Reading". Also in contrast with the Framework Reading, I argue that the passages concerned with this notion of knowledge should not be seen as providing either a definition or a criterion for knowledge. Instead, I see Wittgenstein as looking at many different uses of the word "know", in particular the phrase "I know", and analysing what the phrase can mean when applied to hinges.

The chapter has the following structure:

- First, in section 6.1, I look at commentators' views on the epistemic status of hinges.
- Then, in section 6.2, I look at different concepts of justification present in *On Certainty* and examine which of them can be applied to hinges.
- In section 6.3, I discuss Wittgenstein's remarks on the use of the phrase "I know" and argue that it can be used with regard to hinges and that such use is still epistemic. This is also where I present my interpretation of Wittgenstein's criticism of Moore.
- In section 6.4. I discuss the closure principle in the context of the knowability of hinges.
- I finish with some concluding remarks (section 6.5).

6.1 Framework and Epistemic Readings

The issue of whether hinges can be known, and more generally whether epistemic concepts apply to hinges, is seen as the main point of disagreement between the Framework and Epistemic readings. According to Coliva, what makes a reading epistemic is simply the fact that it sees our relation to hinges as epistemic (Coliva, 2010, pp. 151-152). The Epistemic Reading, thus understood, seems roughly the same as what Pritchard calls “the Epistemicist Reading” (Pritchard, 2011).

In this section, I present views of both readings of the topic of knowability of hinges, and argue that the issue is not as clear-cut as the Framework Reading presents. This is because the Epistemic Reading is a much less homogenous collection of interpretations of *On Certainty* than the Framework Reading, and, as we will see, it is hard to find a core set of theses that all commentators within the Epistemic Reading endorse.

The structure of this section reflects this difference between the readings. The views of the commentators within the Framework Reading are presented together in one subsection (subsection 6.1.1.) The remaining four subsections are devoted to individual commentators within the epistemic reading in the following order:

- subsection 6.1.2 Thomas Morawetz
- subsection 6.1.3 Michael Williams
- subsection 6.1.4 Crispin Wright
- subsection 6.1.5 Duncan Pritchard

6.1.1 Framework Reading

As we have seen in previous chapters, the Framework Reading sees hinges as framing our practice of making judgments about the world and as not themselves parts of it. The first consequence of this view is the sharp contrast the Framework Reading sees between hinges, which have the status of rules, and

empirical propositions which are purely descriptive. The second consequence is that some of the Framework commentators think about hinges as so radically different from empirical propositions that they argue they are not propositions at all. The third consequence of the view holds that hinges are not assessed within the practice, and are, therefore, neither true nor false.

Given the attribution of these features to hinges, it is not surprising that the Framework Reading also sees hinges as neither known nor unknown. In particular, the fact that hinges are not truth-apt according to this reading supports, or even implies, the claim that they are not known either. The commentators within the Framework Reading, however, do appreciate the complexity of the issue and the ambivalence of the text. In this subsection, I will look at some of the most important themes in the Framework outlook on the issue.

Hinges are neither known nor unknown

The claim that the concept of knowledge does not apply to hinges, and that, therefore, hinges are neither known or unknown, is one of the central theses of the Framework Reading. The reasons given in support of this reading rely on two prominent themes of the book. The first of these is the theme of ungrounded character of hinges, that is, the numerous passages in *On Certainty* (see OC 1, 206, 243, 245, 282 and perhaps most famously 166) where Wittgenstein notes that no grounds can be offered in support of hinges as, in order for something to count as a ground, it has to be more certain than what it is meant to ground, and since hinges already are as certain as anything can be, no such grounds can be offered. The second, closely related, theme is that of Wittgenstein's criticism of Moore's claim to know hinges, and his insistence that relation to hinges is that of certainty, not knowledge (see for example OC 151, 308).

In terms of a larger picture, seeing hinges as not known fits well with the Framework's central thesis that hinges frame our practice of talking about the world. Just as any evaluation only takes place within the game, and does not

involve the framework itself, so does the reasons giving, or grounds offering, process; it simply does not involve hinges. At the same time, the Framework Reading claims that the fact that we cannot offer reasons in support of hinges is not a lack, they are removed from the epistemic practice due to their special status, and justification for them is, therefore, not required. The reasons given by the Framework Reading in support of the indubitability of hinges and their special status were discussed in Chapter Two.

Different uses of “I know”

Another important theme of *On Certainty* is Wittgenstein’s investigation of the use of the phrase “I know”. With regard to this topic, commentators within the Framework Reading (McGinn, 1989) (Coliva, 2010) point out that the ordinary use of the phrase “I know” has certain characteristics (see subsections 1.1.1 and 1.4.1 of this thesis) which could not be maintained if we used the phrase in relation to hinges. That is why, according to Coliva and McGinn, we simply cannot say that we know hinges, as such use would not fulfil the criteria of application.

This strategy, however, does not explain either the complexity of Wittgenstein’s remarks on the use of the phrase, particularly the passages in *On Certainty* where Wittgenstein does say that we do know hinges (see for example OC 187, 325, 328), or the fact that in everyday life we do claim to know things which are beyond doubt. This is perhaps why Coliva supplements it with distinguishing three different types of uses of the phrase. Coliva differentiates between the empirical, grammatical and philosophical uses of “I know” and describes them as follows:

1. Empirical: an example of such use would be an utterance of “I know it is Catherine’s birthday today” in a case where I can give grounds for my claim that are more certain than the claim (for example Catherine has just told me), where it is also verifiable (other people could ask Catherine, or check her passport etc.), where the knowledge claim is relevant, and

finally in case where it makes sense to say that one does not know it (a claim “I do not know whether it is Catherine’s birthday today” does not seem odd).

2. Grammatical: as, for example, in “I know I feel nauseous”. Such a proposition is not based on grounds, as those would be equally or less certain. Moreover, it does not make sense to say that one does not know. Such a use could be replaced by stronger claims such as “here a mistake or doubt is not logically possible”.
3. Dogmatic (or philosophical): this is the use Coliva attributes to Moore, and it confuses the other two uses in the sense that it combines the indubitability of the grammatical use with the epistemological character of the empirical one.

Coliva maintains that, in the case of hinge propositions, we can only talk about the grammatical use of ‘I know’. That is, it is correct to say I know a hinge, only if it is meant in the grammatical sense. Even more importantly, according to Coliva, such use of “I know” does not express genuine knowledge. In the following passage she explains why the grammatical use of “I know” is not epistemic:

The ultimate justification of one’s claim to (grammatical) knowledge that that is a hand is simply given by one’s appeal to what one has been drilled or trained to, while learning one’s mother tongue. But it must be noticed that the role of such a justification is peculiar. For, strictly speaking it does not exhibit a *reason* that legitimates my claim to know that that is my hand. As we have seen in the first part of this chapter reasons can be produced, for Wittgenstein only *within* the epistemic language game. Rather, the kind of justification I mention in favour of my claim that I know that that is my hand exhibits the *cause* of my ability to participate in the various language games with the word “hand”, which may be epistemic or otherwise. Such a cause consists in the fact that I have been trained to use language a certain way and I therefore master the use of certain words. Hence, this once more shows how the grammatical use of “I know” doesn’t conform to the criteria that govern the ordinary and genuinely epistemic use of those very words. (Coliva, 2010, p. 86)

Coliva claims that the grammatical sense of “I know” does not have an epistemic dimension because, in case of this use, we cannot offer reasons for believing

hinges. She does not, however, show why only grounds can be seen as reasons. Neither does she give reasons for which only grounds are the kind of things that make the truth of the proposition in question more certain. She insists that the kind of justification we have for the grammatical “I know” does not seem to have anything in common with epistemic reasons to believe, and that it is more of a causal explanation than justification *per se*¹. I will come back to this point when I discuss different notions of justifications present in *On Certainty* (section 6.2).

It is worth pointing out that Coliva’s reasoning here is circular. That is, Coliva does not offer reasons for thinking about ability to give grounds as a necessary condition for knowledge that would be convincing for anyone who does not already have that intuition. Instead, she explores this intuition, and shows that other uses of “I know” present in *On Certainty* can (or have to) be explained as not genuine cases of knowledge. In that sense, this reasoning is analogous to the one I already discussed in Chapter Two (section 2.1), which was intended to show that doubt with regard to hinges is different than the doubt we express with regard to empirical propositions. Even though I acknowledge that it is an important observation, it is not enough to disqualify such doubt. We have the same situation here, even though it is important to note that the use of the phrase “I know” does not share some of the characteristics of the ordinary use, it is not enough to show that the concept cannot be applied to hinges. To generalise this point, the idea of a use of any word “really” expressing the concept behind it is one that it is hard to make sense of on the grounds of Wittgenstein’s view of language, as it is our language games, and our practice of applying concepts, that constitute them.

¹ Coliva interprets the epistemic reading as failing to acknowledge the grammatical use of “I know”, and therefore interpreting passages of *On Certainty* where Wittgenstein talks about hinges as known as implying that our relationship to hinges is epistemic when in fact Wittgenstein means it in a grammatical, and therefore non-epistemic, sense.

6.1.3 Internalism and foundationalism

Another theme of the Framework interpretation of *On Certainty* is that of ascribing the two following epistemological positions to Wittgenstein: foundationalism and internalism.

Let us consider the issue of internalism about knowledge first. We can see attribution of this view to Wittgenstein in the previously discussed views of Coliva and McGinn; it is implicit in their insistence that it is only knowledge which implies ability to give grounds that counts as real knowledge. Coliva also states directly that unlike Moore, Wittgenstein is committed to internalism (Coliva, 2010, p. 208). We also see such insistence in Stroll's work (Stroll, 1994, p. 133).

Even though I agree with the Framework commentators that Wittgenstein should not be seen as an externalist, I don't believe that this is necessarily a reason to think about him as an internalist. In fact, just as there are passages in *On Certainty* which can be seen as implying internalism, there are also passages in *On Certainty* which can be seen as supporting externalism, such as OC 396. However, what we need to keep in sight is that Wittgenstein is not concerned with an analysis of knowledge, but rather with particular knowledge claims: those of Moore form his *Proof of an External World and Defence of Common Sense* (Moore, 1959) (Moore, 1959). Consequently, the concept that is relevant in this case is that of ability to give grounds. Wittgenstein cannot be placed on either side of the internalism vs. externalism debate because he is not trying to search for the essence of knowledge; neither is he trying to reply to scepticism in an externalist fashion. We can only speculate, but it is likely that, if he wanted to engage in this debate, he would point out that our practice is very varied in this regard, and that sometimes we use the word "know" in a way that is better captured by internalism, and, at other times, externalism.

Another view which the Framework Reading attributes to Wittgenstein, and which is revealed in their discussion of knowability of hinges, is foundationalism.

The first commentator who suggested that Wittgenstein is a foundationalist was Stroll (Stroll, 1994), who devotes a large part of his book to arguing for this conclusion (as discussed in subsection 1.2.3 of this thesis). This theme is also reiterated by Moyal-Sharrock (Moyal-Sharrock, 2004a). In a way, the Framework Reading¹ can be interpreted as seeing Wittgenstein as a foundationalist, but as having a very untraditional view of the foundations. This is so because if we treat hinges as foundations they form a very inhomogeneous mass, and do not share any particular quality such as being self-evident, for example. At the same time, according to the Framework Reading, they do ground knowledge².

My interpretation of *On Certainty*'s view on knowledge differs significantly in this regard. I think that the problem with the Framework commentary lies in reading too much into Wittgenstein's remarks about knowledge, and in losing sight of his motivation to demonstrate what is wrong with Moore's reply to scepticism.

Personally, I believe that Wittgenstein is not presenting any specific epistemological views, and, in particular, that he is uninterested in either coherentism/foundationalism or internalism/externalism debates. This is because he is not looking at defining knowledge; there is no place for such a project in his philosophy any more than for defining the essence of anything else. In particular, with regard to the first of these debates, which I discuss in section two of this chapter, Wittgenstein uses as many coherentist metaphors as he does foundationalist ones. What is more, if we think about these two views as providing different ways of dealing with the problem of regress of justification, we will see that Wittgenstein's proposal in this regard comes at a different level from both foundationalism and coherentism, and that this is the most important part of his view. With regard to internalism and externalism he is not arguing for one position over the other, rather, he looks at a specific use of the phrase "I know", that of Moore, and he is interested in his ability to give grounds as required by the context in which Moore uses the phrase. This, however, is not to

¹ With the exception of Coliva; see (Coliva, 2010).

² (Williams, 2005) offer more detailed critique of the idea that Wittgenstein was a foundationalist.

say that the ability to give grounds is a necessary conditions of the “real” concept of knowledge.

Moore

Lastly, I would like to mention how the Framework Reading, that is, the standard interpretation of *On Certainty*, sees the relationship between Wittgenstein’s and Moore’s treatments of scepticism. It is important to note that a thorough analysis of the interpretation of Moore’s work by the Framework Reading is beyond the scope of the thesis, especially given that most of the commentators have written extensively on the topic of Moore’s works themselves. I will, therefore, limit this brief summary to contrasting the status of Moore’s and Wittgenstein’s reply to the sceptic¹.

Regardless of the complexity of the interpretation of Moore’s thought, it is fair to say that Framework Reading sees Wittgenstein as offering a treatment of scepticism situated at a different level than that of Moore. While Moore treats the sceptical doubt as meaningful, and tries to meet the challenge by claiming to know hinges, and, with them other things, Wittgenstein shows what is wrong with sceptical doubt. Contrary to Moore, Wittgenstein is seen as showing that hinges cannot be doubted, even though they cannot be known (or unknown). It is, therefore, the claim that Wittgenstein does not believe we can know hinges that summarises the difference between him and Moore, and makes his treatment of scepticism that of dissolution rather than solution.

To summarise the exposition of the Framework views: the reading sees ability to give grounds as a necessary condition of knowledge, and therefore reveals both foundationalist and internationalist tendencies. Given such an understanding of knowledge, hinges are seen as neither known nor unknown, and it is this fact that allows us to see Wittgenstein’s position as a third way, different to both

¹ Three out of four book-length Framework interpretations of *On Certainty* are also interpretations of Moore’s reply to scepticism.

scepticism and dogmatism. We can now look at the alternative views presented by commentators within the Epistemic Reading.

6.1.2 Morawetz

Thomas's Morawetz' interpretation of *On Certainty* is presented in both his early article, and subsequent book (Morawetz, 1974) (Morawetz, 1978), and a more recent article (Morawetz, 2005). Even though the 2005 article is very much a restatement of the main themes of the book, there are some differences in emphasis in these works, and I will come back to them at the end of this section. The Framework commentators see Morawetz' work as the first exposition of the Epistemic Reading (Coliva, 2010). However, I will argue that Morawetz does not fully endorse the thesis that hinges can be known.

In order to examine Morawetz' views on the knowability of hinges we need to first look at his distinction between two kinds of propositions which we keep fixed. The first of these are propositions which are testable via experience, but in some context are treated as rules of testing, rather than subjects of testing. An example of such a hinge¹ offered by Morawetz is "my name is T.M.", which in most everyday contexts is treated as a rule for testing (for example, to check whether a given letter is for him), but in some abnormal circumstances can be tested itself, that is, in some cases we can use the contents of a letterbox to determine what our name is.

The second category are what Morawetz calls "methodological propositions", about which he says: "No doubt about such propositions can exist in any context if certain judging-practices are to be possible" (Morawetz, 1978, p. 40). These are held fast in all contexts, and Morawetz provides "there are physical objects" as an example. Morawetz' concept of methodological propositions is roughly the same as the Framework concept of universal hinges.

¹ Morawetz does not use the word "hinge".

Before we can examine Morawetz' view on the knowability of hinges, we need to introduce his distinction between knowing and claiming to know. In his work he devotes a lot of attention to arguing that it is possible to know something while still not being in a position of claiming to know. In his later article, he clarifies that claims to knowledge are only appropriate in specific circumstances, and require the claimant to be able to offer grounds. The question of whether we know something, on the other hand, is decided by whether experience backs us up or contradicts us (Morawetz, 1978, p. 92). The idea that we might know something, but not be in position to claim to know, has been criticised by Coliva as mysterious (Coliva, 2010, p. 151), however, it is not mysterious if we are happy to share the intuition, which Morawetz seems to attribute to Wittgenstein, that experience can back us up regardless of whether we are actually in position to offer grounds. I will discuss this topic more in subsection 6.2.2.

We can now examine the question of whether hinges can be known with regard to the two types of hinges distinguished by Morawetz. Let us consider methodological propositions first. With regards to these propositions, we not only cannot claim to know them, but we also do not, in fact, know them. This thesis is given a lot of attention in (Morawetz, 2005), where Morawetz points out that, in the case of those propositions, experience can neither back us up nor contradict us. He writes:

The first category, methodological propositions, are such that there is no context in which I can gather evidence for them no context in which I can imagine contrary evidence. How can I find evidence that objects exist unobserved when every attempt to gather evidence counts as an observation? (Morawetz, 2005, p. 180)

In Chapter Eight, I will argue that the situation that Morawetz describes is, for Wittgenstein, a reason to see them as nonsense, rather than as something we keep fixed.

With regard to the empirical hinges, these, as Morawetz argues, are different, and for each of them we can find a context where they can be claimed to be known¹. More importantly, however, even in the context when they are held fast, according to Morawetz, we can still gather evidence in support of them. Such evidence, despite it not being grounding, is enough to say that in those cases we do possess knowledge of them, but it cannot be properly expressed in a claim to know, rather it is expressed in actions.

As far as Morawetz' diagnosis of Moore's mistake is concerned, his interpretation is consistent with, and very similar to, that put forward by the Framework Reading. In the book (Morawetz, 1978) he states very clearly that Moore's mistake is not just that of claiming to know something that he does know but cannot claim to know. Morawetz states it in the following passage:

One possible criticism of is that Moore confuses what can be said about knowing and what can be said about claiming to know, or at least that he does this at some points and not at others. This, however, cannot be Wittgenstein's point, for he makes clear (see passage 397 above) that he rejects Moore's premise in his "proof" not as the premise that he may appropriately claim to know but simply as the premise that he knows. Accordingly, Wittgenstein rejects "I know I am in pain" and "I know that the earth has existed for many years" as admissible premises not simply as inappropriate utterances; he says that it is not the case that Moore *knows* these things. (Morawetz, 1978, p. 91)

In a similar vein Morawetz writes in his more recent article:

A person is less and less likely to be thought of as knowing p (and less likely to think of herself as knowing p) to the extent that p is such that one cannot imagine how others could believe the contrary (see OC 93). (Morawetz, 2005, p. 185)

It therefore seems that Morawetz' interpretation is not far from the Framework Reading, and differs mainly in Morawetz expressing more externalist intuitions. When we look at a concluding passage of his article, it reads very much like something that could have been written by a Framework commentator:

¹ Morawetz is not clear if these are the contexts in which they play hinge role.

Moore's mistake is in meeting the sceptic on his own ground, in responding to the sceptic's 'You don't know the things you think you know' with 'I do know these things after all'. For Wittgenstein, the references to knowledge are altogether misleading. Moore's claims are of the form, 'I am generally qualified to engage in this practice because I can follow the rules'. This state of conviction, according to Wittgenstein, is 'wrongly expressed by the words "I know" ' (OC 414). It is entirely appropriate to say, however, that I act 'with a certainty that knows no doubt' (OC 360). (Morawetz, 2005, p. 186)

To conclude, Morawetz' view is much closer to the Framework interpretation than Coliva claims (Coliva, 2010, pp. 151-152). The primary difference between his view and that of the Framework commentators lies in his externalist tendencies, as suggested by his distinction between knowing and claiming to know, and his claim that evidence, even when it is not more certain than what it is that it is evidence for, can still be enough to amount to knowledge (I discuss this theme further in section 6.2.2). These differences, however, do not change the fact that his view on the main issue, that is, identifying Moore's mistake as lying when claiming to know what cannot be either known or unknown, is the same as that of Framework Reading.

6.1.3 Williams

Another commentator who is often seen as adopting an epistemic heading is Michael Williams. Williams has written extensively on both *On Certainty*, and the problem of scepticism, and it is important to distinguish Williams' works which present his interpretation of *On Certainty* from the ones which present his own epistemological and meta-epistemological views, which are largely inspired by Wittgenstein, and *On Certainty* in particular.

With regard to the first group of works, which include (Williams M. , 2004a), (Williams M. , 2004b), (Williams M. , 2005), Williams acknowledges the fact that, according to Wittgenstein, we cannot offer grounds for hinges, and that therefore they are neither known nor unknown. In (Williams M. , 2004b, p. 254) he states that "with regard to basic certainties, claims to knowledge are nonsensical, the

concept of knowledge does not apply”¹. This is exactly the opposite thesis to what the Framework Reading sees as defining the Epistemic Reading.

The idea of thinking about Williams as an Epistemic reader of *On Certainty* might stem from the fact that his own views, labelled inferential contextualism and presented most notably in (Williams M. , 1996), are inspired by *On Certainty*, and do involve propositions which we both hold fast, and to which we have an epistemic relation. Even though it is a mistake to see Williams’ own view of our epistemic practices as an interpretation of *On Certainty*, and Williams does not present them as such, an argument can be made that they offer a Wittgensteinian reply to scepticism (Pritchard, 2011). A thorough reconstruction of Williams’ view lies beyond the scope of the thesis, however I would like to briefly sketch the outline of his project so that we can place it accurately in the debate.

Williams’ contextualism’s central claim is that what counts as knowledge or justified belief differs from context to context. However, unlike semantic contextualists², he takes context to be defined by its inferential structure, and in particular by which propositions are held fixed. He takes this to imply that each single context has its hinges, including the philosophical context in which epistemology and our discussion of the sceptical paradox takes place. Therefore, he maintains, all the sceptic can prove is not that we know nothing, but only that in the context of philosophy, and given its hinges such as epistemic realism³, we can know nothing about the external world.

Of “methodological certainties”, Williams says that we can know them, however such knowledge can never be expressed in knowledge claims, as such claims shift context to one where the proposition no longer is held fast. He also suggests that some propositions which we hold fast in certain contexts can be false. Both of these claims go against the interpretation of hinges put forward in this thesis,

¹ Williams is a little more hesitant on this topic in (Williams, 2005).

² Such as for example (Cohen, 1999) (DeRose, 1992).

³ That is the view that there are actual epistemic facts, that whether a proposition is justified depends not on a context but on a proposition itself.

however this is best explained by the fact that in his original work Williams is concerned with slightly different kinds of propositions to what either the Framework Reading or myself talk about as hinges. To clarify the difference, it's useful to invoke William's classification of hinges.

In (Williams M. , 2004a) and (Williams M. , 2007) Williams lists four kinds of constraints on doubt:

1. Semantic: anyone who thinks a challenge is in place does not understand the language or is mentally disturbed.
2. Methodological: everyone who thinks a challenge is in place does not pursue the same line of enquiry.
3. Dialectical: someone who thinks challenge is in place does not understand/appreciate current state of the debate.
4. Economic: someone who thinks challenge is in place will end up epistemically poorer.

Each of these groups has a corresponding kind of hinge. In my reconstruction of Wittgenstein's insights into scepticism, I focused on what Williams classifies as semantic hinges, that is, hinges which cannot be doubted, as such a doubt is not intelligible. Their indubitability is unconditional and I take them to be essential to Wittgenstein's dissolution of scepticism.

Williams, in his diagnosis of scepticism, focuses on the second type of constraints and relevant hinges: methodological necessities. Presumably this is because Williams is interested not (or not only) in dissolution of scepticism but has more diagnostic purposes. It is due to the identification of methodological necessities specific to epistemology (or at least main-stream epistemology) that he achieves these goals.

As such, his project is significantly different, and the claims he makes about methodological certainties should not be attributed to hinges, especially if by these we mean semantic hinges. In that sense, his view that methodological certainties can be false does not contradict the views I present in this thesis, and

is consistent with my claim that “semantic certainties” or hinge propositions are paradigmatic examples of true propositions.

As a consequence, Williams also cannot really qualify as an Epistemic reader of *On Certainty*, as he does not see hinges as known. In his own work, in which he operates with a similar but significantly different concept of methodological necessities, he takes these to be known, but this body of work should not be seen as an interpretation of *On Certainty*. It is important to note, however, that even though Williams agrees with the Framework view that Wittgenstein does not see hinges as known, his views are very different from the Framework interpretation in other respects.

6.1.4 Wright

Crispin Wright’s work, which has also been classified as an Epistemic Reading of *On Certainty* can really be categorised with Williams’ view. That is, Wright is not as interested in interpreting *On Certainty* as he is in replies to scepticism, and especially in Moore’s proof of the external world. He presented his views in a series of articles (Wright C. , 2004a), (Wright C. , 2004b), (Wright C. , 2004c) with different degrees of connection to the text of *On Certainty*. Even in the article where he engages with the text of *On Certainty* most directly (Wright C. , 2004c) he states explicitly that his project:

will involve pursuing an idea that features in *On Certainty* but in a way that Wittgenstein himself did not explicitly develop it, and doing so in a spirit – perhaps – that is in some respects at odds with his later philosophy of language. (Wright C. , 2004c, p. 31)

The first striking feature of Wright’s view of hinges is that he talks almost solely about very general propositions, which are negations of sceptical hypotheses; his examples include “There is a material world”, “The world did not come into being ten seconds ago replete with apparent traces of a more extended history” and “There are other minds”. Wright even states directly that “[h]inges, broadly speaking, are standing certainties, exportable from context to context” (Wright C.

, 2004b, p. 190). This clearly makes Wright's focus different than Wittgenstein's, as Wittgenstein is concerned with context-specific propositions (further discussed in subsection 8.2.2).

Wright's interest in negations of sceptical hypotheses can be explained by his reconstruction of the sceptical strategy. Wright sees it as consisting of identifying a cornerstone for a large class of beliefs, and then showing that such a cornerstone is not justified or warranted. In case of the external world scepticism, the cornerstone is a belief that there are material objects, or, that the external world exists. As Wright notices, this proposition plays an important role in our justification of more ordinary beliefs about the external world. That is, any evidence we might provide in order to support an ordinary claim will only be valid if the material world exists. Wright illustrates this claim with the following example: my state of consciousness seemingly being aware of a hand in front of my face only counts as evidence for "Here is a hand" given the "collateral information" that there is a material world (Wright C. , 2004c, p. 26). The cornerstone propositions, in turn, cannot be justified by evidence in a non-circular way, as the sceptic shows.

Wright points out that cornerstone propositions cannot be supported by evidence, as any evidence only counts as evidence if they are already in place. The reason for which Wright is seen as providing an Epistemic Reading stems from the next step of his reasoning, the idea that, for such cornerstone propositions, or hinges, we have what he calls "unearned warrant", and therefore we are justified in holding them. The reason for that is that in the case of hinges we are faced with the following dilemma: either we take the risk of accepting hinges and carry on with our epistemic practices, or we do not, in which case we enter something like a cognitive paralysis, which is epistemically catastrophic (Wright C. , 2004c, p. 39). When presented with such a dilemma, it is rational for us to choose the first option, and this is why we do have "unearned warrant" for hinges.

Consequently, by accepting hinges, we are taking a cognitive risk, but it is a risk worth taking as the alternative is worse, or the same as lack of success if we do take the risk. Wright explains it in the following passage:

That would stand refinement, but the general *motif* is clear enough. If a project (epistemic or otherwise) is sufficiently valuable to us – in particular, if its failure would at least be no worse than the cost of not executing it, and its success would be better – and if an attempt to vindicate its presuppositions would raise presuppositions of its own of no more secure as antecedent status, then we are entitled to – may help ourselves to – the original presuppositions without specific evidence. (Wright C. , 2004c, p. 51)

It is important to note that Wright is very clear that such warrant has nothing to do with the truth of the statement. He states:

To be entitled to accept a proposition in this way, of course, has no connection whatever with the likelihood of its truth. (Wright C. , 2004c, p. 53)

As such the status of the warrant is an interesting one; it is not epistemic, but also not a purely pragmatic one because of Wright's appeal to rationality.

Wright's project is very far from my own aims in this thesis, and has a different goal. However, it is important to note that in some respects it stays in contradiction to some of Wittgenstein's insights presented in *On Certainty*. In particular, I believe that *On Certainty* gives us reasons to reject any attempt at justifying hinges qua hinges. This criticism applies not only to Wright but also to naturalist themes within the Framework Reading. I will discuss it in the next section (section 6.2.3).

6.1.5 Pritchard

The majority of Duncan Pritchard's work discussing Wittgenstein on scepticism is not so much an interpretation of *On Certainty* as a commentary on different interpretations of *On Certainty*. In particular, he focuses on the issue of whether it is possible to construct a Wittgensteinian, but at the same epistemic, reply to scepticism. Many of his articles (Pritchard, 2005) (Pritchard, 2008) (Pritchard,

2012) (Pritchard, 2011) provide an extensive overview and discussion of different interpretations of *On Certainty*.

Since Pritchard is less concerned with Wittgenstein's reply per se and more with whether a Wittgensteinian but also epistemic reply can be constructed, it is only accurate that his work focuses on Williams and Wright. He offers an interesting analysis of these views in (Pritchard, 2005) where he criticises both views if seen as Wittgensteinian projects.

His own proposal starts with the following criticism of Wright (Pritchard, 2011). Pritchard notices that Wright's reasoning leading to the conclusion that we have unearned warrant for hinges when combined with internalism about knowledge, leads to the following consequence: in order to know even ordinary propositions about the external world, we must be able to follow a sophisticated philosophical reasoning. Consequently, only those of us who go through Wright's argument to the conclusion that we have unearned warrant to believe that material objects exist, can know ordinary things such as that there are more than a hundred buildings in Wellington. This seems highly unintuitive.

That is why Pritchard suggests that Wright's concept of unearned warrant should be combined with some form of externalism about knowledge. Pritchard suggests agent reliabilism such as Greco's (Greco, 1999), which would mean that a belief in hinges is justified, in the sense that it is what a reliable epistemic agent would do. This idea, however, is open to the same criticism as Wright's with respect to seeking justification for hinges by virtue of being hinges. I argue against such strategy in the next section of this chapter (subsection 6.2.3).

It has been shown that the Epistemic Reading is a collection of very different views, and that the idea that not grounding evidence can be offered for hinges is not contested within this reading. The variety of the views on the knowledge of hinges suggests the complexity of the issue. In the next section I start presenting my own view by discussing different notions of justification present in *On Certainty*.

6.2 Different concepts of justification

One of the difficulties of giving an account of the theme of *On Certainty* which centres around the concept of knowledge and the knowability of hinges, is the fact that Wittgenstein seems to operate with different concepts of justification. In this section I look at these concepts and the role they play. I also investigate which of these concepts do, and which do not, apply to hinges. I distinguish three different notions, and discuss them in separate subsections.

6.2.1 Justification 1

The first notion of justification present in *On Certainty* is introduced in the very first passage, where Wittgenstein writes:

If you do know that there is one hand, we'll grant you all the rest. When one says that such and such a proposition can't be proved, of course that does not mean that it can't be derived from other propositions; any proposition can be derived from other ones. But they may be no more certain than it is itself. (OC 1)

This quote introduces the notion of being justified as being based on grounds, where grounds are propositions more certain than the one to be justified. This, of course, indicates a problem for thinking of hinges as justified in this sense, since nothing is more certain than hinges. Wittgenstein describes this situation in the following passage, which also alludes to the meaning-constitutive role of hinges:

And here the strange thing is that when I am quite certain of how the words are used, have no doubt about it, I can still give no grounds for my way of going on. If I tried I could give a thousand, but none as certain as the very thing they were supposed to be grounds for. (OC 307)

This notion of justification received a lot of attention, and, as we have seen, is a basis of the standard reading of hinges. Commentators within both Framework and Epistemic readings accept the claim that we cannot ground hinges. The amount of attention given to this notion can be explained by the fact that one of the most important themes of the book is the un-groundedness of our believing (OC 166). The traditional view is that justification understood as giving grounds,

and the associated concept of knowing as having such justification is what, in *On Certainty*, is explored in the context of Moore's claim to know (what became known as) hinges.

The difference among commentators is on what the status of this claim is. The Framework Reading sees ability to give grounds as a necessary condition of knowledge, and therefore rejects any attempt at seeing hinges as known or justified, as well as evidence being gathered in favour of hinges. Commentators within the reading, as we have seen in subsection 6.1.1, insist that, therefore, our relation to hinges has to be seen as non-epistemic. Some of the commentators within the Epistemic Reading, most notably Wright and Morawetz, however, argue that, because of the empirical origin of hinges, we can still gather evidence in support of them. This brings us to the second notion of justification present in *On Certainty*.

6.2.2 Justification 2

The second notion of justification present in *On Certainty* is closely related to the notion of evidential support. Wittgenstein often writes about hinges as supported by evidence in the sense of things "speaking for" hinge propositions; he claims that unlike their negations, they have a lot "speaking in favour of them". We find this notion, for example, in the following passages:

Everything that I have seen or heard gives me the conviction that no man has ever been far from the earth. Nothing in my picture of the world speaks in favour of the opposite. (OC 93)

Now would it be correct to say: So far no one has opened my skull in order to see whether there is a brain inside; but everything speaks for, and nothing against, its being what they would find there? (OC 118)

Everything that we regard as evidence indicates that the earth already existed long before my birth. The contrary hypothesis has nothing to confirm it at all. If everything speaks for an 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. (OC 203)

This notion of justification is very different from the previous one, as it allows for a proposition to be justified even if the things in question, which speak in favour of it, are not themselves more certain. This aspect seems to be replaced by a requirement that there are a lot of those things. This view can be given a more internalist or externalist spin, but it seems that, at least in principle, it is possible to reflect on such evidence although sometimes perhaps we might have a feeling that we do not really know where to start. This, however, is not surprising given that this picture is much closer to coherentism.

It is clear that Wittgenstein thinks that hinges are justified in this sense, and he actually only discusses this notion with regard to hinges. The Framework's resistance to the idea stems from their strict distinction between rules and empirical propositions, as already criticised in Chapter Three. According to such a picture, hinges cannot be supported by evidence, since they are not based on experience; they do not have an empirical component at all. If we acknowledge hinges as dissolving the distinction, there is no reason to think about them as not supported by evidence.

Some of the commentators within the Epistemic Reading, on the other hand, acknowledge this notion. Wright states:

But I do not think that Wittgenstein needs to be read as saying anything antithetical to the idea that one's confidence, for example that one has two hands, is ultimately empirically based. (Wright C. , 2004c, p. 37)

Morawetz talks about this notion when discussing the idea that evidence can back us up even in a situation when we are not in position to give grounds, which is the reason behind his distinction between knowing and claiming to know.

What the introduction of the second notion of justification confirms is the fact that, as with any other concept, Wittgenstein is not attracted to the idea of providing necessary and sufficient conditions. As a consequence, the question of which justification is helpful in defining the concept of knowledge is not one of

Wittgenstein's. What is more fruitful is an investigation into the function these two concepts of justification play in our epistemic practice.

These roles are very different. In order to illustrate them let me once again use the analogy of the game of chess. If we think about justification as analogous to the explanation of why a move in a game of chess is a good move, we can explain it by showing how a certain move gets us closer to winning. That would be equivalent to offering grounding justification, and would take the form of something like: "The move of this piece from here to here gets us into this position, and that is a better situation than the alternatives available to us". It is very useful in cases of disagreement, that is when someone challenges our move; if we can successfully demonstrate that our move is better than the alternatives, we win the challenge. Of course, there can be a lot of practical difficulties in reaching agreement on whether a particular move gets us closer to winning, for example, there might not be enough good will from the parties involved, but, in principle, this is how we would proceed.

The situation is different if someone requests justification for a checkmate move. In this case we would not be able to explain why a checkmate is a good move because the challenge itself cannot really be understood as a challenge, rather it shows a lack of understanding of the game on the "challenger's" part. This is not to say, however, that there is nothing we can do, or that there is nothing that shows that the checkmate move is, indeed, a good move. We can ask the person to observe a few matches and point out how they all finish with a checkmate, what these have in common; we can point out how the party which performed a checkmate celebrates a victory, etc. None of this evidence on its own would be enough to convince anyone that a checkmate is a good move; this is, rather, shown by the whole picture.

Let us use one more example to illustrate this point. For an ordinary proposition like "Book A is available at a bookshop B", we can offer grounds when challenged. For example, we can point out that we saw the book in the bookshop earlier that day, or we can call the bookshop, check their website, etc. However,

in a context where that same proposition is a hinge, for example when we are already at the bookshop looking at the book in question, if someone was to “challenge” whether it is available, we would not be able to understand such challenge. Our first reaction would probably be something like, “what do you mean?”. If the person persisted with asking for justification, we would not be able to convince them by offering grounds for our claim, as it is as certain as anything we could say. This, however, is not to say that our belief that the book is available is not based on experience: it is; the fact that we see it in a bookshop, that we take it into our hands at the bookshop, and so on, are all reasons to believe that it is available at the bookshop.

What these examples demonstrate is that these notions of justification play a very different role. What is crucial, however, is that both sorts of justification offer reasons to believe the propositions they justify, and make it the case that this proposition is more likely to be true. The first one does it in the traditional way, the second one by pointing out their hinge status. In that sense, both of these notions are epistemic.

6.2.3 “Justification” 3

Finally, I would like to distinguish a third concept of justification that *On Certainty* has been interpreted as endorsing: justification for believing certain propositions not for propositions themselves. Both the Framework readers and some of the Epistemic readers argue that we are justified in holding hinges by virtue of them being hinges, as opposed to having justification for particular propositions, which play a hinge role.

One such strategy we saw with Wright and Pritchard, who tried to show that believing hinges is rational as it is our best bet. According to them, this is the case because not believing in hinges can only result in cognitive paralysis. That is why we are justified in believing them, even though such justification does not make them more likely to be true.

We find attempts of justifying our belief in hinges within the Framework Reading as well. Coliva sees it as rational for similar reasons to Wright (Coliva, 2010). Moyal-Sharrock, Stroll, and to some extent McGinn, justify our belief, not as rational, but as something we do not have a choice about, as it is simply our instinct to believe in them.

What both of these views have in common is that they see hinges as needing collective justification. What is more, Wright's version of the view sees their truth-value as something that is not certain. It is important to note that an attempt to justify hinges, as such, is different from looking for evidence for individual hinges. As I argued in the previous subsection, there is a sense in which we can achieve the latter, that is, we have empirical evidence for hinges. However, once we start asking for justification for hinges, we move the debate to a different level. It is a level which would require external perspective in the sense described in Chapter Five, and is, as I argued there, not intelligible. Holding hinges is a rational thing to do because they define rationality, because holding hinges is what being rational means. This is how I interpret remarks such as:

So rational suspicion must have grounds? We might also say: "the reasonable man believes this". (OC 323)

So it might be said: "The reasonable man believes: that the earth has been there since long before his birth, that his life has been spent on the surface of the earth, or near it, that he has never, for example, been on the moon, that he has a nervous system and various innards like all other people, etc., etc." (OC 327)

But it isn't just that I believe in this way that I have two hands, but that every reasonable person does. (OC 252)

Therefore, the impossibility of doubting hinges is simply something we encounter in our practice. It is not a philosophical argument that convinces us that we cannot doubt them. The philosophical argument for indubitability of hinges, like the one I presented in Chapter Two, is not the reason why we should not doubt hinges, but an explanation of why we do not, and cannot, understand such doubt.

To summarise this section, we have seen that two different notions of justification are present in *On Certainty*, and that one of these applies to hinges. Both of these notions applied to individual propositions. Unlike justification in believing hinges offered by Wright, Pritchard, and commentators within the Framework Reading, these notions are parts of our epistemic practices and do not require looking at our practice from outside. We can now investigate the consequences Wittgenstein's discussion of these notions for the knowability of hinges, and Wittgenstein's critique of Moore.

6.3 Wittgenstein on Moore and knowledge

As I mentioned earlier, the standard view is that Wittgenstein, unlike Moore, does not claim that we know hinges, but rather that our attitude is that of certainty. What is more, the Framework Reading insists that knowledge and certainty belong to different categories. The Epistemic Reading agrees that hinges are not known in the same sense that we know empirical propositions. In this section, I look at the issue of knowability of hinges, and argue that the sense in which we know hinges is not completely different from the one in which we know empirical propositions (section 6.3.1). Then, in section 6.3.2, I present my interpretation of Wittgenstein's criticism of Moore, and argue that the problem with Moore is that the context in which he claims to know hinges is not one in which we can make sense of such claim, rather than with the claim itself.

6.3.1 Are hinges knowable?

Before we can answer the question posed by the title of this chapter, we need to have a look at what exactly is at stake in the debate. As we have seen in section 6.2, both the Framework and the Epistemic commentators agree that hinges are not known, if knowing means ability to give grounds. What also seems to be uncontroversial is that, in *On Certainty*, Wittgenstein speaks about hinges as known. The main controversy seems to be whether the sense in which hinges can be known is epistemic.

None of the commentators discussing this issue define what is meant exactly by them being epistemic. However what seems to be implied by the claim that we do not know hinges in the epistemic sense of the word is that knowing them has nothing to do with evidence or reasons to believe, and that whatever justification we might have for them does not make their truth more likely.

In my view, the way in which we know hinges, and the way Wittgenstein talks about knowledge of hinges, is still epistemic in the ways described above. Even though such knowledge is not based on grounds, it is still based on evidence, as discussed in the last section (subsection 6.2.2). To investigate this issue further, we need to look at the relationship between the concept of knowledge and the concept of objective certainty.

The traditional view (Moyal-Sharrock, 2004a) (McGinn, 1989) (Stroll, 1994) is that Wittgenstein puts these two concepts in sharp contrast. While knowledge is about reasons to believe, and, as such, belongs to the rational aspect of our lives, objective certainty, that is, the attitude we have to hinges, is neither rational nor irrational, and belongs to the animal, instinctive aspect of our lives. The following passage is presented as establishing it (Coliva, 2010, p. 75) (Moyal-Sharrock, 2004a, pp. 16, 30) (Stroll, 2005, p. 36):

'Knowledge' and 'certainty' belong to different categories. They are not two 'mental states' like, say 'surmising' and 'being sure'. (Here I assume that it is meaningful for me to say "I know what (e.g.) the word 'doubt' means" and that this sentence indicates that the word "doubt" has a logical role.) What interests us now is not being sure but knowledge. That is, we are interested in the fact that about certain empirical propositions no doubt can exist if making judgments is to be possible at all. Or again: I am inclined to believe that not everything that has the form of an empirical proposition is one. (OC 308)

Interestingly, the passage does not contrast knowledge with objective certainty, but rather with "being sure", which is a mental state, and therefore much closer to subjective than objective certainty. What is more, in this passage, Wittgenstein says that he is interested in knowledge, that is, interested in the fact that about certain propositions no doubt can exist. Therefore, he actually identifies

knowledge and immunity from doubt, and contrasts it with the state of being sure.

Therefore, I interpret this passage very differently to the Framework Reading. I take this passage, as well as the indispensability of hinges argument, to show that objective certainty is an epistemic concept. What it is contrasted with is subjective certainty; it is the conflating of these two concepts that Wittgenstein tries to warn us against. Objective certainty is crucial for defining our epistemic games. Hinges, we already established, are paradigmatic examples of linguistically correct and true propositions. We have seen in the previous section that they are also rational to hold, and, as such, they define rationality. What is more, they are examples of epistemically sound beliefs; they define what being based on evidence means, as suggested by the following passages:

"If I don't trust this evidence why should I trust any evidence?" (OC 672)

If I now say "I know that the water in the kettle in the gas-flame will not freeze but boil", I seem to be as justified in this "I know" as I am in any. 'If I know anything I know this'. - Or do I know with still greater certainty that the person opposite me is my old friend so-and-so? And how does that compare with the proposition that I am seeing with two eyes and shall see them if I look in the glass? - I don't know confidently what I am to answer here. - But still there is a difference between cases. If the water over the gas freezes, of course I shall be as astonished as can be, but I shall assume some factor I don't know of, and perhaps leave the matter to physicists to judge. But what could make me doubt whether this person here is N.N., whom I have known for years? Here a doubt would seem to drag everything with it and plunge it into chaos. (OC 613)

That is to say: If I were contradicted on all sides and told that this person's name was not what I had always known it was (and I use "know" here intentionally), then in that case the foundation of all judging would be taken away from me. (OC 614)

We can, therefore, think of our epistemic practice as an attempt to gain the same amount of objective certainty with regard to other propositions as we already have with regard to hinges. This is why we do not need grounding justification for hinges themselves; they are what grounding justification is supposed to get

us to. That is, when we can offer grounds for an empirical proposition, it is more likely to be like a hinge: true and certain.

However, if we see Wittgenstein as stating that our relation to hinges is epistemic, and therefore it is not a mistake to say that we know them, then how is his treatment of scepticism different to that of Moore? I will consider this question in the next section.

6.3.2 Wittgenstein and Moore

As we have seen in the previous section, the problem with Moore's treatment of scepticism cannot be simply that he claims to know hinges, when in fact the attitude we have has nothing to do with epistemic reasons to believe. This, however, does not mean that Wittgenstein's treatment of scepticism is akin to Moore's. The interpretation I offer is that the problem with Moore is the philosophical weight of his claim. The context of Moore's claim, that is, his dialectical position of arguing against the external world sceptic, is what transforms a potentially innocent claim to know into a philosophical thesis, and that is what his mistake consists in. This is why Wittgenstein writes:

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. That is, I feel (rightly?) that these two mean to say something different. (OC 407)

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

But now it is also correct to use "I know" in the contexts which Moore mentioned, at least in particular circumstances. (Indeed, I do not know what "I know that I am a human being" means. But even that might be given a sense.) For each one of these sentences I can imagine circumstances that turn it into a move in one of our language-games, and by that it loses everything that is philosophically astonishing. (OC 622)

More specifically, Moore makes a mistake of countering sceptical claim with "I know that this is a hand", and, by that, acknowledging the sceptical doubt as intelligible and something worthy of a reply. As I will argue, that is already going

too far with the sceptic, and missing the fact that we cannot really make sense of the sceptical doubt. I will argue that we cannot understand the sceptical argument in more detail in Chapter Eight, for now I would like to suggest that Moore's exchange with the sceptic is analogous to something like this:

The sceptic: You cannot really know what your subconscious nationality is. Subconscious nationality can be different from your normal nationality and you cannot know anything about it because it is subconscious.

Moore: You are wrong – I do know. I was born in London to English parents, so I know that I am English.

Instead of pointing out that “subconscious nationality”, or “the external world *really* being here” do not have any clear meaning, Moore changes the subject. We can of course interpret it charitably as a way of saying ‘this is absurd, let's talk about something else’, but it can also be seen as an attempt at providing a reply to something without any clear meaning.

To conclude, I believe that it is clear that even though we cannot offer grounds for hinges, we can still know them in the sense that our relation to them is still epistemic. The problem with Moore is that he goes too far with the sceptic by validating their doubt as meaningful, which is something I will come back to in Chapter Eight. Before concluding this chapter, however, I would like to look at one technical objection to the non-epistemic view of hinges.

6.4 Closure and transmission principles

In this section I would like to discuss an objection to a non-epistemic reading of hinges involving the closure principle (Pritchard, 2011) (Pritchard, 2012). Even though, in my view, our relation to hinges is epistemic, the reason for which the objection fails, that is, the reasons for which we can retain the closure principle and think of hinges as not known, has some interesting consequences which are relevant to my interpretation.

The closure principle states that:

- (1) If S knows that P and;
- (2) S correctly infers Q from P then;
- (3) S knows that Q.

The principle is a very intuitive one. It seems to be true that if we know something, and we know that something else follows from it, then we also know that other thing. For example: If I know that it is Catherine's birthday today, and I know that if it is her birthday, then she is not home, then I know that Catherine is not home; as long as I have a justification of an antecedent of a conditional, and the conditional itself, I have a justification for the consequent.

However, the following argument can be made (Pritchard, 2011): if we substitute a hinge for Q, and any proposition that it follows from for P, and if we claim that hinges are not knowable, we contradict the principle. The following example is used to illustrate this point:

- (1) S knows that Napoleon won the battle of Austerlitz in 1805.
- (2) S knows that if Napoleon won the battle of Austerlitz in 1805 then the universe is more than 5 minutes old.
- (3) S knows that the universe is more than 5 minutes old.

However a statement that the universe is more than 5 minutes old is a hinge proposition, hence it is not known.

It is worth pointing out that the abovementioned example uses a proposition, which is not a hinge under my interpretation. Nonetheless, we can easily construct a different example:

- (1) I know that Susan has tattoos on both of her hands.
- (2) I know that if Susan has tattoos on both of her hands then she has two hands.
- (3) Therefore I know that Susan has two hands.

Or

- (1) I know that the tree in front of me is an oak.
- (2) I know that if there is an oak in front of me than there is a tree in front of me.
- (3) Therefore I know that there is a tree in front of me.

The problem in the above examples is with the second premise. In each example it is a knowledge claim of a conditional that seems very unnatural. As I have claimed earlier, the only notion of knowledge that Wittgenstein insists that hinges are not knowable under is the one of knowledge as being based on grounds. Given such a notion, the conditional constituting the second premise is not something that is known. A proposition “If there is an oak in front of me, then there is a tree in front of me” is not something that we can base on grounds.

To further clarify this point it might be useful to look at an example of a conditional that can be based on grounds; let us use the already mentioned “If it is Catherine’s birthday today then she is not home”. We can easily imagine reasons that can be used to support this claim, for example, Catherine told me that she plans to spend her birthday on the beach, or, as her best friend I know that she hates spending her birthday at home and always goes out. To know this conditional is to know a correlation; I know certain facts about Catherine that allow me to justify a claim that either it is not her birthday, or she is not at home.

Let us now compare this example with the claim “If there is an oak in front of me, then there is a tree in front of me”. This proposition seems obvious and cannot really be doubted as such a doubt would put in question our sanity or linguistic competency. It therefore seems a lot like a hinge.

This feeling is compounded further once we notice that the truth of this conditional is not more mysterious than the truth of the antecedent. If we are absolutely certain of the antecedent, then making it an antecedent of a conditional is not going to spoil anything. Either way, the statement is as certain as anything can be, and, as such, is a hinge itself. Consequently, if the notion of

knowledge we apply is such that hinges cannot be known, then already the second premise will be false, and the closure principle preserved.

The reasoning presented above can also be applied to the case of the so-called “transmission principle”, that is, the idea that warrant transmits under known entailment. We can now see that the hinge status of the conditional involved in the potentially problematic examples prevents the transmission principle from failing in the same way in which it prevented the closure principle from failing.

It has been shown that a common objection to the non-epistemic reading of hinges is misguided. Even more importantly, it also shows that the fact that hinges are not grounded does not lead to transmission failure.

6.5 Conclusions

As we have seen, there is a vast agreement among scholars both within, and outside of, the Epistemic Reading that hinges cannot be grounded, and that sometimes Wittgenstein expresses this thought by saying that hinges cannot be known. At the same time I argued that it is not the same as saying that hinges do not have any evidential support, or that the attitude towards them is not epistemic, that they somehow belong to a different sphere. On the contrary, the concept of objective certainty is an epistemic concept, and our belief in hinges should be seen as based on evidence and rational, and, as such, as defining the concepts of being based on evidence and rationality.

I would like to finish with a few words about the status of Wittgenstein remarks on knowledge. I believe that any attempts at attributing epistemological views to Wittgenstein are misguided. Even though, in *On Certainty*, he is interested in the epistemological problem of external world scepticism, Wittgenstein does not approach it from an epistemological perspective. Rather, he looks at our practice of talking about the world and shows that we cannot make sense of the sceptic’s hypotheses and doubts, even though we might have an impression of them being intelligible. In his analysis of Moore, Wittgenstein is not interested in arguing for a particular conception of knowledge, rather, he shows why his attempt at

refuting the sceptic is unsatisfactory from a dialectical perspective. In this sense Wittgenstein is doing not epistemology, but, rather, argumentation theory.

Viewed as such, the core of Wittgenstein's reply to the sceptic is semantic. It relies on demonstrating what role hinges play, and why the sceptical argument literally is senseless, devoid of linguistic meaning, which I will argue for in Chapter Eight. In his discussion of knowledge and certainty, and by showing why hinges cannot be grounded but also are not in need of grounding, Wittgenstein targets not only Moore's response to the sceptic, but also any attempt at justifying hinges collectively (in the way that, for example, Wright or Pritchard do). In that sense, a search for an epistemic and Wittgensteinian reply to the sceptic is futile.

Chapter 7

Hinges and Relativism

The question of whether the later Wittgenstein should be interpreted as endorsing relativism has been debated ever since the publication of his works. The relativist reading of Wittgenstein focuses on his concepts of language game, form of life and worldview, and sees the plurality of those, either potential or actual, as inviting relativism. Since the publication of *On Certainty*, the concept of hinges is seen as indicating that Wittgenstein's relativism also has an epistemic aspect.

In this chapter, I discuss the question of whether *On Certainty* should be seen as endorsing or implying relativism, and argue that it should not. The chapter has the following structure:

- Firstly, in section 7.1, I present the Framework view on the topic.
- Then, in section 7.2, I look at and define different forms of relativism attributed to Wittgenstein and present epistemic relativism as the most promising candidate for a form of relativism endorsed by Wittgenstein.
- In section 7.3, I argue that Wittgenstein's understanding of rules as reconstructed in Chapter Two, provides compelling reasons to reject relativism.

- Lastly, in section 7.4, I explain away the themes of *On Certainty* that have been presented in secondary literature as implying relativism.

7.1 Commentators on *On Certainty* and relativism

The issue of the potential endorsement of relativism by the later Wittgenstein is one of the most debated interpretative questions regarding Wittgenstein's legacy. As Martin Kusch (Kusch, 2013) notices, philosophers seem to be almost evenly divided between the two views with (Rorty, 1979), (Boghossian, 2006), (Phillips D. , 1977), (Lukes, 1982), (Hintikka & Hintikka, 1986), (Bloor, 1996) (Gier, 1981), (Grayling, 2001), (Haller, 1995), (Glock, 1996), (Hacker, 1996), (Kusch, 2013), (Gullvåg, 1988), (Vasilou, 2004) all endorsing a relativist reading, and (Anscombe, 1976) (Bambrough, 1991) (Blackburn, 2004), (Crary, 2005), (Dilman, 2004), (Harzberg, 1976), (Lear, 1984), (O'Grady, 2004), (Rhees, 2003), (Schulte, 1988), (Sluga, 1996), (Williams M. , 2007), (Williams B. , 1981), (Wright G. H., 1982), (Morawetz, 1978), (Bilgrami, 2004) presenting Wittgenstein's view as not supporting relativism.

At the same time the authors within the Framework Reading write relatively little about relativism, with the exception of Coliva, who addresses the issue directly and in great length in (Coliva, 2010), (Coliva, 2010) and (Coliva, 2013a). The reason for that might be that the commentators within the Framework Reading largely agree on the issue, and claim that *On Certainty* does not imply relativism. Even though their accounts are to some extent similar, there are still some interesting and important differences. I will, therefore, discuss each commentator's view in a separate sub-section, starting with Moyal-Sharrock (subsection 7.1.1) and then moving to Stroll (subsection 7.1.2) and Coliva (7.1.3)

7.1.1 Moyal-Sharrock

Moyal-Sharrock's (Moyal-Sharrock, 2004a, pp. 140-150) discussion of relativism revolves around the idea of propositions changing their status from that of empirical proposition to hinge, and vice versa. The possibility of propositions

changing their status in these ways is a theme of *On Certainty* that has been read as inviting relativism. The following three passages discuss this topic most directly:

It might be imagined that some propositions, of the form of empirical propositions, were hardened and functioned as channels for such empirical propositions as were not hardened but fluid; and that this relation altered with time, in that fluid propositions hardened, and hard ones became fluid. (OC 96)

The mythology may change back into a state of flux, the river-bed of thoughts may shift. But I distinguish between the movement of the waters on the river-bed and the shift of the bed itself; though there is not a sharp division of the one from the other. (OC 97)

But if someone were to say "So logic too is an empirical science" he would be wrong. Yet this is right: the same proposition may get treated at one time as something to test by experience, at another as a rule of testing. (OC 98)

Moyal-Sharrock argues against seeing a change described in passages 96 and 97 as a change in a status of one proposition. She suggests that, instead, we see two different propositions of different statuses. She uses the concept of a doppelgänger of a hinge,¹ as discussed in Chapter Three, to explain the origin of the mistake of taking passages, such as the ones cited above, as indicating a change of a status of a proposition. Moyal-Sharrock's view, however, does not fully rely on this claim and the concept of a doppelgänger, as she still does acknowledge that some of our hinge beliefs can lose the hinge status, and that some of our empirical propositions can enter the "river-bed" and become ineffable hinges. She uses an example of "A human being must be an offspring of two human beings" (Moyal-Sharrock, 2004a, p. 141) as a case study. She claims that this proposition used to be an ineffable hinge, until recent developments in cloning "dislodged it from its hinge status". What she emphasises, however, is that such a change in the status of a belief is not a rational, epistemic one, and has nothing to do with evidence, confirmation or disconfirmation. She even

¹ A doppelgänger of hinge is a proposition that looks exactly like a hinge, but does not play a hinge role. *On Certainty* does not mention anything akin to this concept.

states that “the connection of facts to hinges is never a rational connection” (Moyal-Sharrock, 2004a, p. 143).

Even more importantly, however, Moyal-Sharrock insists that not all hinges can lose their status, and claims that some of them are “ungiveupable”. These “universal hinges” are what describe our universal human form of life, and can be contrasted with local hinges, which describe the different human forms of life (Moyal-Sharrock, 2004a, p. 150). The reason for that is that, without them, no judgment is possible; they are what makes our practice possible, and any doubt with regards to them would compromise our ability to think. This is what she says about them:

Amongst the various strands of our sense-making grammars, there is one that is fixed, permanent and universal. Or, to use a more Wittgensteinian image: our foundational bedrock has an immutable stratum. There are hinges upon which all human knowledge, at any time, in any place, has revolved and will revolve. Strawson’s ‘big four’ can be countered amongst these *universal hinges*: (1) the existence of body/world/external objects; (2) the existence of other minds; (3) the reliability of induction; (4) the reality and determinateness of the past. (Moyal-Sharrock, 2004a, p. 149)

In addition to Strawson’s¹ “big four”, Moyal-Sharrock provides her own examples such as: “Humans cannot turn into birds and birds into humans”, “a human baby cannot look after itself”, and “my shadow or my reflection in the mirror cannot come to life” (Moyal-Sharrock, 2004a, p. 150). As I will argue in more detail in Chapter Eight, these examples, unlike the “big four”, are actually hinges.

Moyal-Sharrock concludes that Wittgenstein’s view is, therefore, that of objectivism, but not of absolutism. That is, the objectivity is granted by the fact that we belong to the same species, share common interests and responses. This naturalist conclusion is what can be seen as differentiating the Framework Reading from what has been identified as the Transcendental Reading.

¹ Moyal-Sharrock refers here to (Strawson, 1985).

The problem with such a view lies in the concept of a universal hinge; both the concept itself, and the examples Moyal-Sharrock gives, are highly problematic. I will start with the specific examples; the propositions which Moyal-Sharrock takes from Strawson, if taken as expressing a philosophical thesis of realism, which is how Moyal-Sharrock understands them, are, according to Wittgenstein, just as much nonsense as the sceptical hypotheses which are their counterparts. The sentence, "There are physical objects", is actually designated 'nonsense' by Wittgenstein in OC 36. The other propositions do not feature in *On Certainty*, and Wittgenstein's examples of propositions which we hold fast are nothing like them. The argument showing that negations of sceptical hypothesis are not hinges is an important part of my interpretation of the book, and will be presented in Chapter Eight.

For now, let us focus on the idea of a universal hinge, which, even if we leave particular examples aside, remains problematic. I agree with the observation that some propositions play a hinge role in more contexts than others. However, this is different to saying that some propositions play a hinge role in all contexts, past, present, and future. The idea of a universal hinge ignores the linguistic and factual aspect of hinges. Both the meanings of words and the facts can change, and those changes can dislodge any hinge. To assume otherwise would be to put rules ahead of practice of applying them.

Lastly, the views Moyal-Sharrock expresses concerning relativism reveal another side of the impotence of the Framework picture against scepticism. All that the Framework Reading shows is that, due to certain facts about human beings, we cannot help but believe certain things, some of them very universally, species-wide, some of them more locally. Still, the sceptic might argue that this does not justify us in believing those things. After all, there are sceptical arguments which show how an alternative is possible. The Framework Reading attempts to use our biological limitations as a justification for our beliefs, but they cannot serve that purpose. While they can explain the origins of our beliefs they will never serve as justification, and that is what the sceptic requests. As I already

suggested, what the Framework's argument actually shows is the tension between the unliveable nature of scepticism, and its compelling power. As I will argue in more detail in the next chapter, the Framework Reading's mistake lies in accepting too many of the sceptic's assumptions.

If we take scepticism in its relativist form, here, again, Moyal-Sharrock's picture is helpless. The indubitable nature of hinges relies on the natural makeup of human beings, and, therefore, might be able to deal with the idea that there are, in fact, different practices relying on different hinges. It is, however, weak when confronted by the idea that there might, in principle, be different communities with different, incomparable practices.

7.1.2 Stroll

As I already mentioned in Chapter Four, where I discuss the issue of propositionality of hinges, Stroll (Stroll, 1994) attributes two different views of hinges to Wittgenstein, and sees *On Certainty* as progressing from one to the other. The first view is the propositional account, and, according to Stroll, it is a product of Wittgenstein's interest in Moore. This view is also seen by Stroll as a form of relativism. He claims that some hinges are held only relatively fast or fixed, and not absolutely fast, and that, at this stage of the evolution of his view, it is the relativist version of the view that is given more prominence.

This changes, according to Stroll, when Wittgenstein's view progresses to a non-propositional account, which Stroll sees as absolutist. At this stage, certainty is, for Wittgenstein, something animal and instinctive. The "ruthlessly realistic" (Stroll, 1994, p. 159) picture we hold according to such view is common, not just to all humans, but to all animals.

The view is therefore very similar to Moyal-Sharrock's, and open to the same criticism. That is, it uses our natural limitations as justification for our belief in hinges. Such a stance, however, can be seen as closer to scepticism than to its rebuttal; we see the world in a very limited way, through the "lenses" of hinges which our natural make up forces us to endorse, but we do not know how our

picture relates to the world as it is, nor can we even fully express our doubts. As I already mentioned, the mistake of the Framework Reading lies in not noticing that Wittgenstein questions the sceptical reasoning much earlier. I will come back to this point in Chapter Eight, where I discuss the sceptical arguments.

7.1.3 Coliva

Of the Framework commentators of *On Certainty*, Coliva might be the one who devotes most space to the issue of relativism, and offers an argument which is significantly different from the reasoning presented by Stroll and Moyal-Sharrock in (Coliva, 2010), (Coliva, 2010) and (Coliva, 2013a).

Coliva starts by noticing that the naturalist theme is not helpful with regard to the rebuttal of relativism, and that the fact that our belief in hinges is instinctive does not mean they are not rationally held. She reproduces Wright's argument¹, saying that, since the alternative to believing hinges leads to terrible consequences of cognitive paralysis, it is rational for us to hold hinges rather than actually let our practice fall apart completely.

Coliva also spends some time explaining away examples of very different practices present in Wittgenstein's writings, and shows that none of them, under closer inspection, are actual examples of radically different practices in the sense required by relativism. I believe this is an important task for anyone who defends a non-relativist reading, and I will also attempt an interpretation of them in section 7.4 of this chapter.

The core of Coliva's argument consists in showing that it is the relation between hinges and the meanings of words that allows us to refute relativism. She argues that, in the scenarios where we encounter practices very different from ours, we cannot really talk about different epistemic systems. It is so because if we cannot reach agreement on hinges we need to revise translation, which is why it is never

¹ I discuss it in Chapter Six.

the case that we can have a practice which we recognise as practice but which is radically different.

In the crucial paragraph of her argument she states:

This in turn, entails that even if they existed, we wouldn't be able to recognize them as such, because if we got so far as to be in a position to interpret them we would inevitably do so by the light of our own world-picture and conceptual scheme. (Coliva, 2010, p. 21)

This passage confirms Coliva's and the Framework Reading's commitment to the idea of hinges constituting a conceptual scheme that was criticised in Chapter Three. Even though I agree with Coliva that the meaning constitutive role of hinges is crucial to understanding why Wittgenstein is not a relativist, I believe that it has nothing to do with the idea of them constituting a conceptual scheme. In fact, it is the meaning constitutive, and yet descriptive, character of hinges that allows to do both: reject relativism, and reject the scheme/content distinction. What I will argue for later in this chapter is that it is not until we are able to see someone as correctly following the moves of our games (at least most of the time), that is, as accepting hinges that we can see that person as engaged in linguistic behaviour. At the same time, by accepting hinges, we acknowledge certain facts, and, therefore, hinges are not "lenses" through which we perceive the world. Unlike Coliva's, my argument does not offer a picture of us not being able to get outside of our conceptual scheme, but a picture of a practice which is open-ended. Before I present my argument, however, let me clarify the concept of relativism attributed to Wittgenstein.

7.2 Later Wittgenstein and Different Types of Relativism

Relativism of any kind involves a claim of the following general form:

X is relative to Y

Different kinds of relativism differ on one or both variables. Relativism with regards to a concept X is often further divided into the three theses (Williams M., 2007):

1. Dependence thesis: states that X cannot be understood or made sense of or applied outside of a certain system, and that its application, depends on that system.
2. Variability thesis: states that whatever X depends on can have (at least in principle) different forms.
3. Equality thesis: states that no system is better than any other; that there is no place outside all systems from which they could be compared.

These three theses allow us to express any form of relativism, however from our point of view only two are relevant. That is, we are going to be interested in two kinds of relativism commonly attributed to Wittgenstein: conceptual relativism and epistemic relativism. It is worth noticing that they can both be seen as substituting sets of hinges, or hinge-related concepts, as the Y variable in our general relativistic thesis.

In this section, I briefly discuss the idea of *On Certainty* implying conceptual relativism (section 7.2.1), and present epistemic relativism as the most plausible candidate for a form of relativism that might be present in *On Certainty* (section 7.2.2).

7.2.1 On Certainty and conceptual relativism

Conceptual relativism is attributed to Wittgenstein by, for example, (Glock, 2009), (Hacker, 1996). With regard to *On Certainty* specifically, the concept of hinges has been seen as constituting a conceptual scheme, and, as we have seen, this is exactly how the Framework Reading (even though they argue against conceptual relativism) sees Wittgenstein.

We can now use the schema from the previous section to define conceptual relativism:

- (1) Our description of the world depends on our form of representation/conceptual scheme/frame of reference/accepted hinges/ world view/form of life.
- (2) There are, at least in principle, many different possible frames of reference/ forms of representation/accepted sets of hinges/world views/forms of life.
- (3) There is no way of judging one form of representation/conceptual scheme/frame of reference/accepted hinges/ world view/form of life as better than the others. In particular, we cannot say that one system of concepts carves reality at its joints.

I have already argued against seeing *On Certainty* as endorsing the scheme/content distinction in Chapter Three, and the implausibility of seeing *On Certainty* as endorsing conceptual relativism is a consequence of that argument. That is, in Chapter Three I argued that it is a mistake to think about hinges as purely regulative, and empirical propositions as purely descriptive, and that one of the main consequences of the introduction of the concept of hinges is the blurring of that distinction. What is more, I argued that hinges play their regulative role by virtue of being descriptive. As such, the concept of hinges goes against, rather than reinforces, the idea of the distinction between scheme and content. Without the distinction, however, conceptual relativism does not get off the ground, as we cannot so much as express the dependence thesis.

Before I move to epistemic relativism I would like to point out the oddity of the Framework stance on the issue. On one hand the Framework Reading wholeheartedly endorses the scheme/content distinction, while on the other hand, it insists on the singularity of the scheme. It is, however, very difficult to see how, once we have the scheme/content distinction, we can argue against the idea of

multiple schemes, other than by the dogmatic assumption that we saw with Moyal-Sharrock and Stroll¹.

The other side of this relationship is shown in Coliva's view, which fails to refute relativism. To an extent Coliva admits this in her article, where she writes:

At a reflexive level, moreover, this exercise teaches us something about our own way of thinking, namely that it doesn't screen off the metaphysical possibility that there may be radically alternative world-pictures, but rather, their conceivability in detail from our own point of view. This, in turn entails that even if they existed, we wouldn't be able to recognise them as such, because if we got as far as to be in position to interpret them we would inevitably do so by the lights of our own world-picture and conceptual scheme. Thus, our own world-picture and conceptual scheme may well be metaphysically contingent, still they are unavoidable for us, and therefore, universal, if only from our own point of view. (Coliva, 2010, p. 21)

This is a radically sceptical conclusion, and in this way the Framework treatment of relativism is on a par with their treatment of external-world scepticism. The views that they argue against are both seen as metaphysical possibilities, but ones that we do not have resources to talk about; we cannot fully appreciate them from our viewpoint. As I argued in Chapter Three, it does not make sense to differentiate between scheme and content. The Framework Reading's endorsement of this distinction is a sign of its ambivalent attitude to the external perspective; it sees this perspective as unattainable, but at the same time somehow metaphysically legitimate. That is, from our perspective neither the scheme/content distinction nor radically different practices make sense. The difference between my interpretation and the Framework Reading is that the latter sees this as a limitation; the external perspective is something unreachable. If interpreted in the manner suggested by the Framework Reading,

¹ As Davidson puts it: "For if we cannot intelligibly say that they are different neither can we intelligibly say that they are one." (Davidson, 1973, p. 20).

Wittgenstein's position is not an alternative to scepticism or relativism, but a form of scepticism and relativism. In contrast, according to my interpretation, the external perspective is not unattainable, but an illusion, that is, it is something of which we cannot fully make sense (see Chapter Five, section 5.3).

7.2.2 Epistemic relativism – the outline of strategy

The second form of relativism attributed to Wittgenstein is epistemic relativism. This form of relativism is particularly strongly associated with *On Certainty* because this is the work where Wittgenstein is concerned explicitly with our epistemic practices.

Epistemic relativism can be expressed as the following version of the three theses:

1. What counts as knowledge/justified belief depends on an epistemic system.
2. There are at least in principle many different epistemic systems
3. There is no way in which we can judge one epistemic system to be better than another.

It is not clear which epistemic concepts should be the focus of a relativist reading of *On Certainty*. It seems that if Wittgenstein was an epistemic relativist, then he was a relativist about most of these concepts, that is, justification, knowledge, perhaps even rationality and logic. I will leave the issue vague as my argument holds for all of these sub-types of epistemic relativism. With regards to the Y-variable, commentators endorsing the relativistic reading seem to focus on the concept of hinge propositions, world-view, or form of life. The relationship between these concepts and that of “epistemic system”, which is what plays the role of Y in more standard forms of epistemic relativism, will be explored in the next section. This is how we can express the three theses using Wittgenstein's concepts:

- (1) Our epistemic judgments depend on our epistemic system/form of life/world view/hinges.
- (2) There are, at least in principle, many different epistemic systems/forms of life/world views/hinges. We can imagine (or perhaps there even in fact are) people/societies etc. holding different sets of hinges fixed.
- (3) There is no way in which we can judge different forms of life or sets of hinges as better than others.

I would also like to point out that the refutation of relativism is crucial for Wittgenstein's treatment of scepticism. As Michael Williams argues in (Williams M. , 2007), epistemic relativism is a form of scepticism stemming from the same source as the traditional form: the Agrippa's Trilemma¹, that is, the argument showing that, in order to justify a statement, we only have three options: circular justification, infinite regress or dogmatic assumption (Sextus Empiricus, 1996). Relativism can be seen as choosing the circularity option, but it can easily be brought back to its sceptical form. That is, if within our own epistemic system we accept that there are other, equally good and radically different epistemic practices which see different propositions as justified, then it is hard to see how we can claim that the things we think of as justified even by the standards of our own epistemic system. As a consequence, relativism can be seen as a form of scepticism.

There is, however, also a more optimistic consequence of this relation. We have already seen that hinges block the regress of justification by themselves not being justified (if by that we mean providing grounds), but also not in need of justification. The argument showing why no justification for hinges is needed,

¹ Sextus Empiricus talks about five rather than three modes, however for the task at hand this better-known version is more appropriate.

and why they are therefore indubitable, is likely to be successful against relativism.

In the next section I will argue that in the case of epistemic relativism and *On Certainty* it is already the first thesis of relativism, the dependence thesis, that cannot be maintained, and that therefore Wittgenstein is not an epistemic relativist.

7.3 Thesis One: Dependence

In this section, I will argue that in the case of *On Certainty* it is already the dependence thesis that fails. That is, it is not the case that according to *On Certainty* our epistemic judgments, that is, statements about what is justified, known etc. depend on hinges, or at least not in the sense required. The section is divided into two subsections. In subsection 7.3.1., I present a relativist picture of our epistemic practices. In section 7.3.2., I argue that *On Certainty* offers a very different picture, one where the dependence thesis is false, that is that our epistemic judgments do not depend on our epistemic system in the sense required by relativism.

7.3.1 The relativist picture

The traditional picture of epistemic relativism distinguishes between source principles such as, for example, “divination is an acceptable/reliable form of cognition”, or “testimony of experts in a given field can serve as justification”, or “you can rely on the testimony of your senses most of the time”, and applications of those principles, that is, particular examples where we refer to, for instance divination, in order to justify a particular judgment about the world. According to this picture, the particular judgments depend on the set of principles, that is, the epistemic system.

If we accept this picture, it seems plausible that we can have communities accepting very different sets of source principles, and that, since in order to judge some of them as better than others we would have to have a view point

outside of any such system, and at the same time we need a system in order to justify such judgment, we end up with a relativist picture.

The idea of ascribing such a picture to Wittgenstein relies on seeing hinges as something akin to source principles. We can use the Framework example of a hinge “I am not a brain in a vat”, or “external world exists” to illustrate the point. Such an example can be interpreted as saying that I can, in most cases, rely on my senses, that I can use such testimony as justification for my judgments. As far as textual support is concerned, such a picture can then be seen as supported by the following themes of *On Certainty*:

1. That the epistemic aspect of our practice “takes place within the system” as suggested, for example, by the following passage:

All testing, all confirmation and disconfirmation of a hypothesis takes place already within a system. And this system is not more or less arbitrary and doubtful point of departure for all our arguments: no, it 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)

2. That the epistemic system is constituted by hinges, as Wittgenstein suggests for example in the following passage:

If someone doubted whether the earth had existed a hundred years ago, I should not understand, for this reason: I would not know what such a person would still allow to be counted as evidence and what not. (OC 231)

Even though I agree that hinges do form a system, in the next subsection I will argue that rather than expressing anything like the dependence thesis, such claims should be understood as showing the interrelated character of our judgments as expressed in the following passage:

When we first begin to believe anything, what we believe is not a single proposition, it is a whole system of propositions. (Light dawns gradually over the whole.) (OC 141)

7.3.2. The alternative picture

In this section, I will argue that what Wittgenstein says about our beliefs forming a system only suggests that the beliefs are interrelated, but does not have anything to do with the distinction necessary for epistemic relativism to take off the ground. That is, Wittgenstein does not endorse the idea that we can differentiate between the rules governing our epistemic practices (the epistemic system) and the individual judgments about propositions being justified or amounting to knowledge, which are the results of applications of such rules.

What leads to this conclusion is reasoning very similar to the one presented in Chapter Three, where I argued that *On Certainty* blurs the scheme/content distinction. For the clarity of exposition, each step of my argument is presented under a separate heading.

Step 1

The first step in my argument consists in the uncontroversial (at least for Wittgensteinians) observation that our epistemic games, that is, the games of giving reasons, asking for justification and doubt, and so on, are normative in a minimal sense, that is, in the sense that not everything goes. What is more, as far as our game of making empirical judgments is concerned, it is our aim to arrive at epistemically sound judgments about the world because these are more likely to lead to true statements. As I argued in the last chapter, objective certainty is a crucial epistemic concept for Wittgenstein.

Step 2

The second step consists in a reminder of Wittgenstein's understanding of rules and normativity: rules are constituted by the practice of applying them. As a consequence, it is not the general formulations of a rule, which in this case we call source principles, which play the rule-constituting role. Rather, rules are constituted by particular application of those rules, that is, our treatment of particular statements as known, justified etc. (depending on which concept we

want to focus). Among those applications, it is the uncontroversially correct ones that are particularly important. This is one more sense in which “we use judgments as principles of judgment” (OC 124).

Step 3

By virtue of being linguistically correct, true and objectively certain, hinges are paradigmatic examples of correct applications of linguistic, epistemic and truth rules, and therefore play the rule-constitutive role. Even though, as we have seen, they are not justified in the normal sense¹, it is only because they are so objectively certain that we do not need justification for them. As I argued in the last chapter, they are paradigmatic examples of epistemically sound judgments.

Step 4

As a result, we arrive at a picture which is very different to the one of a relativist. That is, once we acknowledge that hinges play an important role in constituting our epistemic rules, we see that the individual judgments depend on the “system” but the system in turn also depends on individual judgments, and is, therefore, not a system in the same sense. What a relativist needs is a claim that this dependence only goes one way.

To see why this is the case, we need to examine more closely the other roles that hinges play. We have already seen that hinges constitute linguistic rules and truth-rules. What this means is that our epistemic rules have both factual and linguistic commitments. Consequently, it is not possible to disagree on epistemic practices alone. As we have seen in Chapter Two, lack of consensus on hinges does not result in disagreement; rather, we cannot see a person who does not accept hinges as participating in a practice at all. In that sense, we cannot conceive of alternative practices any more than we can conceive of hinges being false.

¹ That is justification understood as grounding.

What Wittgenstein's remarks on rules, when applied to our epistemic practice, show is that the practice is more complicated than the relativist takes it to be. We do not have a simple relationship between an epistemic system and instances of it; instead, the rules that supposedly constitute the system depend themselves on the practice of applying them. Moreover, the applications of the rules are not isolated; they are part of our practice of talking (rigorously) about the world, and have descriptive and linguistic aspects. It is in this way that we do not have an "epistemic system" of abstract rules on which our epistemic judgments depend.

We can use the metaphor of the game of three cards again here in order to illustrate the point. Let us start with the traditional relativist picture. To do that let us imagine two radically different simple epistemic systems with regard to the game of three cards. Let us say that one of them is based on the source principle "Divination is a reliable source of cognition", the other says the same about perception. In order for those principles to be different in the appropriate sense, they need to give different results in terms of the propositions they see as justified. Let's say that Player A who endorses the first system says "this is a queen" when pointing to the first card from the left, while Player B who endorses the second system says the same about the second card to the left. When asked for justification, Player A refers to divination, while Player B states that they were able to visually trace the moves of the card, and that is where they saw the queen being placed. We then reveal the cards and show that Queen is the second card to the left. There are two types of scenarios possible at this stage. Either Person A admits that they lost, and starts to question the idea that divination is a reliable source of knowledge. Or they might doubt a hinge, that is, question the fact that the second card to the left is the Queen, even now that the cards are facing up. In the first scenario, what we have is a refinement of an epistemic practice. What we have in the second scenario, is a situation in which it becomes clear that Player A is not actually participating in our practice. There are several ways in which we can react: we can ask the person to watch a few rounds of the game to see if they can understand the game, or we can just give up and exclude them from practice.

This is how Wittgenstein describes such a situation:

If someone said to me that he doubted whether he had a body I should take him to be a halfwit. But I shouldn't know what it would mean to try to convince him that he had one. And if I had said something, and that had removed his doubt, I should not know how or why. (OC 257)

I discuss other available options in the next section. What is important, however, is that none of them suggest anything like relativism.

It has been established that there is a strong analogy between conceptual and epistemic relativisms, and that neither of those is endorsed in *On Certainty*. The task that remains is to explain away the textual evidence provided in support of relativist reading of *On Certainty*. This is what I attempt to do in the remaining section of this chapter.

7.4 Why so many different examples of different practices?

In this section, I address the textual evidence given in support of the claim that *On Certainty* invites epistemic relativism. Such evidence is centred around Wittgenstein's examples of communities engaged in very different practices, potentially based on different hinges than ours. We find examples of such practices in *On Certainty* itself, for example, when Wittgenstein talks about a practice where people believe they can make rain (OC 92) or in the following description of the Catholic doctrine:

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. (OC 239)

It is also our own epistemic practice at the stage when *On Certainty* was written that has been suggested as an example supporting relativism. It is so because among examples of hinges Wittgenstein famously includes the proposition "no

one has ever been on the moon" (OC 108, 171), which is not only not a hinge for us but a false empirical proposition.

We also find similar examples in Wittgenstein's other writings. The example most commonly discussed in relation to the relativism is the example of a community who measures wood by the volume about which Wittgenstein writes in the *Remarks on the Foundation of Mathematics*:

Very well; but what if they piled the timber in heaps of arbitrary, varying height and then sold it at a price proportionate to the area covered by the piles? And what if they even justified this with the words: "Of course, if you buy more timber, you must pay more"? (RFM 149)

Examples of practices based on different hinges seem to be problematic for my interpretation since I just argued that we cannot make sense of them. In what follows I will demonstrate that the examples, which are interpreted as showing different epistemic practices, or, more generally, practices based on a different set of hinges, are not that under closer examination. Instead they fall into one of the following categories:

1. Communities interpreting the same sentence as having different meaning;
2. Communities with different amounts of evidence available to them for particular propositions;
3. Communities focusing on a different fragment of the practice (not the practice of making empirical statements);
4. Communities with different practical circumstances/purposes.

I discuss these under separate headings.

Category 1: Different meanings

If we imagine the facts otherwise than as they are, certain language-games lose some of their importance, while others become important. And in this way there is an alteration - a gradual one - in the use of the vocabulary of a language. (OC 63)

This passage of *On Certainty* describes the first of the categories, that is, examples of communities, whose practices use words, or sentences in a

significantly different way and therefore these have different meaning. In that sense what we have in those instances is not a genuine disagreement, but rather a misunderstanding. It is quite trivial to say that we may disagree on the truth-value of a particular sentence if we mean different things by it. However, the consequences of this trivial observation are important. In particular, if the different meanings involved are not dramatically different, it might be hard to notice that they are actually different.

Before I move to the discussion of a particular example, I would like to point out that categories 3 and 4 above can be seen as a subcategory of category 1. That is, in those cases we also have different meanings, but since the difference in meaning in cases falling under categories 3 and 4 are of an interestingly different kind, I discuss them separately.

Now, on to an example of a case of different practices falling under category 1. Consider *On Certainty*'s example of people treating "the earth is flat" as a hinge. It is an interesting example because it does not require us to imagine any unusual scenario, all we need to do is recall that there was, in fact, a time when our own community used to think that the earth was flat, and it is not completely unreasonable to think that it might have been a proposition removed from doubt¹. What was meant by it, however, is very different from what the sentence means today. To establish that, we need to look at the consequences of this proposition, that is, at other moves it enables, its use in the language game, in our practice of talking about the world. What was meant a long time ago when such a statement (perhaps) was treated as a hinge was likely something like: you cannot fall off the Earth's edge, it is not hard to keep your balance while on Earth etc. Then, in the process of developing a better understanding of physics, the meaning began to change slowly, and at some point the proposition got dislodged from its hinge status and became just an empirical proposition (with

¹ If we think about "the Earth is flat" as a scientific hypothesis, then it is not a hinge in the sense discussed in this thesis. It might still be a methodological hinge in the sense discussed by Williams (see for example Williams, 2004), however the pluralism of those does not lead to epistemic relativism.

different meaning), and then disproven. That is how we arrive at our present-day false statement that the earth is flat. It is in that sense that “further experiments cannot give the lie to our earlier ones, at most they may change our whole way of looking at things.” (OC 292)

Category 2: Different evidence

Another way in which our epistemic practices may differ is in the amount of evidence available for or against certain propositions. This is the category under which Wittgenstein’s example of “Nobody has ever been on the moon” falls. For Wittgenstein, it is an example of a hinge proposition, and that is the context in which it is considered in *On Certainty*. Today we are, of course, convinced that it is false. Therefore, there seems to be a genuine disagreement between us, contemporary readers of *On Certainty*, and Wittgenstein and his contemporaries. It is important to note that the proposition as uttered by Wittgenstein is true (he does not say that no one will ever go to the moon, in fact he actually points out things that need to be taken care of in order for someone to go to the moon). What is more reasonable is to think that, if we were to tell Wittgenstein about the developments in physics and engineering since 1951, and how it is possible to send someone to the moon, and show him the recording of the moon landing and so on, he would come to agree that now it is possible to send someone to the moon, and that in fact someone has been to the moon.

Martin Kusch has recently challenged this last claim. Kusch argues that it is false that “if Wittgenstein had been presented with our evidence he would have accepted the possibility of landing on the moon”, because in the closest possible world Wittgenstein has not yet been systematically re-educated (Kusch, 2013). This is an interesting point, however, what it shows is not that we therefore have two dramatically different systems or practices, but, rather, that understanding requires some good will, time and effort. If Wittgenstein refused to catch up with contemporary physics, it would not mean that his epistemic system is completely different, but rather that he is stubborn, or lazy, and wrong about the moon landing. Even more importantly however, if that was the case, and he continued

to treat “no one has ever been on the moon” as a hinge, he would exclude himself from a large part of our practice; he would simply be treated as still in need of learning how to participate in the practice.

Although this example does not entail relativism, it leads to the following problem: it seems that it is possible to hold hinges that are false if we do not have enough evidence. If that was the case, that would be a problem, particularly for my interpretation of hinges, since I want to say that hinges do have a truth-value. Luckily, this is not the case; the example is not a case of holding a false proposition as fixed. It is so because of the fact that I mentioned earlier, that it is true that no one had been on the moon before 1951, when the remark was made. Wittgenstein does not claim that no one will ever travel to the moon. If he did, that would be a poor example of a hinge; there is nothing certain about it.

Category 3: Empirical and non-empirical games (different mythologies)

Another category under which examples of practices given in support of relativism might fall is a case of the isolated denial of a hinge. An example, which can be classified as such, is presented in Wittgenstein’s discussion of Catholicism. In *On Certainty*, he mentions a hinge “every human has two human parents”, and the fact that, according to the Catholics, Jesus only had a human mother.

In this case we seem to have a straightforward conflict, that is, a case where a proposition that seems to be a relatively uncontroversial example of a hinge is clearly denied. What is interesting about both of these examples is that they do not have any impact on the practice of talking about the world. That is, Catholics do not see their belief that Jesus had only one human parent as a reason not to treat the claim that: “everyone other than Jesus has two human parents” as a hinge: it does not undermine that claim at all. Nor is it supposed to undermine any propositions within biology. It can even be argued that, for Catholics, it is such an important dogma exactly because it is in clear conflict with our experience (these will of course depend on our theological views), and because it is an exception to a rule. Crucially, however, it does not have any impact on their

use of the hinge in all other contexts; Catholics still use the hinge in all contexts other than that of their faith in exactly the same manner as non-Catholics do. In that way, it does not have any impact on the game of making empirical statements, and it is, therefore, fair to say that the proposition is actually from a different game, a practice that has little to do with our game of describing the world, and is more concerned with things such as our religious and ethical discourses. I believe this is what Wittgenstein means when, in (NF, 141) he makes a claim about a different community, that “if they were to write it down, their knowledge of nature would not differ *fundamentally* from ours. Only their *magic* is different.”

Category 4: Different purposes

Finally, we have practices that have different purposes to ours. This is where the example, which Wittgenstein discusses in *Remarks on the Foundation of Mathematics* of the people who measure wood by square metre, comes in. We can understand how such a practice makes sense, if people involved in this practice do not use individual pieces of wood for building, but, for example, see the piles of wood as works of art. In that sense, the example does not describe cases of genuine disagreement on hinges, but rather a shift of context. We can easily imagine expanding our practice to incorporate measuring wood in this way if we were to endorse the same purpose.

In conclusion, we have shown that none of the above examples actually constitutes a case of a practice based on different hinges. What I would like to address lastly is the question of why the examples are present in Wittgenstein's writing if the purpose is not to support relativism. I think that the reason lies in Wittgenstein's target in *On Certainty*: to show what is wrong with scepticism. Since the sceptic is attempting to doubt hinges, the possibility of seeing the sceptic as simply participating in a different, but equally valid, practice is an option which needs to be considered. As I have shown in the reconstruction of Wittgenstein's argument against relativism, this is not an option that

Wittgenstein endorses. What his stance is, with regard to the sceptical challenge, is the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter 8

On Certainty and Sceptical Hypotheses

As I mentioned in the Introduction, *On Certainty* is concerned with two separate forms of scepticism: the problem of the regress of justification, and Cartesian scepticism. I see them as related forms of scepticism, and, in my view, *On Certainty* successfully dismisses both of these views through separate but not unrelated arguments.

It seems clear that the indispensability of hinges argument has successfully addressed the concerns raised by the problem of the regress of justification. That is, by demonstrating the way in which our practice of talking about the world requires us to remove certain propositions from “the route travelled by enquiry” (OC 88), it shows that the picture assumed by the sceptics is wrong. It is not the case that we can only base knowledge on knowledge. Rather, some propositions, even though we cannot offer grounds for them, are also in no need of grounding, not because of the kind of propositions they are, but because of the role they play, or the space they occupy, in our practice at a given time.

At the same time, it seems that there remain some compelling reasons to doubt hinges. That is, we have not yet addressed the strongest weapon in the sceptic’s armoury: arguments involving sceptical hypotheses. Such arguments are seen as showing that our whole practice, including hinges, might be, in some sense,

wrong. As a result, we have two arguments, the indispensability of hinges argument, and the sceptical argument based on a sceptical hypothesis (hereafter “the sceptical argument”), each leading us in opposite directions. It is, therefore, not until we demonstrate what is wrong with the sceptical argument that the treatment of scepticism is complete.

This is not to say that the two issues, that is, the indispensability of hinges and the diagnosis of the flaw in the sceptical argument, are not linked. On the contrary, the two are very closely related. Any attempt at doubting hinges has to invoke a sceptical hypothesis of a kind. It is so because, by virtue of the maximum certainty that we, by definition, attach to hinges, they cannot be doubted by any “ordinary” means. In order to provide any motivation for doubting a hinge, we need to invoke scenarios which call into question not just the hinge in question, but most or all of our beliefs¹. For example, if we were to try to doubt the hinge that there is a tree in front of us, we could not use reasons such as short-sightedness or fog. It is so because the presence of these circumstances precludes “there is a tree in front of me” from being a hinge; hinges need to be certain. Consequently, what we have to invoke is some sort of a hypothesis which is completely consistent with all the evidence we have, but at the same time falsifies hinges. What satisfies these criteria are hypotheses such as the malicious demon and the brain-in-a-vat. The aim of this chapter is to show that such hypotheses are senseless, and, therefore, that arguments involving them are also senseless. If successful, this will complete the dissolution of Cartesian scepticism.

The chapter has the following structure:

¹ Even if we come up with a skeptical scenario, which targets one particular hinge, it can easily be generalized to other hinges. That is, we can invent sceptical scenarios where the malicious demon only decided to give us one false impression, that of a tree in front of us. However, once we are happy to entertain this hypothesis, there is no reason why we would not entertain one where all our beliefs are falsified; the two hypotheses are very much alike.

- First, in section 8.1, I present the sceptical hypotheses, and the structure of the sceptical argument involving them.
- Section 8.2 discusses the Framework strategies of dealing with the sceptical argument, and shows that these are not successful.
- Section 8.3 puts forward an interpretation of passages of *On Certainty* concerned with the sceptical argument, which sees them as showing that the argument is unsuccessful due to the sceptical hypotheses it uses being senseless.
- In the last section (section 8.4), I explain away the draw of the sceptical argument, and the illusion of it being meaningful.

8.1 The sceptical argument

The sceptical argument that I will focus on in this chapter relies on invoking some sort of sceptical scenario, that is, a hypothesis which is consistent with our experience, but at the same time falsifies at least some of the propositions that we take to be true.

The first version of the argument, which invokes a global sceptical hypothesis, comes, of course, from René Descartes. In the First Meditation he writes:

Suppose then that I am dreaming, and that these particulars – that my eyes are open, that I am moving my head and stretching out my hands – are not true. Perhaps, indeed, I do not even have such hands or such a body at all. (Descartes, 1986, p. 13)

What Descartes shows is that a hypothesis that I am now dreaming is on one hand indistinguishable from a scenario where I am awake (as often when we sleep we have impressions as vivid as when we are not), and, on the other hand, many propositions that I take to be true, for example, “Agata is now typing”, are false if the hypothesis is true.

This particular sceptical scenario, that is, the dream hypothesis, is the only global sceptical hypothesis that Wittgenstein refers to in *On Certainty* (see OC 383, 648, 676) however, what he says about it can be applied to all of the other radical

hypotheses as well. It is important to note that the dream hypothesis is different from other radical sceptical hypotheses in the two following ways. Firstly, it relies on an empirical claim that our dreams are vivid enough to be indistinguishable from the state of being awake. Secondly, as Descartes famously points out, the dream hypothesis still leaves some of our knowledge, such as truths of geometry, intact, and therefore is not as radical as some other hypotheses. Descartes invokes an even more radical scenario a few passages later:

I will suppose therefore that not God, who is supremely good and the source of truth, but rather some malicious demon of the utmost power and cunning has employed all his energies in order to deceive me. I shall think that the sky, the air, the earth, colours, shapes, sounds and all external things are merely the delusions of dreams which he has devised to ensnare my judgment. I shall consider myself as not having hands or eyes, or flesh, or blood, or senses, but as falsely believing that I have all these things. (Descartes, 1986, p. 15)

If we imagine that an all-powerful malicious demon is deceiving us, then all our knowledge becomes threatened, even the knowledge of geometry or mathematics, as we are fully at the mercy of the deceiver. That is, all of the propositions that we take to be true can be false under this hypothesis, as the deceiver can put whatever thoughts they like “into our heads”. Due to Putnam’s seminal article (Putnam, 1981), the malicious demon hypothesis has been replaced in more recent debates by a brain-in-a-vat hypothesis, that is, a hypothesis that one is a brain in a vat stimulated by a powerful computer program which feeds it an experience of the external world. A version of this hypothesis using a scenario inspired by the film “The Matrix”, has also been popular in recent years (Irwin, 2002), (Chalmers, 2009).

It might not be a coincidence that Wittgenstein chooses the dream hypothesis as his focus, since, as I will argue in section 8.3 of this chapter, it is the apparent and tantalising possibility of radicalising the sceptical hypothesis that ultimately reveals its senselessness. In this way, it might be that Wittgenstein sees the dream hypothesis as the strongest of the hypotheses exactly because it is less

radical. Wittgenstein's strategy against the sceptic, if successful, is successful against every version of the argument for global Cartesian scepticism.

We are now ready to formulate the argument that is the subject of this chapter:

- (1) I know an ordinary claim P, only if I know that the brain-in-a-vat/dream/malicious demon hypothesis is false.
- (2) I do not know that the brain-in-a-vat/dream/malicious demon hypothesis is false.
- (3) Therefore, I do not know the ordinary claim P.

The argument is a *modus tollens* so it is clearly valid. Moreover, both premises are often seen as intuitive. It is, therefore, unsurprising that, as I mentioned in the introductory chapter of the thesis, it has had immense impact on contemporary epistemology, shaping many debates within the discipline. Throughout the history of epistemology, the argument has been challenged in many different ways. Some accounts attempt to refute scepticism by rejecting the first premise, usually by denying the closure principle, others by trying to show that premise two is false. Under some interpretations, Moore's account is seen as an example of the latter strategy. That is, Moore is seen as reading the argument in the following way: since the conclusion of the argument is false, and it is valid, we need to look for the culprit among the premises, and, since the first premise is highly intuitive, we can actually use the argument to establish that premise two is false. Contextualism, on the other hand, deals with the sceptical argument in yet another way by focusing on limiting the damage caused by scepticism, while at the same time conceding to the sceptic that his argument is rationally compelling in some contexts.

I believe that Wittgenstein's treatment of the sceptical argument is different from these replies. Unlike some of the proponents of the aforementioned views, Wittgenstein does not put forward an answer to scepticism. Neither is he conceding anything to the sceptic. According to my interpretation, Wittgenstein shows that any argument of the kind presented above relies on a meaningless

hypothesis. Therefore, it cannot be meaningful itself. I believe that this is the sense in which Wittgenstein dissolves rather than solves the problem of scepticism. As we will see, this does not mean that he is dismissive of the sceptic; in *On Certainty* he treats the sceptic very seriously, granting much of what the sceptic needs in order to get their argument off the ground. For example, he discusses our practice of talking about the world as pure enquiry. Nonetheless, his conclusion is that there is no meaning that we can associate with a sceptical hypothesis that would be anything like what the sceptical argument requires.

This view stands in opposition to the Framework Reading. Before I start my own reconstruction of Wittgenstein's treatment of the sceptical argument, I would like to first discuss the standard view, which is dominant in the literature, and demonstrate why it does not offer a satisfactory response to the problem of Cartesian scepticism.

8.2 The Framework Reading

The Framework Reading of *On Certainty* gives rise to one strategy of showing that the dream argument (as well as the evil demon and brain-in-a-vat arguments) are not successful. This strategy has three components. The degree of attention given to each of the components varies between the various commentators who adopt the Framework Reading¹.

The first component consists in showing that the doubt which an argument for Cartesian scepticism expresses, does not fulfil the criteria of doubting, and is, therefore, not genuine doubt. I discuss this in more detail in section 8.2.1.

The second of these components is the idea that negations of sceptical hypotheses, that is, statements such as "I am not now dreaming", "I am not a brain in a vat", "There are physical objects" and "The world did not come into

¹ Moyal-Sharrock's view was discussed in section 1.3.3 of Chapter One. Since it is not relevant to my interpretation of the argument it is not revisited here.

existence a few minutes ago” are hinge propositions and therefore cannot be doubted. I discuss this strategy in more detail in section 8.3.2.

Some of the commentators also address the argument directly, and show that it is senseless. I present their argument in section 8.3.3, where, even though I agree with their conclusions, I argue that their attempt fails.

8.2.1. Wrong kind of doubt

We have already seen the Framework analysis of the ordinary doubt in the context of the Framework view of why we cannot doubt hinges (see Chapter One). Coliva refers to it again in her discussion of the dream hypothesis where she writes:

First, there can't logically be reasons to think it is probable, or even possible, that there be an evil genius, whose pastime is to deceive us. Hence, the first thing Wittgenstein would remark is that since such a hypothesis has nothing in its favour, it is irrational and, therefore nonsense. (Coliva, 2010, p. 120)

There are two problems with such an approach. Firstly, the claim that, if nothing speaks in favour of a hypothesis than it means that it is senseless, is highly unintuitive. There are many meaningful hypotheses which have nothing in their favour: the hypothesis that I am not in my office, that I cannot type, that the Earth is flat. All of these, however, are false and therefore meaningful. While it is irrational to hold a belief for which one has no evidence, it does not make the view nonsensical, but, rather, false or likely to be false; these beliefs are only senseless in the sense that it does not make sense to hold them. Coliva's diagnosis does not allow for distinguishing between cases of nonsense and cases of false beliefs. As I will argue in what follows, the problem lies in distinguishing between “nothing speaking in favour of a hypothesis”, and “intelligibility of things speaking in favour of a hypothesis”. It is the latter that we have in case of sceptical hypotheses.

The second problem with the Framework's strategy is that it cannot take into account the possibility of understanding the sceptic as someone who wishes to

propose a change to our use of the words “to doubt”¹. That is, the sceptic can be interpreted as suggesting that there is doubt beyond ordinary doubt, and it is this proposal that needs to be addressed. However, it cannot be addressed by simply insisting that this is not how we use the word “to doubt” at the moment. The following passages of *On Certainty* clearly suggest that Wittgenstein did not see such an approach as sufficient:

The statement "I know that here is a hand" may then be continued: "for it's my hand that I'm looking at." Then a reasonable man will not doubt that I know. - Nor will the idealist; 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 shown in a different way. (OC 19)

But is it adequate to answer to the scepticism of the idealist, or the assurances of the realist, to say that "There are physical objects" is nonsense? For them after all it is not nonsense. It would, however, be an answer to say: this assertion, or its opposite is a misfiring attempt to express what can't be expressed like that. And that it does misfire can be shown; but that isn't the end of the matter. We need to realize that what presents itself to us as the first expression of a difficulty, or of its solution, may as yet not be correctly expressed at all. Just as one who has a just censure of a picture to make will often at first offer the censure where it does not belong, and an investigation is needed in order to find the right point of attack for the critic. (OC 37)

What these passages show is that Wittgenstein's treatment of scepticism cuts deeper than the Framework's interpretation suggests. That is, it is not enough to say that the doubt stemming from contemplation of sceptical hypotheses is somehow different, we need to show that it is illegitimate, that it cannot be made sense of. This is not to say that such a difference is not an important one. On the contrary, Wittgenstein asks the reader to imagine what it might be like “that we should first have to ask: what would such a doubt be like?, and don't understand this straight off”(OC 24).

¹ I discuss this issue in section 1.4.1 and 6.1.1.

8.2.2. Negations of sceptical hypotheses as hinges

The second component of the Framework Reading of Wittgenstein's criticism of the sceptical argument relies on including negations of sceptical hypothesis among hinges. Here are some examples of propositions which the Framework commentators see as hinges: "The earth exists", "There are physical objects", "There exist other people such as myself" (Moyal-Sharrock, 2004a, p. 165), "I am a human being", "The earth is very old" (Coliva, 2010). What is more, we find such examples espoused by commentators within other readings, such as Morawetz (Morawetz, 1978) and Wright (Wright C. , 2004c).

In what follows, for the sake of clarity, I will focus on just one following example.

(EARTH): The Earth is very old.

However, I take my remarks to apply to all examples listed above as well as other negations of sceptical hypothesis such as "I am not a-brain-in-a-vat".

It is important to note that (EARTH) can be interpreted in two different ways. The first way is to see (EARTH) as implying that it is not the case that the Earth came into existence a few days ago. If understood in this way, it is an obviously true statement and there is a lot of evidence we can offer in its support, for example my memory of myself and the things around me existing much longer than a few days. In this sense (EARTH) can indeed be seen as a hinge.

(EARTH), however, has a different meaning when used in a philosophical context where it is contrasted with the idea that the Earth sprung into existence a few days ago replete with evidence, including my memories, which deceives us into thinking that it is much older¹. If we understand (EARTH) in this way, there is nothing that speaks in favour of such hypothesis, but also nothing that speaks

¹ (Wright, 2004) makes this explicit by using the following sentence as an example: "The world did not come into being ten seconds ago replete with apparent traces of more extended history".

against it. What is more, by definition, there is nothing that could speak in favour or against (EARTH).

When the Framework commentators speak of propositions like (EARTH), they have the second meaning in mind, as evidenced, for example, by the fact that they see it as expressing the philosophical view of realism (Stroll, 1994, p. 159), (Moyal-Sharrock, 2004a, p. 149). If understood in this way, contrary to what the Framework Reading suggests, (EARTH) cannot play a hinge role. It is also under this interpretation that (EARTH) is a negation of a sceptical hypothesis.

Before we examine why that is the case, however, let me point out that in *On Certainty* Wittgenstein explicitly labels another example of a negation of a sceptical hypothesis, namely: "there are physical objects" nonsense:

But can't it be imagined that there should be no physical objects? I don't know. And yet "There are physical objects" is nonsense. Is it supposed to be an empirical proposition? - And is this an empirical proposition: "There seem to be physical objects"? (OC 35)

Moreover he explicitly suggest that negations of sceptical hypothesis are not hinges, in the following passage:

No one ever taught me that my hands don't disappear when I am not paying attention to them. Nor can I be said to presuppose the truth of this proposition in my assertions etc., (as if they rested on it) while it only gets sense from the rest of our procedure of asserting. (OC 153)

The differences between these two kinds of propositions, that is, hinges and negations of sceptical hypothesis, are paramount, and can be presented in the form of the following list:

1. Hinge propositions are things that could easily be used in contexts other than philosophical, whereas it is hard to think of any ordinary context where anyone would use negations of sceptical hypotheses.
2. Negations of sceptical hypotheses are not justified in the sense of justification two (see section 6.2.2), that is, justification understood as evidential support. There are not, and there cannot be, things that speak

in favour of them, as, by definition, sceptical hypotheses have to be compatible with any evidence.

3. Unlike in case of hinge propositions, we cannot really find a context in which negations of sceptical hypotheses would be ordinary empirical propositions. That is, for example, the proposition “there is a tree in front of me” which can be a hinge in many contexts, is not a hinge in a context where I am blind-folded and playing the game “What is in front of you?” There simply is not and cannot be a context where “I am not a brain-in-a vat” is an empirical hypothesis, unless the proposition means something other than what the sceptic and the Framework Reading take it to be.
4. We are not certain of the negations of the sceptical hypotheses. In fact, all contexts in which hypotheses of this sort are expressed are also contexts in which we start doubting whether they are true.
5. The negations of sceptical hypotheses do not play a rule constitutive role for our game of making empirical judgments. They are not connected with anything outside the discussion of the hypotheses themselves. That is, they are not connected with other moves in the game; rather, they seem to come at a different level.

It is important to note that what this list shows is not just that the negations of sceptical hypotheses are different from the examples of hinges from *On Certainty*. The way in which they differ is what prevents them from playing a hinge role. In particular, it is not clear at all how these propositions could contribute to constituting the meanings of words. If that, however, is the case, then how do we explain their indubitability? The Framework Reading’s response will likely involve pointing out that they are necessary presuppositions of practice, but this does not seem to be the case either. Our practice proceeds exactly the same way whether there are physical objects or there just seem to be physical objects.

It is, therefore, clear that negations of sceptical hypotheses are not only very different from hinges. But that they lack the exact characteristics that describe

what it means to play a hinge role. We can illustrate this by invoking the game analogy. Let's consider "This is a Queen" as uttered in the first stage of the game of three cards, when the cards are facing up. If interpreted in the ordinary way, it is a hinge. However if by "This is a Queen" we mean; "This really is a Queen as opposed to all of us here having an illusion of it being a Queen" than it is a statement that at best is completely irrelevant to the game of three cards and therefore plays no role, let alone a hinge role.

8.2.2 Framework Reading on the senselessness of the sceptical hypothesis

The third way in which the Framework Reading addresses the sceptical argument is most direct, and consists in showing that the sceptical hypotheses are self-defeating and therefore arguments involving them are senseless. We see first such an attempt in Stroll (Stroll, 1994), and it is then repeated by Coliva, who calls the argument "the linguistic argument against Cartesian scepticism" to emphasise that the argument relies on the assumption of understanding meaning in terms of use (Coliva, 2010). Since the arguments presented by Stroll and Coliva are very similar, I will address them together.

The following quotation from Stroll summarises well the argument to the conclusion that the dream argument cannot be coherently stated:

Insofar as X, the sceptic, wishes to make a certain kind of conceptual point, the utterance X uses to make it must be a genuine statement. Suppose X utters the sentence "I may be dreaming" (ME this is not what he does he asks you to do that). If X is dreaming, the requirement of statements making is violated (me no if he asks you, and you might be dreaming a sceptic asking you those question). For is X is dreaming, his remark is being dreamt as well (hmmm, important but not sure what it is doing here). In that case X is not really talking or thinking, and therefore the utterance is not a genuine assertion. It is not a genuine assertion because the background conditions for genuine assertion making have not been satisfied. These are that X is awake and is fully aware of what his words mean. But if X is asleep, these criteria remain unfulfilled. Therefore X's words are senseless when uttered under those conditions, and because that is so, X's statement or formulation of scepticism lacks conceptual force. (Stroll, 1994, p. 123)

Stroll's argument can be presented in the following form:

- (1) For an assertion to be meaningful, certain background conditions must be met.
- (2) One of these conditions is that the person making it has to be conscious and not dreaming/not a brain in a vat/not being deceived by a malicious demon.
- (3) Therefore, any remark made by someone who is dreaming is not a meaningful assertion.
- (4) This includes an assertion "I am now dreaming"/"I am a brain-in-a-vat"/ "A malicious demon is deceiving me"¹.
- (5) Therefore, the utterance "I am dreaming"/ "I am a brain-in-a-vat"/ "A malicious demon is deceiving me" is meaningful only if it is false.
- (6) Therefore, the sceptical hypotheses are self-defeating.
- (7) Therefore, scepticism is self-defeating, and cannot be meaningfully stated.

Let us consider the argument in more detail. The first premise seems uncontroversial. That is, Wittgenstein is a semantic externalist, and the meaning conditions of an assertion depend on the context. The following passage illustrates this point well:

"I know that that's a tree" is something a philosopher might say to demonstrate to himself or to someone else that he knows something that is not a mathematical or logical truth. Similarly, someone who was entertaining the idea that he was no use any more might keep repeating to himself "I can still do this and this and this." If such thoughts often possessed him one would not be surprised if he, apparently out of all context, spoke such a sentence out loud. (But here I have already sketched a background, a surrounding, for this remark, that is to say given it a context.) But if

¹ It may be argued that it is only a modal claim "I might be dreaming" that is required by the sceptical argument, where "might" is epistemic. Therefore, Coliva's and Stroll's argument rests on the assumption that the modal statement is only meaningful if the embedded proposition is meaningful. As I mentioned in Chapter One (subsection 1.4.2), Coliva discusses this assumption in her book (Coliva, 2010).

someone, in quite heterogeneous circumstances, called out with the most convincing mimicry: "Down with him!", one might say of these words (and their tone) that they were a pattern that does indeed have familiar applications, but that in this case it was not even clear what language the man in question was speaking. I might make with my hand the movement I should make if I were holding a hand-saw and sawing through a plank; but would one have any right to call this movement sawing, out of all context? - (It might be something quite different!) (OC 350)

With regard to the second proposition, this is something that Wittgenstein considers explicitly. Apart from the often-quoted passages 383 and 676 of *On Certainty*, which I will come back to later, the following passage from *Zettel* show that Wittgenstein sustained an interest in situations where conditions for meaningful assertion are not fulfilled, but the proposition in question is true:

Is someone speaking untruth if he says to me "I am not conscious"? (And truth, if he says it while unconscious? And suppose a parrot says "I don't understand a word," or a gramophone "I am only a machine"?) (Zettel 396).

Coliva uses the example of her being asleep in front of a computer and uttering in her dream "the computer screen is on", when it is actually on. It seems highly intuitive that someone in such situation is not saying anything meaningful; sleeping humans cannot make meaningful assertions.¹

It is worth pointing out that, at this stage, the difference between particular hypotheses might play into some difference in terms of intuitiveness of the claim. It is not clear what Wittgenstein would say about the brain-in-a-vat hypothesis, but, for argument's sake, let us assume that, if we were to observe a brain in a vat stimulated to have certain mental states saying "I am a brain in a vat", we would still have an intuition that they are not really making an assertion.

According to Stroll and Coliva, the self-undermining nature of the sceptical hypothesis becomes clear. The examples "I am now dreaming" / "I am a brain-in-a-vat" / "A malicious demon is deceiving me" are only meaningful if they are false.

¹ Coliva also argues convincingly that it is not just the assertion that is senseless; a corresponding act of judging cannot have any content at all either (Coliva, 2010, p.123.)

Therefore, sceptical hypotheses' inability to be both meaningful and true makes them self-undermining. In this way, the sceptical hypotheses similar to, "This is not written"¹, or "I am now silent".

Even if we accept that it is enough to show that scepticism cannot be meaningfully stated, the argument still does not answer the threat of scepticism. Instead, it pushes the sceptical argument one level up². That is, if we look at it from the first-person perspective, rather than the third-person perspective, we are faced with the following problem: is it the case that I am in a situation where I can make genuine assertions, or do I only have an illusion of making assertions? In other words: am I now actually speaking, or am I only dreaming that I'm speaking, do my words have meanings or am I only dreaming that my words have meaning? After all, in a dream it would still seem to me that I am indeed speaking, people would still appear as if they listened and responded, I would still have the impression of hearing my voice, I would still appear awake, etc. It seems that the argument does not let us out of the sceptical conundrum.

Even though I believe that Stroll's and Coliva's way of challenging the argument is unsuccessful, it does point us in the right direction. That is, it shows that if we are to doubt the existence of the external world, we also call into question the meanings of our words. It is this observation that will allow us to see the senselessness of the sceptical hypothesis.

I would like to point out that the combination of views endorsed by the Framework Reading is problematic in the following sense. On one hand, the Framework Reading accepts negations of sceptical hypotheses as meaningful propositions, specifically hinges. On the other hand, a removal of the negation somehow transforms them into something devoid of sense. The simultaneous

¹ The negation of this proposition is, randomly it seems, entered by Wittgenstein in OC 216.

² This is an objection that has been made to other similar refutations of scepticism as well, including Putnam's (Putnam, 1981).

endorsement of the two theses commits the Framework Reading to rejecting the thesis of the compositionality of meaning¹.

In terms of the status of this reply to the sceptical argument, it can be seen as dissolving scepticism in the following way: scepticism cannot be expressed, but it remains a metaphysical, ineffable possibility. This is not a surprising result given that it is exactly what the Framework Reading says about relativism (see Chapter Seven), which we can see as just another form of scepticism.

8.3 My view

According to my view, Wittgenstein shows that the sceptical hypotheses are more radical than they are taken to be, and this is where the problem with them lies. Wittgenstein's treatment of scepticism consists in showing that the external-world scepticism leads to meaning scepticism, and meaning scepticism is not a tenable position, not in the sense of not having a liveable nature, but in the sense of not being cognitively stable.

Wittgenstein's argument to that conclusion can, in my view, be derived from two closely connected strands of *On Certainty*. The first of these strands is the connection between hinges and the meanings of words. Doubting hinges undermines these meanings.

The second of the themes is that of global scepticism being analogous to the hypothesis that we have miscalculated in all our calculations. As I said in Chapter Two, this analogy shows two things: firstly, that what counts as a correct move in a game is determined in part from the actual moves made in that game. Secondly, that it is also the correct moves in the game that give meaning to linguistic expressions involved. As a result, as Williams puts it: "immunity from

¹ The thesis of the compositionality of meaning states that the meaning of a sentence is determined by the meanings of the expressions out of which it is constructed. As a consequence, if a proposition is meaningless then so is its negation.

error, across a wide range of cases, is a feature of language-use as such” (Williams M. , 2004a, p. 90). What makes the idea of miscalculating in all calculations absurd is that, in that case, there is no longer any difference between wrong and right calculations, any rules which we might follow disappear, and so does the meaning of expressions involved.

In that sense, my interpretation of Wittgenstein’s treatment of the sceptical argument sees the treatment as taking the form of showing that the sceptical hypotheses are much more radical than we might initially think, and than both the sceptic and the anti-sceptic take them to be. This idea of scepticism reaching further than intended is conveyed in passages where Wittgenstein compares the idea that we are globally wrong about external world and miscalculating in all calculations:

For 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. This is already suggested by the following: if it were not so, it would also be conceivable that we should be wrong in every statement about physical objects; that any we ever make are mistaken. (OC 54)

So is the hypothesis possible, that all the things around us don’t exist? Would that not be like the hypothesis of our having miscalculated in all our calculations? (OC 55)

It is also present in passages such as the following, where he considers the relationship between doubting the external world, and doubting that words have meaning:

The argument “I may be dreaming” is senseless (sinnlos) for this reason: If I am dreaming, this remark is being dreamed as well- and indeed it is also being dreamed that these words have any meaning (diese Worte eine Bedeutung haben) (OC 383)

The key for dealing with the sceptical hypotheses is, therefore, the same insight we saw playing a crucial role in the indispensability of hinges argument, namely, that statements about the world, that is, propositions with empirical content, play a crucial role in constituting the meanings of our words. In the case of the

sceptical argument, it shows that the hypotheses it involves are so radical that they cease being meaningful.

The sceptic might argue that, in the case of empirical statements the situation is different, that talking about the external world is different from the game of arithmetic, and the analogy does not hold. However, there is nothing to support such a claim once we acknowledge that the sceptical hypotheses, even though they are often perceived as such, are not empirical propositions themselves. Instead, they are devoid of any empirical content; by definition no evidence can be provided in support or against them, nothing can speak for or against them, they are consistent with any experience. At the same time they are meant to undermine all of our beliefs about the world. However, in doing that, the hypothesis destroys the meaning of words and truth-rules, it destroys the game in which it is expressed.

It is important to note the following difference between my interpretation and that of Stroll and Coliva. According to the Framework commentators, it is the truth of the sceptical hypothesis that is responsible for the destruction of linguistic meaning. That is, according to Stroll and Coliva, the utterance of a sceptical hypothesis has no meaning if the hypothesis is true. According to my interpretation, though, it is the consideration of the hypothesis that is already problematic; the hypothesis itself is not entertainable. It is so because we do not know what it means to imagine the hypothesis being true in the following sense: imagining it being true is not different from imagining it being false, there is no potential experience that we could picture that would allow to distinguish between the two scenarios. It is, therefore, the conceivability of the sceptical hypothesis that Wittgenstein questions; the problem is not with background conditions of meaningful assertion being missing, there simply is nothing that the assertion could express in the first place.

I therefore suggest the following reconstruction of Wittgenstein's insight:

- (1) What global sceptical hypotheses say is that “there only *seems* to be an external world (as opposed to it actually existing)”;
- (2) To say that there only seems to be the external world is like saying that our words only seem to have meaning;
- (3) No sense can be made of a contrast between our words really having meaning and only seeming to have meaning.

Or, in another formulation:

- (1) If the dream/brain-in-a-vat/malicious demon hypothesis is meaningful, then a hypothesis that we might be globally wrong about the meanings of our words is meaningful;
- (2) A hypothesis that we are globally wrong about the meanings of our words is meaningless;
- (3) Therefore, the dream/brain-in-a-vat/malicious demon hypothesis is meaningless.

Let us consider this argument (in the second formulation) in more detail. I take the first premise to be supported by the considerations above. With regard to the second premise, it is crucial to distinguish it from a statement that we are globally right about the meanings of our words. Consequently, my argument is different from saying that a sceptical hypothesis is analogous to the hypothesis that our words have no meanings, and, since our words clearly have meaning, the brain-in-a-vat hypothesis must, therefore, be false. The hypothesis that we might have miscalculated in all calculations, in the sense that it is analogous to the sceptical hypothesis, is not false; it is meaningless, as entertaining this idea annihilates any understanding of what “miscalculate” means.

What we can understand is that a particular utterance has no meaning, for example, we can understand that it is a senseless utterance if a parrot says: “I am speaking”. We can also understand a hypothesis that we humans, as a species, might not have mastered language, and therefore the sounds we make have no meaning. What we cannot understand, however, is the contrast between words

having meaning, and words *seeming* to have meaning. This is what makes the hypothesis not false, but senseless.

Even though my interpretation of Wittgenstein's remarks on the dream argument is significantly different from Stroll's, I think that the following conclusion he makes about the importance of Wittgenstein's argument is exactly right:

Wittgenstein's overall strategy is here is to show, first, that the sceptic/idealist positions is senseless, and second that Moore's attempt to confute it is also senseless. This is a very strong result. If we take Moore and his sceptical/idealist opponents to be representative of the Western philosophical tradition, Wittgenstein can be interpreted as arguing that the standard treatments of dreaming, knowing and doubting in that tradition are senseless. (Stroll, 1994, p. 120)

8.4 The appearance of sense

The last task remaining to complete the reconstruction of Wittgenstein's treatment of scepticism is that of explaining where the illusion of sense in the sceptical hypothesis stems from. I believe that the answer to this question is twofold. Firstly, it stems from the fact that we can easily understand doubt in a particular statement, that we can be wrong in our individual judgments. It is easy to think about global sceptical hypotheses as simply bigger examples of the same kind, and, therefore, miss the fact that speaking about all of our judgments changes the level of discussion, and is an attempt at looking at our practice from an external perspective.

Secondly, as I already mentioned, we tend to think about sceptical hypothesis as empirical. This is understandable given that the sceptical hypothesis seems to consist of some familiar components, for example, we know what a brain-in-a-vat looks like, we may possibly have an understanding of misperception. Our telling of the sceptical story sometimes even involves the concept of finding out

that we are a brain-in-a-vat¹, something that makes no sense, as no experience can reveal that we are in a sceptical scenario, as both the sceptical scenario and the-external-world-as-we-know-it alternative are compatible with exactly the same experience, by definition. What makes the hypotheses senseless is the fact that they do not describe anything about our experience, instead they try to reach a deeper, metaphysical level. As Wittgenstein shows, the possibility that there is such deeper level is an illusion.

¹ (Pollock, 1986)

Conclusion

In the introduction of this thesis, I said that *On Certainty* offers a picture of our practice of talking about the world, which makes no room for scepticism. We can now see better the status of Wittgenstein's reply to scepticism.

Wittgenstein presents our talking about the world as a rule-governed, linguistic practice. Like in case of any other rule-governed enterprise, its normative character is not constituted via some external set of rules; those are only abstractions made for practical purposes. Rather, the rules of the practice of talking about the world, like of any other practice, are fixed by the actual practice of applying them and, in particular, by treating some moves as uncontroversially correct. Since in the case of the practice of describing the world, the moves of the game are empirical propositions, and being a correct move means being true, we end up with uncontroversially true empirical propositions, which are certain and indubitable by virtue of the regulative role they play.

As we have seen, this reasoning commits us to seeing hinges as true propositions, which play both descriptive and regulative role, and to seeing our relation to them as epistemic. Hinges are simply moves within the game of talking about the world; the only thing that is special about them is that their correctness cannot be questioned, not because of the kind of propositions they are, but because of the role they play.

Moreover, Wittgenstein's picture of the practice of making empirical statements presents this practice as open-ended and modifiable. In that sense, the practice does not have borders and without borders, or limits, or frames we cannot make sense of the idea of the outside of the practice and therefore neither can we make sense of the idea of an external perspective. In particular, as we saw in Chapter Seven we cannot make sense of the concept of radically different alternative practices, and as we saw in Chapter Eight, we cannot make sense of the idea of questioning the legitimacy of the practice as whole.

Consequently, the indubitability of hinges has been presented not as limiting: hinges are not limitations to our practice, something we are obliged to keep fixed regardless of the metaphysical possibilities that lie beyond. Rather they are expressions of how our open-ended practice is at a given moment. Hinges truly are like an axis around which our practice rotates: they do not limit, they do not frame, they are not in a particular place for any reason other than that the practice at this time requires them. To appeal again to the metaphor of a rotating body, the hinges are together the axis around which the practice rotates. We can change the practice of the giving of reasons, but, nevertheless, hinges are kept fixed until the practice itself changes.

This picture can be further applied to other questions regarding the later Wittgenstein's treatment of scepticism and as such opens the following avenues for further research.

The first way in which ideas presented in this thesis can be explored further would be to investigate how *On Certainty* can inform our understanding of scepticism about other minds. Often the private language argument from the *Philosophical Investigations* is seen as presenting Wittgenstein's stance on the issue. It seems however that *On Certainty* and the understanding of hinges put forward in this thesis can offer a different way of looking at this problem, especially given that a lot of what Wittgenstein says about the hypothesis that there might not be other minds seems to have similar status to the sceptical hypothesis about the external world.

Another avenue, which might be worth perusing, would be to look at how *On Certainty* can help us address the problem of induction. Unlike the other two mentioned forms of scepticism, that is external world scepticism and scepticism about other minds, the problem of induction is not based on a hypothesis which is consistent with any experience we might have. I believe Wittgenstein's treatment of this problem to have a very different status and I see the relationship between Wittgenstein's remarks on the problem of induction present in *On Certainty* and his treatment of external world scepticism to be an interesting subject.

The third way in which the implications of the interpretation put forward in this thesis can be investigated further is by applying the interpretation of hinges to discourses other than our practice of making empirical judgments. It would be particularly interesting to see how the concept of hinges understood as uncontroversally correct moves in a practice can inform our understanding of our practice of making moral (and potentially other value) judgments. If we were successful in recreating the indispensability of hinges argument for the practice of making moral judgments then it seems that we would have reasons to dismiss moral relativism on the grounds similar to those presented in Chapter Seven. A similar research project can be carried out for our religious discourse.

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