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TEACHING DIFFERENCES: AN EXPLICATION AND DEFENSE OF WITTGENSTEIN'S *ON CERTAINTY*

by

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A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Philosophy in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York.

2003

This Manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Philosophy in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

5/27/03
Date

Chair of Examining Committee

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Abstract

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Advisor: Professor Michael Levin

Wittgenstein's writing is notoriously obscure. And his epistemological views are not widely read and, as much as they are, they are not widely accepted. This dissertation is a defense of these views as published under the title of *On Certainty*. Given the obscurity of his writing and the variety of interpretations it lends itself to, in order to defend his position I spell out what I take Wittgenstein's position to consist in as well as what its aim is, namely a dissolution rather than refutation of the skeptical position. My aim is to bring to the forefront Wittgenstein's views as a real and worthy alternative to widely read responses to skepticism. Hopefully, this will help in alleviating the dismissive approach that many readers of Wittgenstein have towards his work.

Chapter one is a general overview of traditional responses to the problem of regress. I focus on foundationalist and coherentist views and pinpoint the impasses that such views lead to.

In chapter two I explain what Wittgenstein means by the term "weltbild", while also discussing aspects of *On Certainty* that relate to it. I also focus on aspects of Wittgenstein's earlier philosophy that are essential to understanding his more mature thought.

Chapter three deals with Wittgenstein's reaction to Moore's *Proof of the External World* and his views on certainty, knowledge and doubt. In the process of expounding

these, I argue against the idea that Wittgenstein is putting forward a foundationalist or a contextualist theory.

In chapter four I expound Wittgenstein's dissolution of skepticism of the external world. I argue that Wittgenstein dissolves skepticism by showing that lack of reason is not correlative with doubt.

In chapter five I take up three major objections leveled against Wittgenstein. The first comes from Grice's work on pragmatics and semantics. I argue that Wittgenstein does not commit the error of confusing the two but instead makes a valid point concerning the meaning, and use, of the term "knowledge" and related words. I then take up Ayer's direct objections to *On Certainty* focusing on Wittgenstein's position vis-à-vis defenses of common sense, the dream argument and idealist alternatives to common sense such as Berkeley's. Finally, I discuss Jonathan Adler's tacit confirmation view that he advances as an alternative to unsuccessful attempts against skepticism in which he includes Wittgenstein's.

Lastly, chapter six tackles the issues of relativism and verificationism that are the most often heard objections against Wittgenstein's work. I argue that characterizing Wittgenstein's later work as either verificationist or relativist does not do justice to his writing and is the outcome of a partial, and erroneous, reading of his work.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This has been a long journey. But it has been one I did not take alone. There are many people I need to thank who, in one way or another, played an important role in my life as a graduate student these past few years.

I owe more than I can ever express to Yannis Costopoulos whose support and patience made all this possible. And to Despina Stratigis, who kept pushing me on when I couldn't see the point anymore—her friendship sustained me through this, as through almost everything so far, and has added a sixth member to my family. Jo Frangou and George Siolas need special mention also. Two of my best friends who started their Ph.D. around the time I did and, though we were in different countries, we went through it all - work and play- together. I must thank Don Blair and Josh Kehler, my closest American friends, who struggled with me the past years. The patience and kindness they showed me still amazes me. I am deeply grateful. And Maja Turniski, always a friend willing to listen to me whine about all I could find a reason to and Maria Brincker and Katherina Romanenko who joined me at the end of my journey and made all the difference in the world. Thanks to Marc Nawyn, Soo-Jin Lee and Steven Pantusco for all the hours they spent on the phone with me debating issues that we disagreed on. And, of course, to Vaso Kindi, whose faith in me since my undergraduate years gave me strength to carry on and get as far as I did.

I must thank Rosemarie Iannuzzi, who took care of me like a mother at the Graduate Center when I needed it the most. I will never forget. Paul Horwich for all the time and support he gave me—his astounding insights showed me clarity of thought and this dissertation would not be what it is without him. Claudine Verheggen for her

enlightening comments on drafts of my dissertation and for her smile and encouragement she was always generous with. And John Greenwood and Shirley Tolbert for all their help, it was greatly appreciated.

Then there is Pietro Pagano. Without him this journey would not have had the colours it had. Maybe it would not have been worth taking at all.

And mostly, I must thank my family. Nikos, Daphne, Marianna and Manolis Vintiadis. Without them, all this would simply not have been.

This dissertation is dedicated to my grandmother, Elly Canellatos, who taught me love.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. EPISTEMOLOGY AND SKEPTICISM[1]

I know things. I know my grandmother died in 1997. I know that my best friend lives in Greece and I know there is a hole in my socks. I'm sure you know many things too. I'm pretty sure that if you live in New York City and have been out, or looked out, today you know that the sun is shining and it is a beautiful day. I think you believe me when I say I know and you know a number of things. But from the time of ancient Greece to today skeptics have cast a shadow of doubt on our epistemic right to believe the things we believe. In this chapter I will discuss the problem of regress as the starting point of the skeptical challenge and the various responses that have been offered as a way to overcome it. My aim is not to give an overview of epistemology for its own sake or to deal with the skeptical challenge per se. It is to outline the impasses of traditional epistemology in the area of the justification of our beliefs in order to set the stage for Wittgenstein. I want to give an account of what the background was when Wittgenstein proposed a new way for accounting for human knowledge which, in turn, encompasses a re-evaluation of the philosophical endeavor. I will discuss the different answers to the problem of regress that were in the philosophical air at the time that Wittgenstein was expressing his alternative to what constitutes responsible epistemic behaviour. I will mainly focus on two views which have been most influential in the history of philosophy and also at the beginning of the 20th century when Wittgenstein was forming his philosophical persona. One is foundationalism according to which justification has a

[1] An invaluable guide to the structure of this chapter was Robert Audi's book *Belief, Justification, Knowledge.*

two-tiered structure: some beliefs are self-justifying and other beliefs are justified if they are supported by those basic beliefs. The other is coherentism which denies that any beliefs are self-justifying and instead holds that beliefs are justified by belonging to a system of beliefs that support each other. In the process of discussing these views I will refer to philosophers and ideas that Wittgenstein could not have known about only if they offer some insight that will make what I am discussing more clear. So I will ask to be pardoned for any anachronism with the excuse that it is helpful in framing my discussion.

The problem of regress in epistemic justification has been with us at least since Aristotle discussed it in the *Posterior Analytics.* It is a problem that we are faced with when we talk of inferential chains of beliefs providing justification for knowledge. The problem that arises is the following. If I have belief, *A,* the question is, what justifies *A*? If it is another belief, *B,* the question will be what justifies *B*, and so on and so forth. If beliefs are justified only from being inferred from other justified beliefs, we have here the beginning of an infinite regress. The first belief in the series can only be justified if the last one is. So, the intuition goes, if we are to have any justified beliefs at all, there must be justified beliefs that do not take their warrant from some other belief. The problem of regress is not just a problem of avoiding an infinite regress of justification, it is the problem of stopping this regress without leaving our beliefs unjustified or inadequately justified. It is the problem of finding a satisfying answer to the skeptic who claims that if we don't have a firm grounding for our beliefs we can have no knowledge. According to Sextus Empiricus, Agrippa, an ancient Pyrrhonian skeptic, formulated five "modes" of argument that lead to the suspension of belief. The first is based on discrepancy in which we arrive at a conflict and we cannot decide for or against a particular belief so we have

to suspend judgment. The second mode is that of the above mentioned regress; we have no starting point for our argument and thus we cannot establish a justified belief. The third is the mode of relativity. Here we have beliefs about the appearances of objects and their relation with other objects but we have to suspend judgment about their true nature. The fourth mode is that of hypothesis which, he tells us, is the way of the dogmatist, who accepts as a starting point something he has not (adequately) justified. And the last mode is that of circularity in which the premises that are used to establish a conclusion need the conclusion to be established themselves—therefore, we have to suspend judgment for both the premises and the conclusion. So, in the spirit of Pyrrhonism, Sextus Empiricus tells us we have to suspend judgment because we have no better reasons to believe than not to believe.[2] The argument seems simple and convincing: here are the forms of argumentation we observe and none of them adequately justify our beliefs so if we want to be responsible and rational agents we must suspend judgment. But this is a difficult conclusion to accept because we want and need to have beliefs and because the idea that we cannot justify our beliefs makes us feel, at least, uncomfortable. So different theories of justification have been advanced in the attempt to save our beliefs from the skeptic's fatal blow.

One response given to the problem of regress is that, contrary to the Phyrronian belief, knowledge *can* be justified by appeal to an infinite series of beliefs in which a belief is justified by the previous belief in the series which, in turn, is justified by the one before that and so on. The originator of American pragmatism, C.S.Peirce (1839-1914),

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[2] Sextus Empiricus, Book 1, Chapter 15.

was one of the proponents of this view. [3] Even though Peirce was not widely studied at the turn of the century because of his radical ideas, he is worth mentioning because, as I will be pointing out in passing as we go along, many of his ideas were shared by Wittgenstein. Peirce offers a version of the Achilles paradox to make his point for an infinite series of justified beliefs, but I'll offer a simple example that may shed some light on why some philosophers have found this position appealing. Suppose I have a justified belief that what I am typing on is the keyboard of a lap-top computer. This belief justifies the belief that what I am typing on is not a phone, as well as the belief that it is not a shoe and the belief that it is not a mad cow either. This can go on endlessly just by substituting the *x* in "what I am typing on is not an *x*" with anything that is not the keyboard of a lap-top computer. Here is an instance, the argument goes, of an infinite number of beliefs we hold that are justified. So having an infinite number of beliefs need not imply that these beliefs are unjustified. This is not a good argument because it refers to beliefs that are entailed by a (justified) belief we already hold. In this case, we can reason that if we have a justified belief *A* then what is entailed by that belief is also justified. But this is plausible when we talk about forward justification so to speak--justification of beliefs entailed by a justified belief we already hold. We cannot say the same for backward justification, that is, for justification for the initial belief we hold (in this example, that what I am typing on is the keyboard of a lap-top computer). But this is the kind of justification we are looking for when we talk of epistemic justification. Even if this argument does not convince us of the implausibility of our having infinitely many beliefs there is another objection. It states that it is very doubtful that finite beings such as

[3] Peirce (1992), pp.26-27. In "Questions Concerning Certain Faculties Claimed for Man".

ourselves can have an infinite number of beliefs or know an infinite number of things. A formulation of the objection is the following. We might tend to think that we can have infinite beliefs because we believe that 1 is smaller than 2, 2 is smaller than 3, 3 is smaller than 4 and since there are infinite numbers we have infinite beliefs of this sort. But we reach a point where the numbers become so big that we cannot even grasp them so it is difficult to see how it can be part of our beliefs. We may hold the belief that any x is smaller than x+1 but that is one belief. The *x*'s that exist may be infinite, but the *x*'s we know, and hence the beliefs about *x*'s we hold, are not.[4]

In the view we have been discussing every belief we hold is inferred from some other belief in an infinite chain. There is yet another view that allows all our beliefs to be derived from other beliefs but this time in a circular chain. My belief *A* supports my belief *B* which supports my belief *C* and so on until we arrive again at my belief that *A*. In this case my belief *A* is used as a premise for what will in turn justify it and for this reason the argument has been considered to be viciously circular. I think the only way such a view of justification can be defended is by saying that justification is not linear but that our beliefs form a system and their justification comes from belonging to that system. This is the coherentist reply to the regress argument. This view was prominent in England at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century before the first world war among the Oxford idealists such as Bradley and Bosanquet. The idea behind coherentism is that the foundationalist attempt to ground our beliefs on a base of self-justifying beliefs doesn't work and thus leads to skepticism, because ultimately the base is left unsupported. So coherentist theories of justification support the idea that

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[4] Audi, p.183.

justification has a holistic character and that there are no beliefs that are basic. What is justified is not individual beliefs per se but a system of beliefs that in turn gives support to beliefs that cohere with one another within that system itself. Thus it is coherence that supplies us with justification.

There are two basic problems for coherentist views. The first one, which was pointed out by Bertrand Russell, is that there is no reason to believe that we can have only one system of coherent beliefs.[5] For every belief, even beliefs that are contradictory, there can be a coherent system it can be incorporated in. The question is, what makes one complete set of coherent beliefs more acceptable than another? Russell pointed out that the idea that all we experience is a dream is consistent with the rest of our beliefs, so why should we choose the common-sense idea that what we experience really exists independently of our minds? The Pyrrhonian skeptic would say that if coherentists cannot supply an adequate answer to this question then holding one set of coherent beliefs instead of another is purely arbitrary. If, on the other hand, the coherentists maintain that there is some reason for a choice, it seems they have abandoned coherentism and sailed into the waters of foundationalism, since the reason for holding one set of beliefs instead of another is not one of the beliefs in that set. As far as I know, and as Russell again pointed out, an adequate non-arbitrary standard for choosing between coherent and mutually incompatible systems has yet to be formulated.

The other problem for coherentism was pointed out by Bernard Bosanquet[6] as an objection to Bradley's very strict demands that all beliefs within a system must mutually

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[5] Russell (1959), p.122.

entail each other. This is the question of how such systems are related to the external world. If all that is required is internal coherence within a system of beliefs, then it is not clear how the connection can be made between this system of beliefs and reality except by chance. Nowadays, this is sometimes referred to as the isolation problem[7] which is exactly the problem of explaining how systems of beliefs that are coherent are not isolated from truth and thus how they can provide knowledge and justification. A contemporary example from Plantiga will show this difficulty very well. This is anachronistic (I have already begged your pardon for this little deviance) but it is helpful because it points very poignantly to the heart of the isolation problem. The example is the following: the Epistemically Inflexible Climber Ric has just climbed a mountain and is relaxing on a small plateau. Ric has a set of beliefs: that he is sitting there, that he is wearing his new shoes, that it is warm and sunny up there with a beautiful view and so on. So far, so good—his beliefs are all coherent. But let's suppose that he is struck by cosmic radiation which damages his brain. His beliefs have now become fixed and do not vary with his different experiences. So that when that night he goes to the opera and has the same experiential input as everyone else in the opera hall his beliefs are still the ones he had up in the mountain. He still believes that he is sitting on the plateau with his new shoes on, that it is warm and sunny and that there is a beautiful view from where he is sitting! Ric's beliefs are still coherent but they have no warrant for him. Something more is needed, and that is that beliefs be responsive to our experiences.[8] These two

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[6] See *Knowledge and Reality*. The debate between the Oxford Idealist is spelled out in detail in Passmore (pp.50-60), from which I benefit to refresh my memory of books and ideas studied in the past.

[7] Audi, p.194.

[8] Plantiga, pp.179-180.

objections are very strong points against a coherentist account and even though there have been a number of different formulations of coherentist theories of justification none seem to adequately resolve them. It is mainly due to these unresolved problems that coherentists views of justification have been eclipsed and foundationalists theories are more prominent.

Coherentists want to avoid terminating a chain of beliefs with foundationalist basic beliefs. The idea behind such theories of justification is that the Pyrrhonian skeptical argument can be overcome if we can find some basic beliefs that cannot be doubted. Now, as we have seen, coherentists accept circular chains of beliefs if they are large enough so that beliefs within those chains can justify each other. Foundationalists on the other hand, do not accept such circular chains. For them certain of our beliefs are non-inferential (basic or foundational) and all other beliefs are inferentially derived from these. So we have a finite chain of beliefs that terminates in beliefs that are not inferred from other beliefs. Aristotle in the *Posterior Analytics* held such a view regarding the structure of scientific knowledge, Descartes *Meditations* is the most famous exposition of foundationalist justification as a reaction to the general uncertainty of the 17th century and there subsequently have been various different formulations of it. According to all forms of foundationalism beliefs have a hierarchical structure, but foundationalist theories differ mainly in two points: what the nature of the basic beliefs is and how these basic beliefs confer justification to our other beliefs. What we can safely say about all version of foundationalism is that they all require that basic beliefs are not derived from others, are not supported by other beliefs but support them instead and that we have the epistemic right to believe them. Foundationalists do not accept the coherentist idea that a belief, *A*,

can be justified by another belief, *B*, just because we believe *A* because we believe *B*—there must be something and that is that *B* itself must be justified before it can be the basis on which we justifiably believe *A*.

Strict foundationalists like Descartes, claim that there are some beliefs (in Descartes' case the "clear and distinct ideas") that are certain, true and that we cannot be mistaken about. Other beliefs are justified and true if they are logically implied by those basic beliefs. Strict foundationalists insist on a deductive inference or a very strong inductive one so that there can be a guarantee for the unchanging truth of the non-foundational belief in question. Certainty is transmitted to non-basic beliefs from the basic beliefs through entailment relations that guarantee the truth of non-basic beliefs. More modest foundationalists are less stringent in their demands. Even though some intrinsic credibility is needed for basic beliefs, they need not be absolutely certain, they can even be defeasible, all that is needed is that they are not justified by other beliefs. Also, the justification of non-basic beliefs from basic beliefs need not derive from a strict deductive process-a probabilistic inference or one to the best explanation can be enough. All modest foundationalists agree that basic beliefs are non-inferentially justified but they differ as to what kind of justification basic beliefs have. Recently, there have been different formulations of the foundationalist position that were not available as such to Wittgenstein but the seed from which they developed was already in the air during his lifetime. Some contemporary foundationalists claim that basic beliefs are self-justifying. Others claim that justification of basic beliefs is not immediate, is not propositional and is not in the form of another belief but rather comes from sensory or perceptual experiences, for instance what I seem to perceive or I seem to sense. So if I see a skateboard in front

of me, this can support the foundational belief that there is a skateboard there, or at least that it appears to me to be so.

The most immediate objection to foundationalism comes once again from the Pyrrhonian skeptic. For a belief to be really basic, the objection goes, it can't just be a belief for whose justification we don't give reasons because in that case it would be nothing but arbitrary. Why hold this belief to be basic instead of another one? If there is a reason for its being basic then it is not really basic and there cannot be any basic beliefs like the foundationalists claim. If we don't want to ask what the reason is (because that would be leading us to the regress we are trying to avoid) and we accept it as such the Pyrrhonian will say that this is nothing but a form of dogmatism.

Another problem concerns the immediacy of the proposed basic beliefs. In the classical foundationalist tradition basic beliefs are either beliefs that are self-evident or beliefs that are about my immediate sense experience. It is still an open question whether there is such a thing as a self-evident proposition--be that a clear and distinct idea, an intuition, an a priori or analytic proposition or what have you. It is notoriously difficult to find satisfactory criteria for any of these. Well known are the problems with Descartes' clear and distinct ideas and the Cartesian circle as well as the problem Russell pointed out that it is not clear how we can distinguish true from false intuitions.[9] But even if we accept that there are such self-evident beliefs as the mathematical proposition "2+2=4" or the analytic proposition "All bachelors are unmarried men," it is not clear how such beliefs with such a minimal content can justify and support our other beliefs. Foundationalists then must address and answer the question whether there are self-

evident beliefs and if there are and their self-evidence is justification enough, why this is so. Obviously to rely on the "natural light of reason" to establish the reliability of our intuitions, or to rely on God to validate our innate ideas is not enough. These are typically used to show that our fundamental intuitions are somehow inherently reliable. Relying on God to prove any point though is not adequate because the existence of God must first be proven. And in turn, the notion of a "natural light of reason" remains ill defined if one cannot fall back on the solid foundation that the existence of God would provide if it were conclusively proven.

On the other hand, we can say that our basic beliefs have an empirical character, for instance that they are the products of our immediate sense experience. Thomas Reid, who believed that Descartes' representational theory of perception was an open invitation to skepticism, claimed we need no justification for our immediate perceptual beliefs.[10] This idea has had many excited supporters but it remains to be adequately shown how such beliefs can justify and support the whole structure of the rest of our knowledge. For classical foundationalism the problem of perception is still open. If our senses truly relate to us the character of external objects, it has to be shown how this happens. Which means that the belief that our senses correspond to reality must be justified and here we are again in the regress. If our senses just give us experiences that are not a correct

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[9] Russell (1959), p.135.

[10] Defending common sense, Reid, in *Inquiry and Essays* admits that our senses and our faculties of judgment are fallible but he insists that we are correct in relying on them. This is all that nature has given us to form judgments, Reid says, so we cannot and need not appeal to anything else to justify them—we cannot but believe certain things and we are thus justified in believing them. According to Reid's foundationalism our faculties, though fallible, are innate powers that in response to sensory stimulation and the sensations that follow from it, give rise to our conception of the qualities of objects and to our belief in their existence. The skeptic's mistake, according to Reid, is that he tries to deny something that our constitution demands from us.

representation of reality (or we cannot know whether they do or not) then they cannot really justify our beliefs about that reality. It seems that in this case the content of these beliefs is so limited that it is not clear how they can adequately support all the things that we presumably know. And Hume asked: how can our sense-data serve as the foundation for our belief in the continuing existence of the world even when our sense data have ceased to exist?

Lastly, there is the difficulty of how basic beliefs transmit justification to non-basic ones. As we have said, the classical foundationalist requirement of a deductive inference is far too strong. Given the skeptical challenge, even the beliefs that we have the most evidence for do not entail their truth. As Russell pointed out, even if we accept the intuitive self-evidence of the basic propositions, we will have to secure the self-evidence of every step of reasoning from these propositions to the ones that follow from them. But the more complicated and lengthy the line of reasoning, the more problematic this requirement becomes. For instance, even though Descartes is very lucid and has very strong evidence that he is sitting by the fire with a piece of paper in his hand, this does not entail that he is, in fact, sitting by the fire with paper in his hand because he might be dreaming. If we accept some other kind of non-deductive inference to secure knowledge, then it is not clear how justification can be transmitted from basic to non-basic beliefs because the relation based on such inferences is, by definition, defeasible. So in order to have a secure inference in these cases something more will be needed—some reason why such inferences are reliable. But if we could find such reasons, relying on basic beliefs for the foundations of our knowledge would not be necessary.

Descartes' attempt to base knowledge on *a priori* principles that in turn validate empirical judgments has been subject to a barrage of criticism. A characteristic criticism comes from Hume's *Enquiries*. Hume writes that Descartes,

> "...recommends an universal doubt, not only of all our former opinions and principles, but also of our very faculties; of whose veracity...we must assure ourselves, by a chain of reasoning, deduced from some original principle, which cannot possibly be fallacious or deceitful. But neither is there any such original principle, which has a prerogative above others, that are self-evident and convincing: or if there were, could we advance a step beyond it, but by use of those very faculties, of which we are supposed to be already diffident. The Cartesian doubt, therefore, were it ever possible to be attained by any human creature (as it plainly is not) would be entirely incurable; and no reasoning could ever bring us to a state of assurance and conviction upon any subject."[11]

If anyone was excited about Descartes' solution to his skeptical doubts he cannot be anymore after Hume. Hume showed us that not only our perceptual beliefs, but also our purely inferential ones, are not to be taken at face value. By the end of the *Meditations* Descartes believed that we know for certain that God, bodies and minds exist. Hume, revealing weaknesses in our reasoning and in the ways the mind organizes experience, questions Descartes view that reason can lead us to foundational beliefs. Hume tells us that we cannot show through inference that the continuity in nature that we perceive and the constancy and coherence of our perceptions are attributes of the external world. And, starting from the principle that all ideas come from impressions, he denies that we have a simple self that exists through time. Through his criticism of Descartes, Hume has now become the quintessential skeptic. The difference between Descartes and Hume is one of degree. Descartes very methodically sets up his doubt taking us step by step through his argument. He eloquently walks us through all the stages of his doubt and then resolves it

[11] Hume, pp.149-150.

all in one fell swoop by introducing the benevolent God. Once he establishes the existence of God, *voilá!,* he can prove the existence of the external world. Hume is a lot more tedious. He offers a brilliant analysis of our beliefs and shows us that we cannot rationally believe many of the things we do believe. But in the end he does not appeal to God to resolve his doubt. He realizes that that is not justification enough because it either leads to circularity, if used in the way Descartes did relying on clear and distinct ideas, or, if God's existence is accepted as a clear and distinct idea, it is an epistemologically brute assumption. Yet, even though in the end Hume concludes that the skeptical conclusion is the only possible one concerning knowledge of the world and its ways, he did not believe that we can subscribe to the Pyrrhonian doctrine and must suspend judgment. For him there are some beliefs, like our belief in the existence of the external world, that we are by nature conditioned to hold and that it is psychologically for us to doubt even though we can't justify them. Hume came along and shook the ground under philosopher's feet and left us with what Kant called "a scandal to philosophy", namely, that we cannot provide a satisfactory proof for the existence of the external world and we therefore have to go through life taking its existence on faith.

The search for foundations was very prominent at the time at which Wittgenstein started to get involved in philosophy. At the very beginning of the last century Wittgenstein was still an engineering student at the University of Manchester with an intense interest in the theory of mathematics. It was because of this that he first became acquainted with philosophy reading Russell's *The Principles of Mathematics*[12] which was an attempt to reduce mathematics to basic principles of logic from which the body of

mathematical knowledge could be derived. Frege too, a few years earlier and independently of Russell, had tried to base arithmetic on laws of logic in his *Fundamental Laws of Arithmetic's* and the *Foundations of Arithmetic*. There was a very Cartesian feel to all these works; trying to find some basic, self-evident axioms from which to prove mathematical theorems in order to establish the objectivity and certainty of mathematical knowledge. Russell's *The Problems of Philosophy* begins with a very Cartesian question: "Is there any knowledge in the world which is so certain that no reasonable man can doubt it?".[13] We can also see this implicit Cartesian orientation of the early 20th century empiricists in both Moore's and Russell's interest in sense data, the 20th century alternative to the earlier empiricists "ideas of sense". For Moore, they were what we immediately know, for Russell what we know by acquaintance and what we are directly aware of. But for both they are the starting point from which to establish knowledge of the external world. This tendency can be viewed in part as a reaction to the coherentism and holism of the Oxford Idealists. Moore, opposing Idealist ideas such as that there is no mind-independent reality, insisted on the truth of what common sense leads us to believe. [14] And Russell, who interestingly enough had a more Hegelian past than Moore, turned towards a defense of science as a reaction to the Idealists and their insistence that truth cannot be found in common sense or science but only in metaphysics.

In the spirit of trying to find the justificatory grounds for our knowledge, G.E.Moore attempted to free us from the skeptical predicament Hume had left us in a few centuries earlier by providing an argument to the effect that given that we do know that,

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[12] Monk, p.30.

[13] Passmore (chapter 9) was of a tremendous help for the historical information in the following passages on Moore and Russell.

for instance, a pencil exists and we couldn't know such a thing if Hume were right, then Hume is wrong.[15] Moore tried to defend common sense views about objects and to give a proof for the existence of the external world. He claimed that there are many things we know for certain even though we cannot prove them ("There exists at present a living human body which is *my* body", "The earth had existed for many years before my body was born"), and from which it follows that the external world exists. During one of his lectures he lifted his hand and said "This is a hand" and then lifting the other said, "This is another one" and inferred the existence of physical objects from them. As I shall discuss in the chapter on skepticism, Moore believed that this was a conclusive reply to skepticism. Following in the steps of Thomas Reid, he tried to stop the regress of justification by claming that we don't need justification that the external world exists because it is something we already know. Unlike Reid though, he faced the problem of how what we perceive relates to what we know because he believed that all we perceive is sense data. More to the discussion at hand, Moore was trying to defend common sense against the skeptic and the uncertainty in which Hume's and Descartes' philosophy left us. However, Moore offered these propositions as the indubitable foundations the foundationalists have been searching for and tried, by relying on common sense propositions, to beat the skeptic at his own game. There is some level of correct insight in Moore's remarks but there is also a weakness that seriously compromises his whole endeavour. In offering these propositions as the response to the skeptic, he acknowledges the skeptical problem as a valid one and accepts the foundationalist idea as the right line

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[14] See Moore (1993), *External and Internal Relations*.
[15] Moore (1993), p.71. See also Passmore, p.211.

of response. But the moment he does that and accepts the skeptic's criteria, he looses the game. The Pyrrhonian skeptics immediate response would be that Moore (just like Reid before him) is using the dogmatic mode of argument (the mode of hypothesis) accepting as a starting point something he has not adequately justified. So Moore still needs to show what it is that makes what he claims we know immune to the skeptic's attack. Moore is on the right track, he has gathered all the dry wood, but hasn't yet figured out how to light a fire. He is trying, from a philosopher's standpoint and within a philosophical tradition, to settle a question by denying the philosophical ground on which he stands. He is telling us that there are just some things we know as a matter of fact and that that should be enough to appease the skeptic. What he doesn't give us is an explanation as to how we come to know all the things he claims we know and cannot give a proof for. He also fails to explain where it is that the skeptic has gone wrong in asking for a proof that Moore is saying is so obvious that it may even be unnecessary. Moore's proof fails as a direct answer to skepticism but what his paper makes obvious is that a re-examination of the preconceptions and assumptions of traditional epistemology is needed. I will return to these points and will discuss Moore's proof in more detail in the chapters to follow.

There are many theories of justification. Matters are still debated, but what most everyone agrees with is that justification is necessary for knowledge.[16] Hence the

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[16] Recently reliabilist theories have put forward the view that a belief is knowledge if it is reliably linked to the truth. This however does not mean that the requirement of justification has been abandoned because reliabilist theories can be interpreted as putting forward an externalist criterion for justification, (the conditions that justify our beliefs need not be cognitively

why we are justified in believing what we do and why (propositional) justitication of certain beliefs is neither possible nor necessary.

Wittgenstein never wrote a book with the title *On Certainty*. *On Certainty* was published posthumously and it is made up of fragments of Wittgenstein's first draft writing written in the last two years of his life. The motivation behind these is to defuse skeptical arguments about the external world. Taking off from Moore's proof of the external world as an unsuccessful attempt to do the same thing, Wittgenstein investigates the nature of doubt, justification, trust, knowledge and certainty in order to clarify the distortions and misunderstandings from which the skeptical position arises. In order to make his ideas clear and discuss them in detail, I will refer to other aspects of Wittgenstein's later philosophy that connect to his ideas in *On Certainty*. For example, his views on meaning, on philosophy and on mathematics that are not analyzed in *On Certainty*. Unless I specify otherwise, my dealing with these means that I see a continuation in Wittgenstein's thought in these aspects of his philosophy. If there is no specifically relevant reason why I should defend with more than just references my attribution to Wittgenstein of these ideas, I will not. Unfortunately (or fortunately) one cannot deal with everything in a dissertation and my aim is not to defend a thesis about the internal continuity of Wittgenstein's philosophy—it is to expound, explain and defend Wittgenstein's epistemological ideas as they are to be found in *On Certainty*. And to this I shall now turn.

2. Expounding Wittgenstein: Some Preliminaries

As we saw in the previous chapter one of the major problems facing epistemologists from Descartes to Moore is how we can know any (contingent) proposition. And even though different theories have been put forward to address this question, the most influential views supposed either that there are some kinds of propositions that give foundational support to our other beliefs or that beliefs are justified by belonging to a coherent system of beliefs. We saw that the foundationalist view has its fair share of problems, yet in it we find the traces of a fruitful idea--that in every discursive practice there are certain things that we take for granted. This, I think, nobody will deny.[1] What can be denied is that beliefs have an intrinsic epistemological status independent of contextual considerations. This rigidity inherent in foundationalism, which we also see in the idea that basic beliefs are homogeneous,[2] is very objectionable, as is the idea that basic beliefs (if indeed the basis is made up of beliefs, something that as we saw has been questioned from within the foundationalist tradition as well) are (self) evident and prior to other beliefs for which they provide support. Undoubtedly, our beliefs are not free floating and it is not by crude contingency or by some kind of shared lunacy that we all believe the things we do. Our beliefs are connected to one another in many ways and in many different directions, so much so that an exhaustive description of

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[1] The skeptic will question that we are justified in doing this, but he doesn't need to deny the structure as such.

[2] The idea of homogenous basic beliefs (basic beliefs belonging to a special epistemic category) is one that Michael Williams (1996) discusses extensively. Stroll also talks of "homogeneous foundations" (p.141) referring to the foundationalist idea that both basic and non-basic beliefs belong to the same category, that of knowledge. Stroll refers to the foundationalist requirement that basic beliefs are of a certain kind in virtue of their content and independently of contextual considerations "specifiability".

the way they connect is impossible. But the structure of our beliefs is not as clear-cut and regimented as different kinds of foundational theories assume, nor is it just a matter of a convenient and happy agreement of beliefs as coherentists might favour.

Wittgenstein describes our systems of beliefs in a way radically different. He never questions the possibility of attaining knowledge but starts from the premise that we know things and then brings forth the way our beliefs are structured. His great insight is that he takes our social life and natural (physical) existence as basic and shows how our knowledge is an intimate part of it. Instead of framing the problem as how a subject can know things about a world external to him as Descartes and Moore (a bit less explicitly) did, Wittgenstein sees the subject as a part of the world he knows about and who is in a constant practical commercium with it. It is this activity that for Wittgenstein is the key to a resolution of confusions and paradoxes of knowledge and justification. In this chapter I will focus on the world picture Wittgenstein talks about in *On Certainty* and parts of his philosophy of language that relate to it. I will highlight in passing how these connect to Wittgenstein's treatment of skepticism of the external world and his criticism of Moore that I will then take up separately in the next two chapters. In the last two chapters I will deal with issues related to these and address some objections to *On Certainty*.

1.The Weltbild

Early in our lives we are introduced to a system whose various linguistic and non-linguistic components give us a network of strong commitments that are the basis of our knowledge and skills. This system is what Wittgenstein terms the "weltbild" (world

picture). It is a framework of commitments that are the normally unshakable and unquestioned basis for our thoughts and actions and that supply us with a context in which we formulate and solve our problems.[3] It forms the hinges around which we move and serves as the backbone of everything we do. Yet it is not something fixed with a specific and unchanging content. Wittgenstein uses the image of the riverbed to give us an idea of how flux is an essential component of our world-picture.[4] The content of our world-picture resembles the bed of a river the layers of which move progressively and sometimes abruptly and so can change. Some of it will remain stable over a very long period of time, some of it may change only in form, but generally it provides us with a stable riverbed on which our practices may flow undisturbed.

Every human being has a world-picture, and as we shall see its remaining normally unquestioned is a condition for our language-games to work.[5] According to Wittgenstein we have an attitude of certainty towards the contents of this framework. In the next chapter I will talk more about the different kinds of certainty that are distinguished in *On Certainty*. I want to distinguish here, though, how this attitude of certainty is different from feeling certain about something. Feeling certain is a subjective reaction based on an evaluation which, though someone might be convinced of, is still open to dispute. The attitude of certainty Wittgenstein discusses is different. It is a

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[3] *On Certainty,* (henceforth, *OC*) 225,411.
[4] *Ibid.* 97, 99.

[5] Wittgenstein introduces the term language-game in paragraph 7 of the *Investigations* (henceforth, *PI*), when he writes, "the whole, consisting of language and the whole into which it is woven, the language-game". He insists that the many uses of language involve not only the production of language per se, but also practices. The different things we use language to do (justifying, describing, ordering, etc.) make sense only in the context of certain practices because they are part of rule-governed activities and hence part of institutions ("customs") characteristic of our form of life. (*PI*, 199)

disposition that people who share a form of life share towards certain practices and judgements. In the sense that it is a universally shared feeling of subjective certainty it is correct to call it a kind of objective certainty.

Now, the world picture is very heterogeneous. Its content is not easily specified and though we can point to a lot of it, an exhaustive account of its content would not be possible. It includes fundamental rules of linguistic usage and so it includes the judgements/sentences that those rules govern. For a rule that says "Accept 'x'..." contains "x" as part of it. In this sense this framework is made up of judgements and their status as not needing support.[6] Examples of such judgements include basic mathematical propositions ("2+2=4", "a+b=b+a"), some judgements that are contextually specific ("this is a hand"), as well as some (scientific) judgements that are unassailable and are commitments that we all share ("the earth has existed for many years past", "every human being has parents"). So a large part of the world picture is made up of specifications of the nature of concepts and logical relations between concepts. Since observation and understanding take place through concepts, our world picture is constitutive of the way we understand and interpret experience. To draw a parallel with Kant's, "intuition without concepts is blind": the framework contains the concepts (and the rules of their use) with which we interpret and understand our intuitions. Therefore, Wittgenstein tells us, it exemplifies what is to count as a description of the world and what inferences we can make between empirical propositions.[7]

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[6] I say "in a sense" because the world picture is not like a box that contains things, it should be thought more as the background against which our though and actions take place. Often it is not even consciously entertained so talk of it "containing" sentences is maybe misleading.

[7] *Ibid.* 88. I leave the issue of the relationship between language and the world for chapter 6. There is a similarity between Wittgenstein and Carnap's view in *The Logical Syntax of Language* and in *Meaning and Necessity*, where he discusses linguistic frameworks and internal and

Before going on we should lay down two very important points. First, Wittgenstein's insistence that judging is a practice[8] that is not separable from linguistic and non-linguistic action. Conceptual understanding runs in the veins of linguistic action, since having concepts involves being able to identify things, describe them and make comparisons.[9] This, in turn, relates to action in a broader sense.[10] For instance, if I

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external questions. A linguistic framework is, roughly, a vocabulary together with a set of rules and conventions governing the use of that vocabulary. External questions are questions about the reality of the linguistic framework as a whole (e.g. "Do numbers exist?") and internal questions are questions of existence of certain entities within the framework (e.g. "Is there a prime number between 2 and 7?"). According to Carnap, external questions are about a purely pragmatic decision to adopt a certain kind of linguistic framework. Ultimately, the choice boils down to "...their efficiency as instruments, the ratio of the results achieved to the amount and complexity of the efforts required." This is the first point on which Wittgenstein would disagree; there is no decision to be made about the framework that we use. He would reject Carnap's idea that we can choose to adopt a sense-data language instead of a physical object language. As Hacker also points out, there is no such choice to be made, for sense-data language is semantically parasitic on physical object language. Also, the idea that we can introduce a principle of tolerance to allow people to choose, for example, an alternative logic, disregards how certain principles of logic are integral to what we call "thinking", "reasoning" etc. Carnap disregards what Wittgenstein is adamant about: if we give up certain principles that are inextricable from our form of life (e.g. the law of non-contradiction) we will be giving up thinking. The other point of dissent is Carnap's view that analytic propositions and logical principles follow from conventions of the framework. Wittgenstein tells us that linguistic necessities and logical rules don't follow from meanings but are partly constitutive of them.

The *Logical Syntax of Language* takes off from the *Tractatus*, but in *On Certainty* Wittgenstein's thought has changed. Grammatical rules still determine the boundaries of sense but these rules are no longer limited to syntax but also include part of the meaning of words, semantics. To arrive at the correct logic of our language we should try to get an overview of the way we use language that will bring forth the implicit rules of grammar. The meaning of our words and expressions is not something hidden that we can unravel by looking at the logical form of our propositions but it is given by explanations of meaning. Also, even though Wittgenstein still agrees with the idea that sentences that are about logical concepts do not give us any information about the world but are about the way we use language, he doesn't say that these are meaningless. Indeed, they are used to give the meaning of words and expressions within the language in case of dispute or mistake. So there is a use for them as long as they serve as explanations of meaning. The only problem, Wittgenstein would say, is that these rules for the use of predicates are expressed in the form of empirical propositions and this is very misleading. (Apart from Carnap himself, for my understanding of his relation to Wittgenstein I used as a reference Glock (1996) as well as some of Hacker's (1992) remarks (see pp.224-226)).

[8] *OC*, 232.

[9] *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics* (henceforth *RFM*), VII-71, p.433. There are philosophers who have denied this. Jerry Fodor, for instance, insists that having a concept is just having a concept and denies holism and any kind of molecularism that commits us to concepts being related to other concepts. ("Having Concepts: A Brief Refutation of the 20th Century").

evaluate my surroundings and say "this is dangerous" my concept of "dangerous" is not only what causes me to say this sentence but it is also related to what I would likely do if I accept it, in this case run away. Or, if I see a bowl of yogurt with bananas and honey and I say "this is delicious *and* good for you!" this will not only reflect the input of my surroundings and the meaning of "delicious" and "good for you" but also the likely output (eating it) of my accepting this judgement. So hand in hand with our practices goes a conceptual framework and Wittgenstein tells us that it is an essential part of our practices that we all (normally) accept certain judgements without question. Our accepting these judgements is apparent in our linguistic and non-linguistic behaviour (i.e. in the judgements we affirm or deny and the way we are likely to act given these) and our commitment to the rule of accepting these judgements (partially) explains the meaning of these judgements. This is why Wittgenstein's ideas about meaning as use are essential in bringing home how understanding boils down to mastering a technique.

The meaning (sense) of a word or an expression, Wittgenstein tells us, is constituted by the different uses we put it to. This coupling of meaning and use is put forward to combat the idea (in some ways present also in the *Tractatus*) that meaning is merely kind of entity that a word stands for. Wittgenstein is not denying that meaning exists, he is trying to see what it means for a word to have a meaning and hence what it is to learn the meaning of a word. He insists that understanding the meaning of a word is mastering its use, in the sense that after we are shown the various ways in which a word is used there is no intuitive or interpretative leap that takes place by which we then

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[10] *OC*, 427-428.

understand a word. No, if I can use a word, then I understand its meaning.[11] For instance, we say that someone has learned the meaning of the word "blue" when that person has learned how to use it (enough to get by). So he must be capable of using it appropriately in sentences (e.g. "The sea is blue in Corfu", "I like your blue sweater") and must be able to perform tasks related to it (e.g. "Bring me the blue book"). In turn, understanding a sign is not identified with knowing a set of propositions but ultimately means having mastered the technique of employing it in a community of speakers.[12] This shows how understanding is identified with an activity: understanding involves the mastering of concepts, the mastering of concepts involves learning the use of words and learning to use a word is acquiring an ability. Learning a language, then, is mastering an ability to do things with signs, and this ability is rule-governed.[13] We use an expression according to certain (not necessarily explicitly formulated) rules. So it is not just any kind of use that can give us meaning, but rule-governed use and this has a normative dimension.[14] As we shall see, the way Wittgenstein construes this does not imply Platonism; normativity arises from our agreement in certain judgements that we are all inclined to make and from being trained and immersed in a practice. But also, even

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[11] This, of course, is the subject of Wittgenstein's remarks on rule following in the *Investigations* the core of which is to be found in paragraphs197 to214.

[12] *PI*, 199, *Blue and Brown Books* (henceforth *BB*), p.5.

[13] *OC*, 61-62. See Williams' "Wittgenstein's Refutation of Idealism".

[14] *Last Writings in the Philosophy of Psychology I*, 289, *Wittgenstein's Lectures*, 48. In fact, Wittgenstein's insistence on the impossibility of a "private language" is a consequence of the normativity of meaning. If a private language exists, then meaning exists in a context in which normative judgments cannot be made about it, in which right and wrong cannot be applied. But in such a case, Wittgenstein claims, there is no such thing as meaning. (*PI*, 258) Quine sees the relation between use and meaning purely behavioristically. Wittgenstein would deny that any kind of behaviour alone can give us meaning. That would be doing away with normativity and thus meaning altogether. I agree with Hacker (1996) when he writes that unlike Quine, for Wittgenstein the rules that determine correct and incorrect uses of language are "far from being explanatory idle...[but] are explanatory indispensable, since they determine the difference between correct and incorrect use, as well as the difference between sense and nonsense" (p.107ff) (see also *Theories and Things*, p.46).

though we will say of someone that he follows a rule when what he does agrees with the rest of us, I will argue that this agreement should not be understood as a mere convention.

The second thing to note is the following that I bring up in order to explain what is *not* involved in Wittgenstein's sometimes referring to certainties as propositions. Wittgenstein writes, "...the expression 'propositions of the form of empirical propositions' is itself thoroughly bad...".[15] He wants to stress that the difference between empirical propositions and certainties is not in the form of the proposition that expresses a certainty but in the role that the proposition plays in our system. The search for the exact characterization of certainties as propositions or as non-propositions is misleading and should not be the focus of this philosophical investigation. After all, Wittgenstein tells us, the concept of a proposition is itself rather vague-- it is not a sharp concept but a family resemblance concept.[16] There are empirical propositions, scientific propositions, propositions of the world-picture, avowals of experience, religious propositions and so on. Though the notions of "true" and "false" belong to what we call a proposition all that means is that we call something a proposition if we call it "true" or "false". However, Wittgenstein in the *Investigations* still believes that the concept of a proposition is internally related to the concepts of truth and falsity.[17] What I think it is safe to claim is that Wittgenstein believed that we cannot put all propositions under the same label and treat them all in the same way.[18] Nonetheless a clarification must be made. To begin with, the term "Satz" in German does not need to be translated as "proposition". The

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[15] See also *OC*, 36.
[16] *Ibid.* 320. At most we can say that propositions in the same group (e.g. propositions used in ascriptions of colour) have the same form.
[17] Here I rely on Hacker's work on how Wittgenstein's views on propositions changed through his life (pp.56f).
[18] *PI*, 23, 65, 134, 136.

German language is paradigmatic for the same word having many different meanings, unidentifiable, at times, but by the context, and sometimes not even then! So it is plausible to think that Wittgenstein meant nothing more than "sentence" by "Satz", and not the strict analytic term "proposition". Also Wittgenstein often switches to the term "Urteil" (judgement). He talks of the practice of making judgements[19] and clearly thinks that we judge even when we don't make judgements explicit in propositions. So even though it is useful in philosophy to make judgements (especially certainties) explicit in language and treat them as linguistic entities that is not necessary for the act of judging which is Wittgenstein's concern as the locus of certainty.[20] If we think of propositions as "'what is asserted' when a sentence is used to say something true or false, or 'what is expressed' by such a sentence"[21] then certainties shouldn't strictly speaking be considered propositions for they do not involve their explicit expression in language. If they are expressed, then we can talk of propositions, but they should be distinguished from normal empirical propositions. The important thing is the crucial role of these certainties that are different from normal empirical propositions in that they could not just turn out to be false[22] and so we must not to be misled by their form and identify them with normal empirical propositions. I have preferred the term "judgement" not because it is clearer than "proposition" but because it more smoothly fits in with the pre-theoretical, practical view of certainty Wittgenstein is putting forward in *On Certainty*. I think of certainties as judgements that are intimately connected to our practices and that when formulated in language are the direct application of fundamental rules. Though we would

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[19] *OC*, 140.
[20] For example see *OC*, 110, 167, 204, 232.
[21] *Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*, p. 724.
[22] *OC*, 402.

assent to them were they formulated, they should not be thought of as necessarily involving their expression in language. We can judge without formulating judgements explicitly in sentences and it is not necessary to articulate a judgement for there to be one. So accepting them is not merely accepting a straightforward proposition, for what is fundamental, what is the locus of certainty, is a way of judging that characterizes our form of life. And though this may involve expression in language, it need not. If it does, certainties can be said to be true, but this, as we shall see in chapter 6, means nothing more than that we are willing to assert them.[23] As will become more clear as we move along, the more general point is that we don't start with propositions that are epistemologically primary but with acting-with-certainty. Our attitude (of certainty) is apparent in our behaviour, it is embodied in our language and is described in logic ("logic" in *On Certainty* is the study of the rules governing the use of language).[24]

Though in this chapter I will treat some aspects of Wittgenstein's philosophy of language that are relevant to *On Certainty*, this dissertation is not a defense of Wittgenstein's views on language. However, I do believe that Wittgenstein's sees language as a social phenomenon that is essentially communal. His insistence on the importance of trust in the process of adopting a world picture, the normative character of our use of words and concepts, the discussion of samples as standards in a linguistic practice, the idea that utterances have meaning in the context of our language-games and the importance of an agreement in judgement for a language to exist, are but a few reasons to believe that this reflects Wittgenstein's thoughts. Though I will not take up a

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[23] This is why Wittgenstein tells us that the ground is not true or false, for it is a way of judging and if we express certainties in propositions we get propositions that are true. (*OC*, 83, 205, 206 see also 402)

[24] *Ibid.* 56. What Wittgenstein calls "logic" in *On Certainty* is the study of the rules governing the use of language.

defense of this issue separately, in the analysis in this chapter as well as in the discussion of the relation of language to reality in chapter 6, I will cite many points that could be used to support this view.

It is important to make another methodological point at the outset. The remarks Wittgenstein makes in *On Certainty* are linguistic remarks that are primarily negative: we are given various wrong views from his interlocutor so that then the right view will emerge. In this sense he is not giving us a theory or necessary and sufficient conditions for knowledge as an epistemological theory would, but suggesting a different viewpoint form which to consider our ideas. This is very important to remember when reading Wittgenstein and this dissertation: he is not interested in refuting the skeptic by presenting a proof of what the skeptic is denying. He is saying there is something wrong with the skeptical argument, so an objection to the effect that he uses as a premise the existence of language and society and therefore he is begging the question is out of place. He is trying to turn, defuse the question.[25]

[25] Stroll, Strawson (1995) and McGinn (1989) see hinge propositions as being used to refute skepticism, rather than just being a diagnostical tool used to show why we are tempted into the skeptical problem. The idea that I am supporting here is in accordance with Wittgenstein's metaphilosophy according to which skeptical problems are a result of our being confused by superficial aspects of language (surface grammar). It is this confusion that I believe Wittgenstein is trying to clear up by showing us how our language-games are structured. Note also that Crispin Wright (1985, 1991) takes up hinge propositions and uses them to defeat the skeptical position. Roughly, the idea is that denying these propositions is self-subversive because it undermines the very presuppositions that allow the skeptic to make his point in the first place. So, since it is irrational to doubt hinge propositions, we can know them. As will become evident, though inspired by *On Certainty* Wright's is a very un-Wittgensteinian approach partially motivated by his desire to retain closure of knowledge under known logical implication.

2. Framework Judgements as Certainties

A common interpretation of *On Certainty* is that framework judgements are rules.[26] Though there are some passages that support such an interpretation, I want to suggest another way of understanding Wittgenstein which, though keeping with the intuition that rule-following is fundamental to the existence of language-games and with the idea that framework judgements are very intimately connected to rules of linguistic usage, denies that framework judgements per se are rules. In *On Certainty* Wittgenstein includes in the world-picture judgements like "here is a hand", "the earth has existed for many years past", "my name is...". Given that a rule tells us (how to) do something, these sentences don't seem to be rules for they don't prescribe any sort of behaviour. And also, it is difficult to see how a sentence *per se*, that can be used in many different ways, by many different people, in many different circumstances, can be a rule independently of these uses. In being quick to call them rules we disregard the distinction between:

1. a sentence (a string of (written) words)
2. a rule that tells us to do something with a sentence

and 3. the application/manifestation of the rule (in which we use a sentence on a particular occasion to make a statement in the way the rule prescribes).[27]

What is constantly stressed in *On Certainty* is the role of certain judgements that "lie

[26] For example, see Michael Cober "Certainties of a World Picture, the Epistemological Investigations of *On Certainty*" (in *The Cambridge Companion to Wittgenstein*, Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1996). Hacker(1996), Glock (1990) and Aidun, "Wittgenstein on Grammatical Propositions" (*The Southern Journal of Philosophy*, 19, 1981).

[27] For this distinction in this view I am indebted to Paul Horwich's suggestions in our discussions on drafts of my dissertation.

apart from the road traveled by inquiry".[28] It is repeatedly emphasized that what is essential for the existence of our practices is that some judgements are excluded from doubt.[29] And in what I take to be a pivotal paragraph, 519, Wittgenstein writes "...it is right enough to say that *as a rule* some empirical judgment or other must be beyond doubt"—so the rule seems to be that certain judgements are beyond doubt.[30] I want to suggest that this interpretation makes the ideas in *On Certainty* more plausible while allowing us to come to the same conclusions about the status, meaning and significance of framework judgements as we would if we took the judgements *per se* to be rules. Keeping in mind the above distinction, I think the correct thing to say is that, according to Wittgenstein, there are many different sentences in language subject to different rules and there are some sentences that are subject to fundamental rules. These fundamental rules govern and prescribe the undoubted acceptance of certain sentences.

It is important to remember that these rules did not come prior to their application but because we find ourselves agreeing in certain things we can say we are following a rule. In a sense then the rules are of and emerge from our using language. These fundamental rules are applied every time we judge but when we express the judgements that are a direct application of those rules in language we get propositions of a special logical role.[31] Given that in our everyday practices complicated contextual considerations play a major role and are not always captured in our trying to lay down rules explicitly, it is extremely difficult to specify a rule exhaustively. Also, at the level

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[28] *OC*, 88.
[29] *Ibid.* 446, 490, 613, 628.
[30] In *OC*, 494, he also writes that "I cannot doubt [the proposition "my name is L.W."] without giving up all judgement" has the character of a rule. (see also 493)
[31] When I will refer to "certainties" or "framework judgements" I will be referring to judgements that are a direct application/manifestation of fundamental rules of linguistic usage.

of fundamental rules that we implicitly (mostly unconsciously) follow in our practices, there is a very intimate connection between rules and their application. That's why we often can't easily distinguish between the two. Wittgenstein stresses that we don't learn rules when we are introduced to language games and practices-- *practices come first.* What we learn is a system of judgements[32] and the rules that govern the use of these judgements need not be expressed explicitly in the process. Because grasping a rule is shown in being able to perform and engage in certain practices (which, among other things, involves being able to identify samples, criteria etc.) we sometimes tend to confuse the rule with its direct application and the two seem to merge into each other.[33]

What is involved in saying that certain judgements must be accepted in order for us to engage in our language-game and thus for our language-games to work? Let's take the language-game of history. For us to make any inquiry concerning history we presuppose that the world has existed for many years past. To say that this judgement is presupposed means that it is taken as a given and is not subject to doubt.[34] Stating historical facts, for example "Napoleon died on Santa Helena" or "the French revolution took place in 1789", has the force and significance it has only if (we take it as a given that) the earth has existed for many years past. If we presupposed (to use a possibility raised by Russell) that the earth had come into existence five minutes ago any "evidence"

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[32] *OC*. 44, 46, 139-140.
[33] *Ibid.* 309. According to Baker, "there is no such thing as a hidden, or hitherto unacknowledged, yet operative rule" and we don't "discover *rules* of grammar"—in other words, if there is a rule of language it is such only by being acknowledged by speakers of that language. I think this is a wrong understanding of Wittgenstein for whom we don't learn language by learning explicit rules. So rules can be hidden for some time and this can be seen when new language games are created. I will take this up extensively in chapter 6 but note that this view leads Baker to say that which rules will follow is a matter of decision. ("Following Wittgenstein: Some Signposts for *Philosophical Investigations§§143-242*" in *Wittgenstein: to Follow a Rule*")
[34] *PI*, 180.

we could get for historical assertions would be worth nothing and our whole language-game of history would lose its point. Without our holding fast to this judgement any talk of history couldn't exist. Yet, though all historical knowledge relies on it, it is not itself part of the corpus of historical knowledge; we didn't arrive at it by historical investigation as we did the thesis, "The French Revolution took place in 1789". Through various empirical/scientific methods we can inquire after the age of the earth but for that too we presuppose that the earth existed for many years (this is prior to any knowledge of how old it is). Another example: astronomy would not exist if we did not have an attitude of certainty towards the judgement that Mars, Venus, Alpha Centauri etc. are celestial bodies. Or: that other people have minds. To question this might be an entertaining exaggeration in moments of communication breakdown ("Beam me up Scottie, there is no intelligent life here") but it is never seriously considered because it is presupposed in all human interactions. Every activity, including language, takes place within a context, a setting. Maybe this is why Wittgenstein used the expression language-game, because games too are played in a context and their extreme simplicity brings certain features of language to light. This setting consists, in part, of judgements that we take for granted.

Wittgenstein talks about characteristics of different certainties but they do not all share these characteristics independent of the circumstances of their use. For instance, we are told that they can't be doubted. Yet, as we shall see with "this is a hand", some can be doubted in some instances.[35] We are told that we cannot be mistaken about what

[35] It is clear in *On Certainty* that a large part of our certainties are generally not doubted, but that there are circumstances in which they can be doubted.(*OC*, 111, 348, 350, 413) The only person

our name is. Ordinarily this may well be the case, yet we can imagine scenarios where it is conceivable we could be wrong. For some, we are told, it doesn't make sense to speak of evidence for (or against) them, yet again, we can sometimes provide some (even if little) evidence. We are told they are not mentioned or taught, yet sometimes some of them are. Also, the framework judgements can't be characterized by content because they are about a number of different things. Nor can they be characterized by logical form for they don't share a uniform logic.[36] They cannot be "put into a logic book"[37] because, as will become evident in chapter 6, it wouldn't do justice to the complicated relation they have to our form of life. So if you look for a "definition" of certainties (a definition, if you will, of what will count as "basic") you are already walking down the wrong philosophical path. I think the only possible (and plausible) characterization that will cover all of them may be a functional one. Certainties are presupposed by major human activities, their undoubted acceptance helps in defining a wide range of concepts, and a test of understanding the relevant concepts is acceptance of these judgements. This doesn't mean that the notion of "certainties" is vacuous. Think of the problems that arise when trying to characterize an "axiom". Axiom are propositions that play a certain specifiable role in deductions--that they can be cited without justification. They do not share a logical form nor content (consider all the theories that have axioms: set theory, number theory, group theory...) yet the notion of an axiom is both usable and useful.[38]

I see denying this is Cook according to whom hinge propositions are undoubted regardless of circumstances.

[36] Again we see Wittgenstein's disagreement with Carnap, for he denies that framework judgements are distinguished from other judgements by logical type.

[37] *OC*, 628.

[38] Thought the analytic/synthetic distinction never comes up in *On Certainty*, I think Wittgenstein would have been unimpressed by Quine's dismissal. A reply available to him given the above is to make the comparison to axioms that don't have a common meaning or essence by which they

For now, let me turn to a framework judgement that Wittgenstein keeps returning to in *On Certainty* and see how it is a direct application of a fundamental rule. He ascribes this role to judgements that appear to be normal empirical judgements and tells us that instead they are really manifestations of rules for the making of assertions about the world. The framework judgement that is most prominent in *On Certainty*, Wittgenstein tells us, is a result of a linguistic commitment but is disguised as an ontological commitment. Let's take a look at "this is a hand".

a. Samples[39]

Suppose we are in a medical school and a student finds a deformed hand which used to be in formaldehyde. The hand was hidden from view somewhere before the student found it and when he finds it, deformed as it is, he says "this is a hand." In this case the sentence "this is a hand" has the role of a normal empirical (descriptive) judgement. Another student may doubt it, maybe because it is deformed from being out of the bottle and he doesn't recognize it, maybe because he is convinced that in a good school like this one bottles are not broken easily and a hand would not be left lying around long enough to become deformed. The first student could justify his claim. He could say he broke the glass container a few days ago when he was drunk and couldn't

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can be identified but a distinction can be drawn among them in the way axioms can be used. Similarly, a functional distinction which does not depend on meaning could be drawn between different kinds of propositions (which can also put a boundary to how flexible or rigid the distinction can be). Wittgenstein can reply similarly to Fodor's dismissal (which falls back on the analytic/synthetic distinction) of the sorting and inferring requirements of molecularism and holism in the case of concept possession. A vague boundary is still a boundary and though the distinction cannot be exhaustively delineated a functional distinction can be seen in practice.

[39] For my discussion on samples I rely heavily on Hacker's basic intuitions in *Insight and Illusion*, though I would attribute to Wittgenstein a slight externalism that Hacker would probably disagree with.

find the hand then, he could perform some test that shows that the object is made of organic matter and then dissect it to prove it is a hand.

There is a difference between this case, Wittgenstein is saying, and the case of Moore lifting his hand and saying "this is hand" in *A Defense of Common Sense*. In this case, "this is a hand" is not a normal empirical proposition but it is a direct application of a fundamental rule in our language-games. The rule being something like this: "Accept the sentence 'this is a hand' in normal demonstrative circumstances".[40] I think Wittgenstein would say that Moore is giving an ostensive explanation of our use of the predicate "hand" that is the end point of justification for (descriptively) asserting that this is a hand. To an extent Moore sees this. He realizes that this is the end point but he fails to see that the reason for this is not that he has achieved indubitable knowledge. Instead, he is directly applying a fundamental rule for the acceptance of this sentence, arriving at the point where reasons give out.

What aspect of this use of the sentence "this is a hand" is different from a descriptive one? What makes Wittgenstein claim that they have different meanings? Well, in this case, "This is a hand" is a statement that shows how we use "hand" (in accordance with a rule). It is a statement that carries normative and methodological

[40] By "demonstrative context" I mean the context in which you say of something that is in front of you "this...". (Wittgenstein uses this term in the *Brown Book*, p.77) By normal I mean that the lighting is good, eyesight is functioning normally, nothing obscures the object etc. As Wittgenstein says, any explicit formulation of the rules will involve the expression "in normal circumstances" that we can identify but not necessarily describe. (*OC*, 27) Note also that Wittgenstein writes: "Can't an assertoric sentence...simply be isolated from doubt, though not according to any explicit rule?" (*OC*, 87) So though I may give formulations of rules that govern the use of basic judgements, I have to add the qualification "something like". The important thing is that we all do accept certain judgements and given this we can say we are following a rule. That we might not be able to formulate a rule to adequately respond to all philosophical questions should not cause problems (if there is a general agreement to how we carry out the practice circumscribed by that rule) because I shall discuss in chapter 6, we didn't agree to follow a rule prior to our practices.

implications concerning competence in and the correct use of the language involved. As an ostensive explanation, it manifests an agreed standard for the correct use of "hand". It allows us to explain the use of the term "hand" and correct misapplications by going back to the ostended object. If you can identify samples you have picked up the circumstances in which you must accept "this is a hand" (and as I shall discuss in chapter 6, it is in large part because we agree on our judgements about examples of application of fundamental rules like samples that language and communication is possible). "This is a hand" looks like a normal descriptive statement because ostension connects words with reality in a sense, in that the correctness of our technique of description is determined by reference to public paradigms. However, rules for making meaningful descriptions do not mirror any (meta)physical reality. Of course we refer to objects in language and by applying the rule "accept the sentence 'this is a hand' in normal circumstances where no grounds for doubt exist" in an ostension, we point to the satisfier of a predicate. To paraphrase Hacker, even though ostension is not purely linguistic (since it involves pointing to an object), it introduces the ostended object as a sample into language.[41] "Hand" is not predicated of the sample but rather the sample becomes part of our method of using the predicate "hand". Though in our everyday, pre-theoretical practice our rules are implicit, the rules are manifested in our ostensive definitions, explanations and teaching. We can put it like this: giving examples such as pointing to samples is a manifestation of what goes into acting in accordance with the rule. Because grasping a rule is shown in our correctly engaging in the activity it circumscribes. This is why Wittgenstein writes: "Not only

[41] (1972) p.158.

rules, but also examples are needed for establishing a practice. Our rules leave loop-holes open, and the practice has to speak for itself."[42]

Now a rule prescribes a certain sort of behaviour, in this case to accept a sentence with no doubt. So its direct application is seen every time we utter this sentence with no doubt, as the rule prescribes. Before I continue, I want to briefly take up a possible misinterpretation which I will further deal with in the section "Meaning Change". The misinterpretation is this: if we learn a word ostensively by reference to a specific object, say a hand, or if we pick up the rule through this ostension, the rule is about this particular hand. And so when we affirm a sentence without doubt, as the rule prescribes, but in reference to other instances of hands than the one we learned the rule by, this is a consequence of the application of a rule. I think that to say that it is one single instance that teaches us a rule is contrary to Wittgenstein's ideas. Though it might happen that someone explicitly teaches to a child through an ostensive definition what a "hand" is, this is not necessarily (or usually, I want to say) the way we learn to use words. If this were the case it would indeed seem that only reference to the same hand would be an application of the rule and any other use of "this is a hand" would be a consequence of the application of the rule. The confusion arises when we think of the standard meter. If the rule in that case is that we should accept the judgement that "this is a meter" (referring to the standard meter) in all circumstances then given the rule *and* given the same length we call something one meter long. But in these cases we are not applying

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[42] *OC*, 139.

the rule, the objection would go, for the rule concerns the standard meter. The new application is a consequence of the application of a rule.

However, this is not correct. Anyone who grew up using the metric system knows that you learn to measure things and acquire the concept "one meter" by reference to different meter sticks (that are (obviously) of the same length) long before you learn that there is an actual standard meter. In fact, many people who very competently use the metric system don't know that there is such a thing as a standard meter and most people who know of it have never seen it. Normally if someone asks "how do you know this is a meter?" we will take a stick and show its length based on a meter stick. As when someone asks "how do you know this is a hand?" we will point to samples to show we understand the word. The problem in this case is that apart from the everyday samples for the length "one meter" that would be meter sticks, there is also an "official" sample based on which all meter sticks are made. But there is no such "standard hand" (though all normal hands can be used as samples) so the explanation in the case of the meter can take one more step if you know of the standard meter ("how do you know that that stick is one meter?" "Because it is official in accordance with the standard meter"). So the rule doesn't seem to be

1) "accept 'this is a meter long' (by reference to the standard meter)"
but 2) "accept 'this is a meter long' (by reference to meter sticks)"

and then we learn that a measuring stick is official if it has the length of the standard meter. So we are given a criterion for when a meter stick is official which is useful in cases where there is a reason to doubt the accuracy of a specific stick (as we learn in anatomy class what the internal constitution of a hand is, which is handy in cases like our medical school example). Once we learn this, we learn something about the 'nature' of

meter sticks (after all, the standard meter is another meter stick only it has an official function) but the important thing in evaluating whether we understand the meaning of "one meter" (and so whether we are following the rule concerning the utterance "this is a meter long") is to be able to use the length of one meter, and to be able to measure it, compare it etc.

However, as Wittgenstein says, we don't learn language by learning individual judgements but by adopting a system of interconnected judgements and concepts. By being immersed in our practices we pick up how to identify things. For example, in hearing adults say "wash you hands", seeing them extending their arms and saying "put it in my hand", hearing talk about (or that involves) hands we pick up the rule.[43] And we say we have grasped the rule when we can talk about hands and meters and perform activities related to them. So the fact that there is no "standard hand" should not be seen as a problem for saying that in a Moorean context where no grounds for doubt exist "this is a hand" is a direct application of the rule.

All this does not explain what attributing the length "one meter" to the standard meter itself would mean apart from saying that this is the standard against which we make meter sticks. Of course, if the standard meter were not one meter it could not be the standard of "one meter". But does that mean that it *has* to be a meter long? Kripke is right in this much when he criticizes paragraph 50 of the *Investigations*: it is a contingent fact that the rod called the "standard meter" is a meter long.[44] It could have had another length. However, when we use it as a sample we are talking about *this* stick, when it has *this* length. So the phrase "the length of S at t_0" has rigidified when S is used as a sample,

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[43] see *PI*, 71

[44] *Naming and Necessity*, pp.54ff.

to "the length S actually has at t_0." Because a sample serves as a sample given the use we put it to and the use we put it to is essentially connected to having this particular length. In other words, that it has this length might be an accidental property but it is essential to our use of it as a sample. And so the question now is: can we say that this particular stick in this world, having the function it has, is a meter long? Kripke says we can call it a meter because we can say "if heat had been applied to the stick *S* at t_0, then at t_0 stick *S* would not have been a meter long". And I think Wittgenstein would not object to this because in such a case we have a reason to doubt that it is a meter long for it doesn't have the property that we used to pick it out as a sample. As we would have a reason to doubt that "this is a hand" in the medical school laboratory I mentioned above. The point Wittgenstein is pushing is that what has a normative function can not simultaneously be said to fall under that norm. It can be said to have a certain length under a different norm (as Kripke says, it is 39,37 inches long) and it can be measured in meters but not as long as it is a canonical sample. That would be going around in circles. What is so wrong about that? Well, nothing except that it leads us to confuse the status of the two judgements in different contexts.

What I must stress, though, is that in the context of *On Certainty*, in which there is no discussion of the standard meter, what has no clear sense is not saying "this is a hand" or, in this case, "this is a meter long"—but "I know this is a hand/a meter long" when it comes to the sample. Because knowing involves being able to provide evidence for your claim that is *more certain than what it is evidence for* and in such case it is not clear what such evidence might be. Saying "this is a meter long" of the standard meter is odd and maybe uninformative if you know its function as it would be unexplanatory and

misleading to say "this is a hand" when there is no doubt or denial involved (though you can say "Questa é una mano" to teach the Italian phrase). The point is that as a sample the ostended meter, or hand, becomes part of our method of description and thus the utterance has a different role from a normal empirical proposition. So Kripke may well be right as far as necessity and a prioricity is concerned. But when he talks of other worlds, he might be talking about the stick we are talking about, but it has ceased to be a sample in the way Wittgenstein meant it. So in this case you can say it has the length that it has (whatever that may happen to be).

So recognizing a sample is connected to the ability to make comparisons and establish similarity based on that sample. It introduces the dimension of action, of a specific application, in language which is essential for the internalizing of rules and for acting in accordance with them. It is important to stress again that we don't learn rules of language abstractly and prior to their application. The practical aspect of rule following is taught by examples and training in a practice, not by learning explicit rules.[45] For example, we are not taught a set of rules for how to attribute colours to objects before engaging in the language-game of description. Instead, in adopting a system of judgements we learn to accept that something is called "red", that something is called "blue", in the process picking up that something cannot be red and blue all over etc.[46] This is relevant to Wittgenstein's way of addressing skepticism because, as I shall discuss in the next two chapters, the exclusion of doubt is intertwined with the direct application of fundamental rules of linguistic usage. In this sense, then, the exclusion of doubt is also

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[45] *PI*, 208, *OC*, 139, *Zettel*, 318.

[46] The scientific point that we speak this way because we cannot see red and blue simultaneously due to the way our ocular apparatus functions is not an objection to Wittgenstein. For, as I shall discuss in chapter 6, he grants that our constitution constrains our language games.

the impossibility of doubt under the given norms of description because these lay down conceptual constraints. Wittgenstein is not denying that we learn judgements like "this is a hand" empirically or that we use them to talk about the world. He is urging us to see that they don't function like *normal* empirical judgements and that their peculiar role is not a consequence of facts but of rules.[47] As such the apparatus of verifying, doubting, asking for justification etc. that applies to normal empirical propositions does not apply to these cases also. Moore's use of "this is a hand" manifests our use of language, so in being a direct application of a fundamental rule that prescribes the undoubted acceptance (even if conditional at times) of a certain sentence, the usual apparatus of checking, verifying (and hence calling something known) cannot be applied.

What determines correct use is not the sample per se, but the way we use it in the explanation of its associated term. The purpose of ostensive explanations is to show what we call a "hand" and therefore what counts as a correct application of the rule "accept the sentence 'this is a hand' in all circumstances".[48] For by governing the acceptance of certain judgements rules also govern the use of words. In effect, saying "Accept the sentence..." is a different way of saying "Use words in a certain way" because the way we will use words will depend on the judgements we are willing to make (and accept) using them. That is why Wittgenstein tells us that doubting framework judgements is like doubting your competence in your native tongue. If someone doubts that what he is raising is a hand or that I am a human being, this is an indication that he has not quite understood, and thus he is unable to use, the word "human being" or "hand" (or that he means something very different by it). We didn't arrive at this judgement by

[47] As Hacker (1972) very well puts it, p.155.
[48] *OC*, 268.

investigating its truth as we do for empirical judgements. "This is a hand" didn't turn out to be true but could have been otherwise. No, the fact that we accept it without doubt (in accordance with fundamental rules) partly determines the meaning of the words employed in it. This is why "...the idea of 'agreement with reality' does not have any clear application here"[49] and why, if someone were to ask us if these statements are "true", Wittgenstein tells us that the answer would "characterize a method"[50]--because it would appeal to the rule-governed nature of our language-games.

For Wittgenstein "this is a hand" is unquestioned because we have learned English.[51] To learn a language is to master a rule-governed technique, part of which is that in normal demonstative contexts you are permitted to assert certain sentences without justification. And, Wittgenstein tells us, to assert something without justification is not necessarily to assert it without right.[52] However, the acceptance of "this is a hand" as indubitable is a consequence of rules, not of facts (except if the fact is that this is the rule we follow). It looks as if the world conforms to "this is a hand". But it is essential to understand that rules of linguistic usage circumscribe what we accept as a meaningful description of reality by forming the concepts we use to approach it. In this sense they thus play the role of norms of description, and so, as Hacker puts it, *of course* it looks like the world agrees with judgements that are their direct application!

In order to see what a norm of description is we should fall back on the concept of "grammar". Grammar gives us the sense of an expression by incorporating the rules for

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[49] *Ibid.* 215.
[50] *Ibid.* 318
[51] See *PI*, 381. See Hacker's discussion on the word "red"—(1976) chapter 5.
[52] *PI*, 289.

using that expression correctly. [53] (This, Wittgenstein claimed, is only different from ordinary grammar in that the end to which the philosopher puts it is to clear up philosophical problems whereas the grammarian focuses on things like the structure of sentences). These rules of grammar are manifested in all forms of explanation of meaning (ostensive explanations, explanation by examples, synonyms, criterial relations, paraphrases etc.) So to give an explanation of the meaning of a word is to give an account of its grammar, to describe its use. Hence the different meaning of different utterances of "this is a hand"; one is descriptive of the world, the other manifests our use of language (by being part of stating a fundamental rule). This does not mean that we have to look for all the rules in order to have the "real" meaning. There is no set of rules that is the reason we all agree, that is hidden and we need to uncover. The trick is to understand that if we accept the same explanations and use judgements that involve a certain concept in the same way then we are using the same concept.[54] Just as if we don't have the same understanding of the meaning of a term it will show in what we accept as explanations of its meaning and in the different ways we use judgements that express it. Now, some of these rules can change. They are not forced upon us by nature and in this sense there is a kind of arbitrariness in them. These characteristics, as is more extensively discussed in Hacker's *Insight and Illusion* (chapter 5), as well as the notion of grammar as the rules for the use of words and concepts, make it plausible to see the concept of a grammatical rule and the concept of a norm of description in Wittgenstein as identical. Forming a system of concepts and their logical relations, rules of linguistic usage not only (partially) determine the meaning of words, they also constitute the

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[53] *Philosophical Grammar* (henceforth *PG*), par.23.
[54] I agree with Hacker and Baker here. (1985), p.51.

method with which we make sense of experience and the method we have for talking and describing the world.

b. Logical Vocabulary.

Another example of a framework judgement is "A table is a physical object". This is not an empirical judgement, Wittgenstein tells us, because it is part of our logical vocabulary, it is an explanation of how we use the word "table" or "physical object". We don't have an overarching, abstract concept of "physical object" that goes beyond our being able to identify objects.[55] A child learns that there are books, chairs and tables just as it learns to distinguish between specific instances of colour: blue, red, green, by learning to identify them in its immediate environment and using these words in judgements it makes about them. But "colour" and "physical object" Wittgenstein tells us, are logical categories (like "quantity") under which such concepts or words are subsumed.[56] So when we say that something is a "physical object" we are not making a statement about the world, we are pointing out a conceptual/linguistic connection, we are saying e.g. that "chair" is a physical object language word. Just as, Wittgenstein says, when we say, "this [pointing gesture] is an x" we are not describing x but are

[55] Paraphrasing Williams. ("Wittgenstein's Refutation of Idealism" p.17)

[56] I rely heavily on Williams discussion of these passages which is more eloquent that I could ever make it. As he says, this discussion is very similar to Carnap. However, Wittgenstein takes it further (and let's not forget that it was the early Wittgenstein that inspired Carnap's treatment in the first place). No one who asks "external" questions will be satisfied with a demonstration internal to the framework (as is obvious from the Moore-skeptic debate). The only external claims we can make, according to Wittgenstein, are ones that describe our language-games. And, just as there is no standpoint outside of them from where to say that our language-games are "wrong" or "unjustified", it is wrong say that we choose our language-games.

incorporating it in our language as a instance of the direct application of a rule.[57] We are saying that when we talk of books and chairs and tables we are talking of (physical) objects—this is how we use "physical object", this is what talking about (physical) objects means. This is why Wittgenstein says that "A is a physical object" is an instruction to someone who doesn't understand the meaning of "A" or the meaning of "physical object"—it is not a metaphysical statement, it is a commentary on our practice of describing the world. And also, this is why Wittgenstein tells us that to make the inference from "here is my hand" to "so there are physical things" is like inferring "there are colours" from "I am seeing red." These are grammatical connections, Wittgenstein is telling us, and in effect we are saying that "red" is a colour word and that "hand" is a physical object word.[58] This is a direct application of the fundamental rule "Accept the sentence 'A is a physical object' in all circumstances". We see once again how the locus of certainty is a way of judging that if translated in propositions are ones that we all accept. The rule is not the sentence though. More than describing a decision to follow a rule, the sentence shows us what our picture of the world is within which our beliefs are formed.[59] We are all inclined to interact with objects in the same way and this leads to categorizing them in a similar way that we find ourselves agreeing in. As I shall discuss extensively in chapter 6, this agreement, this way we find it natural to interact with, and think of, objects, is what allows us to talk of following the above mentioned rule. Here too it becomes evident that the rule for accepting certain sentences is also a rule for using words in a certain way. For by accepting this judgement we also accept to characterize

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[57] This is one reason why, as I shall argue later, to attribute to Wittgenstein a version of the paradigm case argument is misconceived.
[58] *OC*, 57.
[59] *Ibid.* 209.

certain things as physical objects. So through governing the acceptance of certain sentences, the rules also govern our use of words.

Meaning Change[60]

According to Wittgenstein we can initially be shown how to use a word such as "hand" by reference to hands in our environment, sometimes (though not necessarily) through explicit ostensions. And through picking up a technique of re-identification we learn that there are fake hands, deformed hands, black hands, white hands and so on. Subsequently, as we are further exposed to our language-games we learn that what we call a "hand" is made up of tissue, veins, bones etc. However, in the ostensive learning of the word we aren't given information about the internal constitution of hands. For we don't refer to essences when we ostensively give names to things. Knowing what a hand is made of is not essential to being able to use "hand" in a variety of circumstances (though in some it may be: in the surgical theatre for instance). Also, an ostension works in the background of a language-game, so through the ostension and ones immersion on language-games, one picks up how to identify other samples. But the meaning of a word is not identified with the ostensive definition, the sample or the object that the word picks out. As Wittgenstein writes,

> "One gives examples and intends them to be taken in a particular way. —I do not, however, mean by this that he is supposed to see in those examples that common thing which I –for some reason-- was unable to express; but that he is now to *employ* those examples in a particular way."[61]

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[60] In this section when I discuss Putnam and Eddington, I rely on Hacker's (1996) counterexamples which are prominent in the literature.
[61] *PI*, 71.

For instance, we now know that the atomic number of gold is 79. Its molecular constitution is not to be confused with the meaning of the word "gold" though,[62] just as a sample should not be identified with the meaning of what it is a sample for. No, to know the meaning of a word, say "hand", is to be able to use it in a community of speakers. Sample relations or criterial relations are about what things are called not what they are. So we can be introduced to the way we use the word "hand" by reference to samples and if, for some strange reason, someone asks me how I know that "this" thing attached to my normally functioning arm is a "hand", the only reasonable answer is "because I speak English" (accompanied, maybe, by pointing to a variety of other samples as a further proof of my ability).

Putnam and Eddington on the other hand, maintain that it is possible to learn a word by reference to a sample that doesn't really belong to the denotation of the word. So for example, you might learn to refer to hands the way mentioned above and then one day find out that all hands are mechanical. Or, we used to refer to tables as solid, and defined a "solid object" as made up of continuous matter, and then we found out that there is no such thing as continuous matter. Therefore, every time we referred to tables as solid we were mistaken. So, they could argue, what we call "hands", or "solid" may not exist at all and so we could be mistaken in our use of language, and thus about meaning.

Putnam cites two examples that can be used against the idea that meaning can be established through paradigmatic samples.[63] The first example goes as follows: suppose

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[62] See Hacker (1996), p.253.

[63] Actually, in "The Meaning of Meaning" Putnam (1975) uses the example of twin earth to show that a) to know the meaning of a term is not to be identified with being in a certain psychological

there is a planet ("Twin Earth") which "...is very much like Earth...In fact, apart from differences we shall specify...Twin Earth is exactly like Earth...even suppose that he [the human visitor] has a doppelgänger-an identical copy-on Twin Earth".[64] The only difference is that there is no H_20 on Twin Earth, only a substance that is indistinguishable from what we call "water" but is made up of XYZ molecules. The inhabitants of Twin Earth refer to this substance as "water" as would we if we came across it for the first time, but once we find out what it is made of we would say that "On Twin Earth the word 'water' means 'XYZ'". Putnam's idea is that the real meaning of a term is given by the scientific determination of its essence (its molecular structure, its genetic structure etc.) and so we didn't know what we meant by "water" (and other natural kind terms) till we investigated.

According to Putnam we initially name a thing through an ostensive definition (the "initial baptism") and then we extend the name to other things through the relation of same essence. In order for something to belong to the same natural kind it must bear this sameness relation to the ostended thing ("this liquid is water") that speakers of a language call "water". And whether two liquids have this relation might take much scientific investigation to determine. Eventually, Putnam claims, when we determine the essence of something scientifically we can determine the extension of its name. In the second example he gives in two other papers ("Is Semantics Possible?" and "It Ain't Necessarily So") he argues against the idea that we can categorize something as complex as a natural kind on the basis of observable properties because there are, or can be, abnormal members belonging to that natural kind. What if cats turned out to be Martian robots

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state and b) meaning does not determine reference. However, this thought experiment can serve our purpose too.

[64] "The Meaning of Meaning", p.139.

instead of animals, would we say that there are no cats because of the analytic definition "cats are animals"? "Not only will we still call them cats, they are cats" Putnam responds. If some cats were animals we would agree that the robots were fake cats. If there used to be cats but then they were all replaced by robots, we would say that these are not cats but robots. But if there had never been any non-fake cats, we would continue to call these robots "cats" but we wouldn't call them animals anymore. Putnam says that the "real" meaning is given by the scientific determination of an essence. It can't be just the observable properties that determine meaning because then "water" and "Twin Earth water" would have the same meaning, as would "cats" and "robot cats".

Eddington[65] pointed out that objects that we used to call solid and used as samples for the correct use of the word "solid", for instance, tables, have now been proven not to be solid. For solidity means "continuous matter" and matter, scientists now tell us, is mostly empty space. Therefore, there is no such thing as a solid object and tables are not really solid. So our use of tables as paradigms of solidity rests on a false hypothesis. For Eddington we were wrong to think matter is solid.

Wittgenstein anticipated such ideas. Indeed, he tells us that we sometimes change the criteria for the use of our words and we sometimes oscillate between criteria and symptoms.[66] This, as Hacker points out, is not, though, because we have discovered the "true" meaning of a word but because of some empirical discovery that we incorporated in our definition, thus modifying our concept.[67] I think the most obvious objection to the rigidity of Putnam's account comes from high-school chemistry. There is water (H_20) and heavy water (the nucleus of the hydrogen atom in this water has a neutron). So why

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[65] *The Nature of the Physical World.*
[66] *Zettel*, 438, *PI*, 354.
[67] Paraphrasing Hacker (1996), p.253.

not, if we went to twin earth and found out that water there is XYZ, not say it is another kind of water?[68] If we found a substance whose molecules, like water, were made up of two atoms of hydrogen and one of oxygen but these were connected in a straight line (H-O-H) instead of an angle of 104° as water is, we wouldn't have discovered the real meaning of "water", we would have introduced in our definition a criterion for distinguishing water from another kind of water, "straight-water". Then again, language is used against the background of certain normality conditions. As Hacker points out, if we kept finding different waters, different types of gold etc. maybe at some point we might come to think that the way we categorize elements in chemistry might need re-thinking.[69] According to Wittgenstein, nothing deeply metaphysical is going on here. Scientific discoveries do not reveal the "true" meaning of a term. The most they can do is modify concepts and meanings by introducing our discoveries into our definitions. This is why Wittgenstein would say that the extension of a term is determined by the meaning of a term (how it is used) in connection to facts.[70] Think of this: I may be able to use the term 'heat' very competently to talk about a number of things: body heat, heat waves, hot flashes and so on. And so, presumably, I know the meaning of the word "heat". But I may not know that the heat of a gas is the mean kinetic energy of its molecules and it is something different in solids or liquids. So I really don't know the nature of heat but I know the meaning of the word "heat"—the deficiency in this case is in my knowledge of facts, not of meaning.

Putnam could still object that observable characteristics are a very rough way to pick out natural kinds. Therefore, what Wittgenstein is saying must be wrong because if

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[68] This example is also used by Hacker (1996), who puts forward this question.
[69] *Ibid.* p.252.
[70] *Ibid.* p.251.

new criteria lead to the changing of concepts, then before finding out the atomic number of gold we must have been talking about something else, not gold! So scientific discovery doesn't lead to meaning change but reveals the true meaning of a term. Note that Wittgenstein never said that we learn the meaning of natural kind terms ostensively. We have grasped the meaning of such terms if we can recognize the criteria that would justify our asserting that something belongs to the natural kind term in question. But this is exactly the reason for Wittgenstein's saying that criteria and symptoms fluctuate.[71] If we change the way we use certain terms, thus partially changing their meaning, the status in our conceptual framework of the judgements we use them in can change too. What was once a criterion for calling a substance "acid" (that it turns litmus paper red) is now a symptom.[72] So what was once the rule is one no longer and the sentence "an acid is what turns litmus paper red" is used as a normal empirical proposition and so can be said to be false. But no rule-issuing utterance is false for the above is no longer the direct application of a rule—it is not a criterion but a mere symptom.

After the discovery that Eddington refers to we discovered what the structure of solidity is. Among the criteria for solidity of things is that they are hard and resistant to pressure, that the atomic and molecular bonds of solid objects are strong, that the object retains its shape and doesn't take the shape of a container etc. These are part of the explanation of the use of the term that we get in high school where we are given criteria of solidity. Note that there are more than one criteria for solidity that involve not only molecular structure but also observable characteristics, so if only one criterion is abandoned it need not spell ruin for the whole concept. Eddington's mistake is that he

[71] For an exposition of submolecular entities and examples of changes in science see Greene, chapters 1-3.
[72] Hacker(1996), p.215.

claims that to explain the solidity of a table is to explain solidity away. Whereas that is not what happens. Eddington thinks that we made a faulty assumption in calling things solid (namely, that they are made of continuous matter) and we subsequently found out that given this assumption the paradigms we used for solidity did not satisfy it. But there is no such assumption when we ostensively name or explain solidity. And surely people have talked of things being solid for a much longer time than we even had a theory of what these things were made of.

What we must remember is that we use language in the background of certain normality conditions. And nobody will deny that we might make a mistake in specific circumstances. But could we have all been wrong about every use of the word? Well, no because even if we were to find out that hands are made of something else than what we thought hands are (which is not as easy as it sounds, for what else could they be? And how much else is wrong if this is?), that would reveal that we were mistaken about something in the physical world, not about (our use of) language (the meaning of words). Science can lead us to modify the meaning of our terms, but it cannot show us the "real" meaning. Even if we were to find out in this earth that water actually is XYZ that will not mean that all this time we were talking of a different phenomenon, not water. Such a thing can be made plausible only if we accept that meaning is determined by reference and in Putnam's case a specific kind of reference, to molecular structure. But that cannot be, because obviously we all used the term "water" before we knew that it was H_2O, and people used it before anyone knew it was H_2O.[73] At any given time meaning is characterized by a description of use, which includes the possibility that given potential evidence our recognition capacity can vary. So even though it is not inconceivable that

[73] A very common point against Putnam's externalism. See Hacker (1996) p.252.

we find out something about hands that we didn't know scientific discovery can at most bring about a modification of meaning. But it can't show that hands don't exist or that tables are not solid (only that the property of being solid is not to be identified with the property of being made up of continuous matter). And though we cannot say what may go wrong, or what will happen if it did, that is all right, because such indeterminacy is part of our language. So we need not have answers to such questions as: could the meaning change while the sample remain the same? It could (as in the example of tables and solidity) or it might not, because maybe, if the change in meaning comes about because, say we find out that there are not only cats walking around but some are robot cats, maybe we would use criteria to decide what is called a cat and what not. But it is pointless to try to find answers to these counterfactuals in advance, for if something so extreme happened, many things would need reconsidering, not just our beliefs about cats.

Now, a sample bears a family resemblance to other things that can be used as samples for the same words and to things that are identified by reference to that sample. Wittgenstein introduced the term "family resemblance" exactly because some general terms do not connote a common property or feature (this is why his example of games is very good) and hence essences, common properties etc. are not what we rely on in using general terms. And we seem to be pretty good at using them. Wittgenstein is against the idea that fixity of meaning is necessary in language, that there must be some ultimate criterion for putting a new instance under a sample or whether in light of it we would have to change the use of our terms. Against the demand that the only way to have meaningful terms is that their sense be completely determinate, he challenges the demand for the *a priori* regulation of our language. Our language is not completely regulated, we

say, "stand roughly there" and we can use the word "game" though we don't have a definition that will cover all instances of games. I am not sure that there is any word whose use is absolutely determined. We all are able to use and understand the word "chair" but there are situations in which we wouldn't know what to say, for example if we came across a disappearing chair.[74] Meaning is not completely determined and the fluctuation of symptoms and criteria is part of our language. In the *Investigations* Wittgenstein tells us that we don't have a single idea of exactness that applies in every circumstance, for exactness is relative to our context and purpose. Think of what we would consider an exact measurement of the distance of the earth from the sun and an exact measurement of the length of a table. So it is with meaning, Wittgenstein tells us. A concept that has an indeterminate sense still has a sense (as a vague boundary is still a boundary).[75] For a concept to be useful it has to be clearly defined for some cases so that for those cases we can clearly say that something falls under it or it doesn't. But that we cannot determine what falls under it in *every possible* situation, that it is inexact in this sense, does not mean that it is unusable.[76] We shouldn't be dazzled by an ideal (that is itself not completely clear) and erroneously conclude that if a concept is not everywhere circumscribed by rules it is not a concept at all (after all, Wittgenstein reminds us, even a line that clearly draws a boundary has a breadth).[77] We do employ words, samples, criteria etc. all the time but we do this within the context of certain practices and in the background of certain regularities. If things around us changed, if our needs or our

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[74] *PI*, 80, see also 68, 71. As a Supreme Court judge is said to have said, "I can't define pornography but I can recognize when I see it!"
[75] *PI*, 99.
[76] The concept of a game doesn't fail to be a concept because we don't have a uniquely identifying description of it. (*PI*, 69, 70)
[77] *PI*, 100.

constitution changed, so would our practices. This vagueness inherent in language is important in the whole discussion of this dissertation for an issue that often arises is that "this is a hand" seems to mean the same in ordinary and paradigm –offering contexts. But of course it seems that way! For the sentence used is exactly the same. But Wittgenstein insists that one of the determinants of meaning (and consequently of nonsense as we shall see in chapter 5) is context. The meaning of a sentence is indeterminate until the context of utterance is specified. Unlike the early Wittgenstein for whom a sentence only has the function of depicting facts, Wittgenstein now tells us that sentences can be used to perform many different functions, and so whether a sentence is a direct application of a rule cannot be determined by its grammatical form alone. Since the grammatical rules for the use of words are not absolutely fixed and tight, meaning is itself open textured.

We should note the differences between the role samples play in the picture Wittgenstein is drawing and the paradigm case argument (PCA). Defenders of the PCA claim to establish an existential conclusion from the way we use language and thus claim to defeat different kinds of skepticism (of the external world, of other minds). They counter skeptical doubt about the existence of things by pointing out paradigm cases of those things. The PCA basically says that if the paradigm we are pointing at is what we call an "x" then we cannot fail to say something true if we assert that (we know) it is an x.[78] And, if a meaningful contrast is made between x and –x, that is, if there is a discernible difference between when we apply x and when –x, then x must truly be descriptive of an object in the world.

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[78] See Kai, pp. 350-351.

This is different from what Wittgenstein is saying. First of all his aim is not to defeat skepticism of the external world, but to deny its intelligibility; skepticism doesn't raise any real questions and a direct answer to it should not be our concern. His main interest is to see what gives meaning to an expression and so what would make a contrast meaningful. The PCA goes wrong in interpreting why we use language the way we do. Though it is true that there is (or rather, must be) a discernible difference between when to use the term "x" and when "–x", this is not the difference between its truly describing the object in question and its not. Surely we can be mistaken but that doesn't mean we could *always* be wrong. For though it is possible that we might make a mistake in certain cases, the ways that we might be mistaken are limited by the rules of grammar governing the use of those words or expressions. I think the real mistake of the PCA is not in the thought that motivates it, that certain doubts are nonsensical. It is that instead of seeing that the fact that we couldn't be mistaken is a consequence of grammatical rules, it takes it to be a consequence of having arrived at the facts. The exclusion of doubt, according to Wittgenstein, is a consequence of having arrived at the rules of language, at the rules that establish internal relations between statements and procedures of justification (as I shall discuss in chapter 4). When Wittgenstein talks of the limits of doubt, these limits are imposed by the grammar of the use of terms and expressions not by our being constrained by facts of the world. Though I can conceivably make a mistake in applying the colour word "x" in a certain case, I cannot be mistaken about what colour we call "x". The PCA fails to recognize that a sample is a linguistic tool and that ultimately explanations have their foundations in training in language use in accordance with public paradigms.[79] But this does not necessarily justify an existential conclusion or a claim to

[79] *Zettel*, 419.

knowledge. Even though I might be justified in saying that something is red by appealing to the sample, a sample is not justificatory.[80] So Wittgenstein and defenders of the PCA agree that certain doubts are a result of misuse of language. Defenders of the PCA though would claim that skepticism is obviously false and the everyday world obviously exists. Wittgenstein would deny that we can know what we cannot doubt—Moorean asserters are as wrong as their skeptical opponents. In such cases, a knowledge claim would be as inappropriate as a doubt.

This is why even though Wittgenstein wouldn't agree with Eddington he would not agree with Susan Stebbing either. Against Eddington, Stebbing supports a version of the PCA and common sense realism. She writes:

> "We can understand 'solidity' only if we can truly say that the plank is solid. For 'solid' just is the word we use to describe a certain respect in which a plank of wood resembles a block of marble, a piece of paper, and a cricket ball, and in which each of these differs from a sponge, from the interior of a soap bubble, and from the holes in a net..."[81]

Like Moore, Stebbing's point is that the basic assertions of common sense are true (and known to be true) and all they need is further analysis. As we shall see in discussing Ayer's objections, Wittgenstein is not concerned to defend common sense and insists that common sense cannot give an answer to philosophical problems. Also, he rejects the idea that propositions of common sense need an analysis; what they need is a clarification of their grammar.[82] While Wittgenstein would have agreed that we use the word "solid" as Stebbing describes I think he would make three points:

1. Grammatical rules govern the meaningful use of words and expressions, not the truth value of statements we make by using them. As we said, according to the PCA

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[80] *RFM*, VII- 40, *PI*, 289.
[81] "Furniture of the Earth" (Stebbing, 1937), pp.51-52.
[82] *RFM*, VII-16.

if "this" is what we call an "x" then in saying it is x we cannot fail to say something true. And in Putnam's case that "x" refers to the essence of x. Wittgenstein is saying that a sample connects a name, "x", to an object, x, but it does not give us the essence of x nor necessary and sufficient conditions for applying the term "x" in all circumstances. We trust our familiarity with our language-games, the general stability of nature, and our common human nature to ensure that we all subsequently use "x" more or less similarly (mistakes and discrepancies of course are not excluded). And though we cannot say in advance what would happen to our language and our conceptual framework if strange counterfactuals were the case, that shouldn't worry us or lead us to create pseudo problems for such indeterminacy is part of language.

2. Ostensively defined terms would lose their meaning if all possible samples by reference to which they can be explained did not exist.[83] This, though, does not mean that it is necessary that if we can meaningfully use a term then the term truly describes the object it denotes.

And 3. As we said above concerning the addition to the concept of solidity, we *can* understand solidity otherwise by adding to the concept. We used to say that "solid" means continuous matter, and that acids are what turn litmus paper red, but if scientific discovery reveals something new we can and do modify concepts.

c. "The earth has existed for many years past"

As we said, Wittgenstein includes in our world picture a number of empirical judgements such that abandoning them would be devastating—too many practices that characterize and shape our very form of life connect to them. Let's look a bit more at

[83] Glock (1996) p.27.

"the earth has existed for many years past" as one example of how a certainty differs from normal empirical judgements.[84] If it were a normal empirical judgement (as for example is "the earth has existed for a million years"), we should be able to test it and question it. However, we see that in our practices that involve inquiries about the past (history, geology, archeology, genealogy) we all share an unshakable commitment to it and it is never questioned. Not because we have established its truth through some kind of inference based on evidence. Evidence is something that we look for in order to verify a hypothesis (and which is more certain than what it is evidence for). For example, if I see your coat and your keys on the table in your office that is evidence that you were in your office earlier. Later that can become evidence for someone else—I can reply to someone who asks how I know you were at the office by saying that I saw you. But if I see you sitting at the table that is not evidence that you are there. As Austin has pointed out, precisely because I see you there I don't need evidence.[85] Also note that in the discourse between the skeptic and the non-skeptic talk of evidence is ample. However there is something curious which I think is indicative of a deeper point that seems to be ignored. Nothing that is put forward as evidence against the skeptical claim seems enough to shake the skeptic's conviction and no evidence given to the non-skeptic seems to work against his conviction either. So it seems that evidence either way does no work

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[84] Note that this is a good example of a sentence that does not prescribe any kind of behaviour and that is very difficult to be understood as a rule. Also, it can be used as a counterexample to the idea that certainties cannot be doubted because they are meaning constituting.

[85] Austin (1962), pp.115-116. I will take this up further in my discussion of Moore, for now it is enough to make the point. Hacker (1996), pp.182, 225 makes similar points to Austin though he doesn't refer to him.

in this exchange. Isn't this a reason to think that maybe talk of evidence (and also of doubt) is misleading and inappropriate in this case? [86]

Now, if we did question that the world has existed for many years past, our practices wouldn't become better for it, we wouldn't become more rigorous and accurate scientists, but our discursive practices that involve a commitment to it would collapse. This judgement is a direct application of the rule "Accept the sentence 'the earth has existed for many years past' in all circumstances". By prescribing the unqualified acceptance of this judgement, the rule also partially determines the content of the concept "earth" as well as the use (and meaning) of the word "earth". It is not like normal empirical beliefs because if we abandoned it too many of our discursive practices would collapse.[87] This is part of what we would call "common sense" and there is no room in our practices to question whether it is true or false. If someone told me that he believed that the earth came into existence at the moment of his birth I really wouldn't understand what it is exactly that he purports to believe and so how one can believe such a thing.[88] Wittgenstein calls these judgements part of our "mythology" and in the *Investigations* he calls them "observations which no one has doubted but which have escaped remark because they are always before our eyes" and also, "very general facts of nature. (Such facts as mostly do not strike us because of their generality)."[89] He talks of imparting to a child a picture of the world when it asks us if the world existed before it was born and we

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[86] Ashdown discusses at length the role of evidence in the skeptic-common sense debate (see pp. 247f)
[87] Hacker (1996) agrees (p.217) and (1972), p.157. His discussion prompted and guided my thoughts on this issue in the early drafts of this dissertation.
[88] *OC.138.*
[89] *PI*, 415.

tell him it did.[90] In doing this, we give the child a picture that shows him what goes into our way of acting (and judging) the way we do.

The general point is this. We have the practice of making inferences, of justification, of testing. Within these practices questions of truth and falsity are resolved. However, questions of truth and falsity do not come up at the level at which the methods of these practices are constituted. For instance, we point out a grammatical mistake by identifying the rule of grammar that has been misapplied and we can correct the mistake. We can do this because the rules of grammar stand fast for us and in order for us to make judgements concerning conformity to grammar we abide by these very rules. But exactly because I presuppose these rules when I correct your grammar, I cannot justify those rules by appealing to them. Similarly, if we wanted to claim that "the earth has existed for many years past" is known that would mean that there is some kind of test we can perform to establish its truth or falsity—some kind of evidence to establish its truth. If I question whether the world existed before I was born, I will have to rely on the method I am questioning. I will have to rely on the practice of gathering evidence. And I will have to presuppose the coherence of my very investigation as well as the importance and relevance of my evidence. But by doing this I already exhibit certainty in the method I am challenging. For it would be pointless to engage in these practices if I did not share this tacit commitment with everyone engaging in it, as I wouldn't act as I do if I weren't certain that the earth has existed for many years past. It is a precondition for engaging in certain kinds of inquiry that are characteristic of our form of life that certain doubts are not entertained. Of course, this is not to say that grounds for doubt cannot exist for things like hands, objects, colours and even (in sci-fi contexts in the future) about human beings.

[90] *OC*, 233.

The example about the medical school where "this is a hand" has the role of an empirical judgement is meant to show that. (Not to forget, it is nothing intrinsic to the sentence itself that determines its meaning: whether it is an empirical judgement or part of the framework is a function of its use in a given context. What cannot be the case, Wittgenstein insists, is that something belongs simultaneously to the method and its application, for that would give it two different uses simultaneously.) The point, though, is that someone who has mastered a language cannot normally doubt (or be constantly mistaken about) certain judgements.

3. Criteria[91]

I said in the previous section that the criteria for the correct use of an assertion are not fixed and unchanging so it is important to see what a criterial relation is. The criterial relation is a grammatical one. Let x be a criterion for y. This means that x is the criterion for correctly asserting "y". For example, if we ask "Why do you say this man has angina?" and we are told "I have found the bacillus so-and-so in his blood" we are thus given the "defining criterion of angina,"[92] thus establishing an evidential relation that justifies us in asserting y. A criterion is a criterion for "something being called something".[93] It is true that there is a natural relationship between angina and bacillus B infection. But it is not this natural relationship that makes up a criterion. As Bernard Harrison correctly points out, it is a linguistic convention that stipulates that this natural

[91] The discussion of criteria is to be found primarily in the *Blue and Brown Books*—I rely heavily on Hacker's discussion in *Insight and Illusion* though, as the reader will notice, I see the criterial relation as being more connected to the world than Hacker might have been happy with.
[92] *BB*, p.25. Wittgenstein makes explicit that sometimes the decision as to what is a criterion (as opposed to a symptom) is *ad hoc*, and also sometimes the decision is never made (especially in medicine).
[93] Harrison, p.221.

relationship is going to have this function that links truth-conditions and falsity-conditions for the proposition "A has angina". But this it is not an entailment relation, for it is possible, Wittgenstein tells us, that x might be the case and y not. For example, we use behavioral criteria to establish whether someone is in pain. But an actor can be pretending and a student may be lying to avoid an exam.[94] We have confidence in our use of criteria because the things that we use as criteria hold in the vast majority of cases but a criterion for something is not (always) a necessary condition for it.[95] Yet this is not to say that x is inductive evidence for y either. A symptom is inductive evidence, not so a criterion which establishes a relation through a linguistic rule. Symptoms are discovered by experience and are not part of grammar.[96] To say you know something by appealing to symptoms is to say that you have found x and y to be empirically correlated and this is inductive evidence for your claim (for example that if you have angina you have a sore throat). But in order to justify a criterial relation you can only appeal to linguistic rules. So it is not part of the meaning of a sentence that certain symptoms are associated with it

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[94] *PI*, 182, 377, *Zettel*, 437-439, 554-556.

[95] *BB*, pp.61-62. It is built into our practices that criterial relations are not entailment relations. So though when we see someone expressing pain we are justified in our certainty that he is feeling pain, the possibility that he is pretending is one we acknowledge and depending on the situation we will evaluate whether or not it pertains. In the sense that it is a convention that we posit a natural connection as a criterion, it is *a priori* that x makes y more likely. Observation will show us what we do, not what we ought to do, which is learned when we learn language. Here we see also the difference between Wittgenstein and Kripke. Kripke (according to *Naming and Necessity* at least) would hold that since we have found out that angina is a bacillus B infection, there could never be angina without bacillus B infection in any possible world. Wittgenstein would reject this claim: no metaphysical conclusion (about all possible worlds) follows from the fact that in this world as we know it now, angina is a bacillus B infection. As I will discuss in chapter 6, even when it comes to grammatical rules we are "infallible" only given certain "very general facts of nature". (See Harrison)

[96] *BB*, p.24, 25. "I call 'symptom' a phenomenon of which experience has taught us that it coincided, in some way or another, with the phenomenon which is our defining criterion." See also *PI*, 354, *Zettel*, 245.

but the criteria for a sentence (what would justify one in asserting it) are part of its meaning.

What does this mean? Having mastered the rules for the use of a word/expression is shown by being able to recognize the criteria that justify its use. In other words, it is part of the meaning of y that x is (non-inductive) evidence justifying the assertion y.[97] Not that x means y, "being in pain" does not *mean* "screaming, crying etc."—as we said, someone might exhibit the typical pain behaviour but be only pretending. But if you completely understand y (for there are degrees of understanding) without understanding that x justifies you in saying y, then x is not a criterion for y.[98] As I have tried to show in contrasting Wittgenstein's with Putnam's views, when a change in criteria occurs we are not talking of a different phenomenon but of an alteration of the way we employ a word and thus an alteration of meaning. And this, in turn, will translate into a change in the judgements we are willing to make, e.g. about x when we attribute to x the property of being an acid.[99]

However, as Hacker also observes, it is not the use of all propositions and words that involves (recognition of) criteria. Words that are taught ostensively (e.g."red", "hand") are not subject to criteria. There are no criteria that will justify our saying "this is a hand" in a Moorean context. It is not a criterion for something being called "red" that we see it for, as I said, that we see something is not evidence for it. Of course we learn that when we see a hand we call it a "hand" but our criterion for something being

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[97] *Zettel*, 437, *BB*, p.51. in these remarks i paraphrase Hacker (1972) p.252.
[98] See Hacker (1972), pp.290-291.
[99] See *PI*, p.147n and also *OC*, 65.

called a "hand" is not that it looks like a hand to us.[100] This relates to Wittgenstein's point that sense-data language is semantically parasitic on physical object language. First we learn to recognize something as a hand and then we learn that something may look like a hand. Learning to qualify certain experiences as impressions comes later. In other words, the sense of "I think this is a hand" presupposes the sense of "this is a hand", and the sense of the word "hand." So it is not sense impressions that are the grounds for our physical object sentences. For in order to identify something as an impression of say, a hand, we already need to have the concept of a hand.[101] No, there are no criteria in these cases, only the exercise of our linguistic ability, our method of description. This is why Wittgenstein says there are no grounds to be given for the correct and justified utterance of these certainties-- they boil down to our ability to exercise language and our training in recognizing samples in accordance with everyone else. In these cases there are no criteria to be offered to justify (the truth of) our assertion but only the response, "...because I speak English" and the pointing to the sample to show that I have grasped the rule and hence the meaning of the term "hand."[102] Learning to recognize samples though doesn't mean that we will (or should) be able to exhaustively describe the circumstances that justify our assertion. Our concepts are not completely circumscribed, but as I discussed earlier, this indeterminacy doesn't make them any the worse or any less

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[100] As Hacker (1972) says the *fact* that something is red is not a criterion for it being red (or for my being justified in asserting it is red) for the fact (which is what makes it true) is available to me only if I already know it is true. So to say that what verifies a sentence is also what justifies its assertion is to beg the question. (pp.160-162) See also *RFM*, I-3 and VII-40: the criterion of identity is not that we all agree. There is no criterion but "to use a word without justification is not to use it wrongly".

[101] Since it is obvious that we may correctly report our sense impression of an object and be mistaken about the physical object itself, this relation resembles a criterial one. But Wittgenstein explicitly avoids reducing sense-impression-physical object relations to any *simple* formula; an attempt doomed to failure. (*PI*, p.180)

[102] *OC*, 140-141.

usable. It is neither necessary, nor is it clear that it is even possible, that an explanation of meaning should settle all doubts about the use of words in every possible circumstance.

4. Are Certainties Analytic Truths/Propositions?

All this is not to say that Wittgenstein's certainties are analytic propositions. Apart from the dangers of identifying certainties with propositions in the usual sense, whether a token of a sentence expresses a framework judgement depends on the use of token-sentences and it is not a feature of sentence-type as it is for analytic statements.[103] Usually analytic truths are taken to be such either because their truth is a consequence of the meaning of their constituent parts or because they belong to a group of certain kinds of sentences that are "reducible to a law of logic by the substitution of synonyms for constituent expressions in accordance with definitions".[104] On the other hand, certainties are applications of rules because of their use in context. Analytic propositions are such in every context whereas, as Wittgenstein puts it, there is no clear-cut distinction between propositions of the method and propositions within a method. Indeed we can use two instances of the same sentence type in one case as a framework judgement and in another as an empirical judgement (and this in itself can go a long way in showing that the locus of certainty is not sentences). More importantly, the crucial difference is that an analytic proposition is true because of the meaning of its constituent parts whereas certainties are not such because of the meaning of the words in them. Rather, certainties by being direct applications of rules of linguistic usage (partly) determine the meaning of the words in

[103] My use of the type-token distinction and the examples of this section not to be found in Wittgenstein are taken from Hacker's work (1996), pp.213-216, also p.49.
[104] Hacker (1996) p.213.

them. "What is a bachelor?" a child might ask. The answer would be "an unmarried man is what we call a 'bachelor'" thus citing part of the rule for the use of the term. This can in turn sanction substitutions such as "Nick is a bachelor" in reference to my friend who is not married. This is an explanation of the term 'bachelor' which, along with the use of examples, can teach us its meaning. "Every rod has a length" is another instance of what Wittgenstein would call a grammatical proposition.[105] So the (grammatical) rule discussed here is "accept the sentence 'if x is a rod, then it has a length' in all circumstances". What it basically says is that if we call something a "rod" then that thing will have a length. In other words, we pick out a feature that makes things fall under a certain category.[106]

Another Wittgensteinian example are the fundamental rules that govern inference that determine the meaning of logical constants. Part of the meaning of the constants is that we are allowed to use them in making certain transformations.[107] Without the rules we have our signs wouldn't have the meaning they do. For example, it is partly constitutive of the meaning of the sign of negation "~", that "Accept '~~p=p' in all circumstances" is a fundamental rule of language (which is used to explain "~") because this rule is another way of saying "Use these signs in a certain way". If we didn't unconditionally accept the sentence the way the fundamental rule prescribes, then "~" would not mean what it does. And that's why if someone said "~~p=~p" we would say that he doesn't understand what "~" means.[108]

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[105] *PI.* 251.
[106] *BB*, p.19, *PI*, 373.
[107] *PI*, p.147 n. RFM, 398. N.B. Wittgenstein doesn't mention the concept of analyticity in either the *Investigations* or in *On Certainty.*
[108] Similarly, Hacker (1996) p.262—see his discussion on the Vienna circle, p.48.

Note also that though some sentences that function as framework judgements will be called analytic truths, many of them would not. For example, nobody would say that "the word 'Bismarck' has 8 letters"[109] is an analytic truth but it can be used to show what "has 8 letters" means and as such it shares the kind of conceptual necessity that framework judgements have—if you don't see that "Bismarck" has 8 letters then you don't understand what having 8 letters means. Similarly, as Hacker points out, for "Red is darker than pink," which gives us a relation between red and pink while also allowing us to make the move between "this sweater is red" and "my socks are pink" to "this sweater's colour is darker than my socks'".

5. Hierarchy of Certainties

Wittgenstein tells us that we all have some judgements we are certain of and this is part of every human's cognitive development. This constant and necessary feature of our epistemic life makes our discursive practices possible. Based on the unquestioned acceptance of these certainties we carry out all our other activities: we count, we test, we doubt and so on. In *On Certainty* Wittgenstein, aware, I believe, of the lurking accusation of dogmatism, starts to question his own certainties. He wonders what would happen, how we would react, if we were faced with different conditions or found out things about the world we didn't know. Unlike Putnam, Wittgenstein gives no definite answer to this. We might be at a loss, he tells us, we might disregard the evidence and go on as before, or we might give in to doubt and change our concepts. It seems, therefore, that even though Wittgenstein doesn't explicitly formulate a hierarchy in our conceptual

[109] *RFM*, IV-40.

framework we see one roughly emerging.[110] There are some things that we cannot imagine to be otherwise that form the core of our world picture and our form of life, such as: other people have minds, a chair is a physical object. If we didn't accept them in *all* circumstances our whole world-picture would be turned on its head. If these were questioned we would be at an utter loss —as he puts it, we would lose faith in judging. Here we see that despite the superficial similarities, Quine's ideas about the web of belief should not be assimilated to Wittgenstein's. According to Quine, any part of the web of belief can be removed even though we will be more reluctant to give some parts of it up (like the principles of logic or statements of mathematics) than others.[111] Wittgenstein disagrees: some parts of our world picture cannot be abandoned. As Hacker correctly points out, abandoning them wouldn't just be inconvenient or harmful for our predictions, it would drag down with it our whole world-picture.[112]

Similarly, there are certain logical propositions (e.g. $-(p \wedge -p)$) without which reasoning would collapse, exactly because they are constitutive of what we call "reasoning".[113] There is a difference between these and judgements like: water boils at *circa* 100° or the water in the kettle on the gas stove will not freeze but boil.[114] If the latter turned out to be wrong we would be astonished but we could live with it by modifying some of our concepts. Remember that our certainties are part of an

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[110] Stroll denies this when he talks of Wittgenstein's foundationalism. His claim is that "negational absurdity" is part of Wittgenstein's foundationalism. That is, that no foundational propositions (and by this he means propositions of the world picture) can be abandoned without an all-encompassing "conceptual rapture". (p.153-154 and 167 ff.)

[111] *Two Dogmas of Empiricism*, pp.42 ff.

[112] See Hacker (1996), p.217-218.

[113] *Ibid.* McGinn (1989) talks also of the "constitutive" role of certain propositions (chapter 7) as does Kober and others.

[114] *OC*, 613, 617.

interconnected set, so if water turns out not to boil at 100° Celsius then other scientific judgements will need to be re-evaluated.

Wittgenstein tells us that "Not all corrections of our views are on the same level"[115]—different kinds and different amounts of (counter) evidence are needed in order to shake our conviction about different things. We saw how meaning changes and fluctuation in criteria occur in science. In such cases the transition is less shocking to us than if other parts of our conceptual framework were questioned. Because even though normally these things are accepted on trust by those of us who are not scientists, it is part of the history of science that in this context, to use Morpheus' words in *The Matrix* (interestingly enough when he is talking about the rules that govern the matrix), "Some rules can be bent and some can be broken". Yet there is no fixed point beyond which we would immediately give up our framework judgements. New evidence that counters some well-established judgement of the world picture will be taken into consideration, but not everything will "throw us off the saddle". "Here evidence is facing evidence, and it must be *decided* which is to give way".[116] Sometimes we would keep on affirming certain judgements in the face of contradictory evidence.[117] Others we would change, giving into doubt, and if things unheard of happened, we would find ourselves in the land of confusion. Evidence will face evidence and, if enough evidence is gathered, and it can be incorporated in the world then the change can take place. But the kind and amount of evidence will vary; a different change altogether took place in our world pictures when we saw Neil Armstrong stepping onto the moon than when humankind accepted as a fact that the earth is a spherical planet orbiting around the sun. It will not suffice to get one

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[115] *Ibid.* 300.
[116] See also *OC*, 293, 338, 516, 517, 555, 558.
[117] *Ibid.* 577.

counter instance (or a small amount) of counter evidence to throw us off the rails. Initially we may choose to ignore inconsistencies or irregularities. For example, if we get different results in measuring a couple of times we will try to find a cause for this change. We will not at once throw away our measuring tapes and rulers and give up the practice of measuring objects. However, if this ceased to be an exception and we found ourselves unable to make measurements most of the time, our method would become useless.[118] But we cannot say in advance how much evidence we will disregard given our trust in our method of measurement and when we will give up. Some parts of the conceptual framework have a more intimate relation to our form of life and so are more essential to the existence of our language-games than others.

There is a point I want to address here without presuming that I can give a conclusive discussion of it because Wittgenstein is not clear about it and his thoughts on it seem to go back and forth. He tells us that we do not doubt or ask for evidence for our certainties. Does this mean that we do not doubt or ask for evidence when we accept them or after we accept them? As I have said, I don't think a uniform answer can cover all framework certainties, but referring back to the hierarchy of certainties we can shed some light to the question. Take for example that the earth has existed for many years past or that other people have minds. In a sense we can come up for considerations/reasons for these (e.g. our memory and historical records for the first one, science and our interaction with people for the second). But I think the point here is that, as I have discussed in section C, what we offer as evidence is no more certain for us than those judgements and if these didn't hold fast for us any "evidence" would lose its force

[118] Hacker makes the same point. This discussion was not inspired by him but was, subsequently to its conception, influenced by him.

or significance. Then there are things like "water boils at 100° Celsius", "no man has been to Mars" and "12×12=144". These are usually taught to us early in our education and though they are explained or shown to us we subsequently use them without questioning them. And it is part of our practices that they are used and appealed to as givens that we are usually not required to offer proof or justification for them. Even though it is conceivable for the first two that under different conditions of temperature and pressure, or with the advancement of space travel, we may come to reconsider them. And to a certain extent we could show to someone that 12×12=144 by falling back on the fundamental rules governing basic mathematical propositions.[119] In this sense they resemble two other examples Wittgenstein gives: that I live here and that my name is.... We can give proof to a policeman who asks us for it: we can show him our ID, have friends and family verify it and so on. But if *I* start to doubt things that are part of my personal history like my name or whether I have been to another planet, or to Asia Minor then this looks like a severe case of conceptual confusion. Normally, Wittgenstein tells us, we don't have doubts and we are not confused about these things. We know where we have been, especially in cases where extensive travel is concerned.[120] Too much of what we do not doubt is connected to this. Remember that what stands fast is a "nest" of interconnected judgements and there are some judgements such that if we were to relinquish them our whole conceptual framework would collapse. If I doubt whether my

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[119] Because in multiplying numbers greater than 10 (that have more than one digit) we in effect multiply each digit of one number in the multiplication by each digit of the other number. So in a sense we can explain 12×12=144 by reference to basic mathematical sentences that we are required to unconditionally accept.

[120] *OC*, 333. When my brother was 5 year old he insisted that he had been to Spain even though we explained to him that our parents hadn't taken us to Spain and that he was too young to have gone on a trip alone without us knowing. He was five so we just attributed it to cute childhood imagination and eventually he stopped saying it. Clearly it would not be the same if he claimed the same and insisted at 23 years of age and hadn't been to Spain.

name is EV I will also have to start doubting who my parents are, who my friends who call me this are and so on. Indeed, it is not really clear that I could just give up my certainty in these things and it is not clear either what I would count as a reason to ever give them up. This is why talk of "believing" these things[121] is misleading. Because belief implies that the opposite of what is believed makes sense. It would be as strange to call our attitude of certainty towards physical objects (our concept of the world) a belief (or a hypothesis) as it would be to characterize my attitude that my brother has a brain, a belief (or a hypothesis). Also, Wittgenstein is not saying that propositions such as "a table is a physical object" are verification transcendent in the positivist sense. He is making a much stronger claim: that nothing could count as evidence against them, we would never give them up except if we gave up our language and thought all together. In large part it is this intimacy and lack of alternatives (and choice) that characterizes our relationship to our form of life that is not captured in simply calling these certainties beliefs. Having said this, I must add that in order to be faithful to Wittgenstein's non-revisionism, we can call certainties beliefs. As long as we are clear that their role is the one described above and thus are to be treated differently from normal empirical beliefs.[122]

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[121] As Nozick (1981) does, p.185.

[122] As Baker (1984) has pointed out, Lear's discomfort in *Leaving the World Alone* can be overcome this way. Lear objects to Wittgenstein that, on the one hand, he says that the belief in the external world, or that other people have minds, is part of our form of life and, on the other hand, he tells us that a belief is something that can be doubted, known etc. So if we cannot doubt that the world exists independently of us, then we cannot believe it either and this leaves Wittgenstein in a position that is contradictory. I think the way to appease this worry is to say that it is true that the idea of an external world, or of other minds, is part of our form of life, but that this attitude we find ourselves agreeing in is not strictly speaking a belief or an opinion. (*OC*. 355, 425, 428 see also *PI*, II. p. 221) Note here that I am not sure that Lynn Baker would agree that it is not so much the part of calling something a belief that Wittgenstein would object to, but to the picture that goes with it.

6. Trust

So what *is* this world-picture? I have tried to show in this chapter that it is the background against which all our language-games are played. It supplies us with the setting against which we interact, communicate and perform. It forms a system of judgements that are the direct application of fundamental rules of linguistic usage that we are all (normally) unshakably committed to. They are certainties that are an intrinsic part of the practices that are characteristic of our form of life. It also contains specification of concepts and logical relations between them that mold the way we understand and interpret the world. This frame of reference is not fixed or fully delineated and, as we shall see more extensively in chapter 6, some parts of it are not universally (in time or culture) recognized.[123] And it is not always a simple matter to locate the origins of some of its contents—some we like, some we need and towards some we are genetically inclined. Some come from our education, some from our peers and our personal experiences, some from other authorities and institutions but by and large people from the same community share a large number of them. Yet not all certainties are shared since each of us is certain of our name, our immediate family and what they are called, the basic make up and location of our residence and so on. What is important is that what things we hold fast us not a personal matter but it is part if the structure of our language-games.[124]

A number of our certainties are not explicitly taught to us. We don't *learn* that what hangs from our shoulders is an arm or that other people have minds. Wittgenstein writes: "This system is something that a human being acquires by means of observation

[123] For some of what is "basic" changes from time to time and even, in some cases, from context to context.
[124] *OC*, 344, 389, 415.

and instruction. I intentionally do not say 'learns'".[125] Many of our certainties are passed on to us when as children we are initiated into a language and we subsequently accept them without doubt. Most of what we learn as infants and children (and much of what we learn thereafter) we learn on trust.[126] We see in nature that mammals when they are young follow the example (the directions if they become explicit) of their elders. So it is with us. We pick up a large part of this frame of reference as we pick up our native tongue; we pick it up practically as we do the rules of a game[127] by trusting what our elders tell us. We have no choice, it is just what children do. Wittgenstein writes,

> "A child learns there are reliable and unreliable informants much later than it learns facts which are told it. It doesn't learn *at all* that that mountain has existed for a long time: that is, the question whether it is so doesn't arise at all. It swallows this consequence down, so to speak, together with *what* it learns".[128]

Framework judgements like "this is a hand", "a chair is a physical object" or "the earth existed for many years past" express platitudes that are rarely used to describe to people what our environment is like. They can be used if we want to teach a foreigner parts of language that he has not been exposed to or to help a child along. When someone has mastered a language they are rarely used at all and when they are it is very odd. A Schulte once put it, they are only brought up if someone keeps being impressed by the obvious or insists on asking questions where they are inappropriate, in which cases we might say "Stop being silly, of course this is a hand!". If these attitudes are embodied in sentences, the sentences serve as gestures or exclamations used to show that this is how

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[125] *Ibid.* 179.
[126] *Ibid.* 162, 170, 600.
[127] *Ibid.* 94, 95, 138.
[128] *Ibid.* 143, 144.

thing are and that things would have to be different (in ways we cannot now specify) if these judgements did not stand fast for us.[129]

[129] This way of putting it was suggested by Schulte in a paper read at Delphi a couple of years ago, entitled "Our System"—I do not know whether it has subsequently been published.

3. MOORE, CERTAINTY AND KNOWLEDGE

Moore

G.E.Moore in *A Defense of Common Sense* (1925), *Proof of an External World* (1939) and *Certainty* (1941) attempted to answer what Kant called "the scandal of philosophy", namely that we cannot prove satisfactorily that the external world exists.[1] Moore drew a distinction between proving something to be true and knowing something to be true. In *A Defense of Common Sense*, he claimed that there are a large number of propositions we cannot prove but that we nonetheless know for certain and from which it follows that there is an external world. Examples of such propositions are "There exists at present a living human body which is *my* body," "The earth has existed for many years before my body was born" and "My body existed yesterday". His famous proof amounted to lifting his hand during a lecture and saying, "This is a hand," then lifting the other saying, "This is another one" and inferring the existence of physical objects from these propositions. Moore believed that the only way to deal with the skeptic is to give him a concrete example of what he doubts. And though this may seem evasive (or question-begging), it allows us to conclusively overcome skepticism of the external world because even though we cannot always articulate the evidence we have for these propositions we all do know them.

Let's take a better look at Moore's argument that has one premise and two conclusions:[2]

premise: Here is one hand and here is another

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[1] To be precise we have to say that in *Proof of External World* Moore deals specifically with skepticism of the external world very, whereas, as Williams correctly observes, in *Defense of Common Sense* he is concerned more generally with justifying a number of beliefs we hold.
[2]This formulation of Moore's proof was given by professor Charles Landesman in a lecture he gave on *On Certainty* during a seminar on skepticism at the Graduate Center.

conclusion 1: Two hands exist at this moment

conclusion 2: Two external objects exist at this moment

In *Proof of an External World*, Moore gives us three conditions that need to be satisfied for a proof to be rigorous; the premises must be different from the conclusion, the premises must be known and the conclusion must follow from the premises.[3] He thinks his proof satisfies all of these conditions. But it is problematic and one reason for this lies in the premise. Let's keep in mind that even though in the proof itself Moore doesn't state that he *knows* this is a hand, he did say further down in *Proof of the External World* and in *Certainty* that he knows such propositions. The skeptic, though, will demand a justification of this premise, some evidence on which to base it. Moore claims he has evidence because he sees his hands and that this is one of the things we know without needing any further proof.[4] But, Wittgenstein points out, though no reasonable person doubts that Moore is raising is a hand, his seeing it is no more certain that what it is evidence for.[5] So the skeptic will insist: we all agree that we see a hand but what sort of justification does Moore have for saying that he knows he has a hand? If he is telling us that he knows that "this is a hand", his argument begs the question, and if he doesn't, his proof doesn't work. Only if Moore can adequately show that we are justified in believing the second conclusion (or if he can somehow justify it) can the premise be used validly.. For if you are going to hold on tight to certain beliefs and propositions and claim, in opposition to a huge philosophical tradition, that these are unproblematic and familiar, you have to explain what makes them unquestionable and obvious.

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[3]G.E.Moore, p.166.

[4] Of course Moore's problem was in pinpointing what exactly the relationship is between sense data and objects.

[5] *OC*, 19. I will discuss the details of this in chapter 5.

Moore offers his argument when the whole body of our knowledge has been put into question; in this context, giving a supposed instance of the knowledge that is in question isn't a legitimate move. To use Carnap's terms, the skeptic has posed an external question about the framework, so attempting to answer it by citing instances internal to that framework is unresponsive. Instead of an answer to the skeptic's concerns, Moore is offering a reassurance that doesn't go very far.[6] As Wittgenstein writes in the *Investigations*, "If I am *now* in doubt whether I have two hands, I need not believe my eyes either".[7] Stroud illustrates this point with his example of the detective and his apprentice who are trying to establish who committed a certain murder. When the detective gives specific reasons why it is not obvious that the butler did it (for example that there is a table in the middle of the room which creates problems with the explanation the apprentice gives) the apprentice's answer "No, there must be a way he got around the table, I know the butler did it" is ludicrous. Like Moore's appeal to common sense, the apprentice tries to prove the correctness of his claim by citing the knowledge that is in question.[8]

William Alston's discussion of epistemic circularity can help to show why Moore's proof is unsatisfactory and also to show what insights might be hidden in it. Alston draws a distinction between two types of circularity: logical and epistemic.[9] Logical circularity applies to arguments in which the conclusion that we are trying to prove is assumed in the premises. Epistemic circularity is the one we find in inductive arguments such as those used to prove the reliability of basic sources of belief (in the case

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[6] *Ibid.* 20, 521.
[7] *PI*, II-221. Similarly, *OC*, 125.
[8] Stroud (1984), ch.3.
[9] Alston, pp.326 ff.

Alston is discussing, perception). In these, even though we do not explicitly accept or formulate the conclusion in our premises, we assume it in them nonetheless (or we assume the conclusion in the claim that we know the premises). This is inevitable, Alston argues, because we have no non-sensory way of ascertaining the premises and rate of success of our senses. Suppose that we attempt to establish the reliability of sense perception by giving a sample of our perceptual beliefs like this:

1. At t1, S1 formed the perceptual belief that p1, and p1
2. At t2, S2 formed the perceptual belief that p2, and p2

...

Therefore, sense experience is a reliable source of belief

Now, Alston tells us, the conclusion is not in the premises so the argument is not logically circular. But in our supposition that we know the premises we are presupposing the truth of:

> (1) We and the world are made up in such a way that beliefs about our immediate environment that are based on sense experience (in the way such beliefs generally are) and that are formed in the kinds of situations we usually find ourselves in are or would be generally true.[10]

This does not figure as a premise, in fact we may not have formulated it or anything like it explicitly or implicitly and we may even never have made such an inference at all. But we accept it in practice, in forming beliefs the way (1) describes. So even though the conclusion itself never appears in the premises, the argument presupposes the truth of the conclusion.

Alston's point is that there is no non-circular way of proving the reliability of perception. And so there is no way for any proof, including Moore's, that tries to establish the existence of the external world on the basis of perception to be non-circular.

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[10] *Ibid.* p.320.

We are not going to accept Moore's argument as a satisfactory proof of the external world unless we think we know Moore's premise. One might say that it is enough that a premise be justified, but then we wouldn't have a proof but at most a justificatory argument (if even that). However, if Moore does in fact know the premise of his argument ("Here is one hand and here is another") then the argument is epistemically circular because what he claims to know in the premises is part of what his argument is trying to prove. Now, Alston concedes that if we base our belief that p on sensory experience and we have no good reasons to the contrary, we can be justified in believing that p. This is because we only practically accept the premises that support the reliability of certain sources of belief. And this, Alston argues, is enough. We don't need full reflective justification (in the sense of providing arguments for each of our premises) to be justified in holding a belief, and this kind of circularity does not prevent us from justifiably believing, and knowing, that perception is reliable.

Yet, although Alston offers a very elaborate argument for his position, even he admits that, "...an epistemically circular argument cannot be used to rationally produce conviction. At least it cannot be used to rationally move a person from the condition of not accepting a conclusion in any way, to a condition of doing so".[11] Which is exactly what Moore is trying to do in putting forward his proof in response to the skeptic. His proof treats the skeptic's questioning as not really a problem for philosophy because it can be answered simply and directly by appealing to what he sees. I think that the general direction of Moore's intuition is correct. Moore is correct in implying that the certainty we have towards certain judgements is beyond the skeptic's attack. But he still needs to explain why, even though we are unable to offer a conclusive proof for some of

[11] *Ibid.* p.334.

our beliefs, we can nonetheless be justified in holding them. This is what Wittgenstein supplies; a setting that explains why we are justified in believing what we do and that explains why propositional ("full reflective" in Alston's terminology) justification of certain beliefs is neither possible nor necessary.

Beyond all this though there is another point concerning Moore's "Proof" that can be read off Wittgenstein's remarks. As discussed in the last chapter, according to Wittgenstein, "A is a physical object" is an instruction we give to someone who doesn't understand what "A" or "physical object" means. So "A is a physical object" is different from "there is an A in the room". For "...is a physical object" is a way of saying what kinds of things we can refer to in the world and distinguish from other objects.[12] But "physical object" itself is not like that, it is not a kind of object at all that we pick out. So the peculiarity of "There are physical objects" comes out. What is this proposition? Is it logical/grammatical? It seems not, because it doesn't explain the use of "physical object" (as does "A is a physical object"). But it doesn't seem to be empirical in this context either because doubt (evidence etc.) is ruled out. So, Wittgenstein tells us, it is nonsense, because it is not clear what it does, what its meaning is. Now Moore thinks that "there are external things" follows from "here is one hand". But Wittgenstein is telling us that Moore misunderstands not only the role of "here is a hand" but also the meaning of "there are physical objects". The first of these propositions has a peculiar logical role in our language that is not that of an empirical proposition, and the other is nonsense. How then can the latter follow from the former? It can't.

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[12] OC, 35, 36. Ashdown discusses the proposition "A is a physical object" and the nonsensicality of "There are physical objects" extensively. This is a proposition that Wittgenstein makes a big song and dance about and is one of the clearer passages in *On Certainty* and so it is something discussed in most of the literature—see, for example, Williams (1996) and Hacker (1996).

So though Wittgenstein agreed with Moore that some judgements are certain and have a special status, he disagreed that we know them. Moore is trying to say something valuable: that there is nothing wrong with the way we talk of things in the world. But he can't show that by insisting that there *really* are physical objects like we might insist that ropes in India *really* do rise at the melody of a flute and it is not just some elaborate trick. As Williams points out, the reason his proof is unsuccessful is that he uses logical vocabulary to prove something empirical about the world.[13] Wittgenstein held that Moore misconstrued the way we use such expressions as "I know" and "I am certain" and that he was making what Ryle at the same time was calling a category mistake.[14] There is the category of things that we know (or can know) and the category of things we are certain of and Moore is talking about something that belongs to the latter category as if it belonged to the former category. Not only does Moore beg the question in his proof but, just like the skeptic, he is treating framework judgements as normal empirical beliefs.

Anti-Foundationalism[15] and Anti-Dogmatism

Avrum Stroll claims that Wittgenstein in *On Certainty* is putting forward a foundationalist view "*of sorts*, but not of a traditional sort".[16] I think that though at first glance Wittgenstein's view of our epistemic lives seems to have a foundationalist structure, Wittgenstein denies the basic tenets of foundationalism and thus Stroll's

[13] "Wittgenstein's Refutation of Idealism", p.21.
[14] That is why when Moore says "I know this is a hand" his utterance is nonsense. It is not just an odd use of the expression or that Moore is violating some rules of conversation. I will address this extensively when I will address the "Gricean" objection that Wittgenstein confuses the meaning of an expression with its use in chapter 5.
[15] See also Williams "Is Wittgenstein a Foundationalist?" from whom my discussion was initially inspired.
[16] Stroll, p.141, McGinn (1989) also seems to read Wittgenstein as a foundationalist.

characterization is misleading. One of these tenets is that the propositions that belong to the foundations of knowledge are different in kind from the ones they support and this difference in kind is specifiable. Specifiable in the sense that we can distinguish between foundational and non-foundational propositions independently of the contextual conditions of their utterance. That is, that foundational propositions are privileged in the foundational structure because of their content (e.g. of being about our immediate sense experience). Wittgenstein rejects this Cartesian idea.[17] Not only are framework judgements about a number of different things (including, in the right circumstances, about objects in our immediate environment) but some of them can vary from context to context. A judgement that in one context may have the role of a normal empirical judgement, in another can be part of our framework itself ("this is a hand") and our criteria can become symptoms thus changing the status of sentences in our conceptual framework.

The other idea that foundationalist theories (including Descartes') are committed to is what Stroll calls the necessary condition of "non-dependence" that "foundational propositions by stipulation cannot depend on other propositions or other pieces of knowledge."[18] However, as Williams points out, in *On Certainty* there is a sort of semantic holism that does not conform to Stroll's condition of non-dependence. Wittgenstein tells us that framework judgements are interconnected (they form a "nest")[19] and if one is abandoned other judgements will be affected too. The importance and content of a framework judgement is not independent of other judgements we make (or

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[17] *OC*, 25-29.
[18] Stroll, pp.150-151.
[19] *OC*, 225. This holism can be seen already from the *Blue Book*, p.5: "understanding a sentence means understanding a language."

are willing to make and assent to)—since they are implicit in our practices, they require us to hold other beliefs. We learn to use language as we are raised in a community and we do not learn it by learning to utter individual judgements but by gradually adopting a system of interconnected judgements and concepts.[20] These are linked to our practices and thus to the world that make our use of concepts possible (the nature of this relationship will be the focus of chapter 6). So we don't learn language and then learn a set of judgements as we engage in the world. We learn to identify and reidentify things in our environment and we grasp what counts as falling under a certain concept. But this is something we acquire by engaging in a net of practices in which our language gets its life.[21] These judgements alone, separated from the others, or separated from our practices, lack the meaning they have within the system. We wouldn't attribute to a parrot that says "I like your shoes" beliefs nor would we ascribe meaning to his words. Therefore, it is not strictly speaking true that foundations are not "supported by anything" as Stroll claims.[22] They support, and are supported by, our language-games. Meaning-as-use depends on this interconnectedness of judgements. For example, since samples are linguistic tools an ostensive definition can only work in the background of a language-game. The person pointing and his interlocutor must already be engaged in one or more language-games in order for an ostension to work. For in order for something to serve as a standard, a shared linguistic practice must exist.[23] If someone tries to explain to me the meaning of the term "apple" by pointing to one I must be able to understand what it is my interlocutor is pointing at. I must be able to understand that he is pointing

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[20] *OC*, 105.
[21] *Ibid.* 229.
[22] Stroll, p.143.
[23] *PI*, 198. (This goes a long way towards defending a social view of language that I referred to in the last chapter).

to the whole fruit, not the colour or shape and this I will be able to do if I am already involved in a practice.

Since in *On Certainty* the two elements of non-dependence and specifiability are lacking, I don't think we should characterize Wittgenstein as a foundationalist. Of course, there is the distinction between formal and substantive foundationalism. The difference is what we take foundational beliefs to be. Formal foundationalists are merely committed to the idea that in all justification there are basic beliefs at which justification terminates. Substantive foundationalists add to this what Stroll calls "specifiability", that terminating beliefs are of a certain kind and that is why they don't need further justification. Maybe Stroll has in mind formal foundationalism when he says that Wittgenstein is a foundationalist of sorts. However, though it is true that there is a foundationalist structure in *On Certianty,* it is part of both kinds of foundationalism that basic beliefs, though unsupported by anything, are self-justifying. This Wittgenstein denies. Framework judgements are not self-justifying. They are a-justified, beyond the scope of justification.[24]

Even though it is true, as Stroll points out, that Wittgenstein often uses foundational terms in *On Certainty*, I think that the riverbed metaphor (which Stroll does

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[24] Note that in this weak sense even contextualist theories can be seen as formally foundationalist (for more on this see Williams, 1996). Apart from this though, in Stroll's account non-dependence and negational absurdity of all basic belief (see footnote 82, p.59) are necessary components of foundationalism neither of which I believe are to be found in *On Certainty.* Jonathan Adler (2002) also accepts a foundationalist reading of Wittgenstein even though he says that "[Wittgenstein] rejects [the foundationalist] characterization of the ground floor". Adler gives a couple of quotes from *On Certainty* but mostly relies on Stroll for his evidence (p.176). He then says that foundationalism claims that certain beliefs are "self-evident" or "self-justifying" (p.178). Wittgenstein explicitly rejects the requirement of self-evidence when in *OC*, 204 he writes, "...the end is not some propositions striking us immediately as true, i.e. it is not a kind of *seeing* on our part; it is our acting...". Certainties should not be seen as assumption that we make because some things seem obvious to us, but they are held fast because of their role in our language-games.

not mention in his discussion of Wittgenstein as a foundationalist) is more important than the foundations metaphor. Foundations are rigid and are usually associated with holding the weight of buildings that are themselves rigid. On the other hand, a river and a riverbed transmit the image of flux, movement and activity. Depending on the amount and force of water flowing in the river, a riverbed can shift and change. It is within language-games that the intellectual and other activities of humans take place and it is within them that the movement takes place that will cause a conceptual framework to shift (and which will in turn be reflected in the language-games themselves). Indeed Wittgenstein writes, "...one might almost say that these foundation-walls are carried by the whole house"[25]—we see here that even though foundational language is used a dynamic relationship is shown that is definitely not part of foundational theories. The dynamic (reciprocal) relationship that Wittgenstein suggests between framework judgements and (normal) empirical judgements, is better represented in the metaphor of a river bed with the river flowing in it. Stroll in fact identifies two kinds of foundationalism in Wittgenstein, one in which foundations are basic propositions and another in which foundations are ways of acting.[26]

However, what Stroll does not seem to take into account is that Wittgenstein sees judging as a practice embedded in our form of life.[27] Indeed, apart from the fact that I do not think we can properly speak of Wittgenstein as a foundationalist, I do not think that there are two kinds of ideas that Wittgenstein is putting forward, as Stroll thinks. In the whole of *On Certainty* Wittgenstein is pushing forward the idea that what we accept without grounds is our judging the way we do—a practice whose very possibility

[25] *OC*, 248.
[26] See Stroll, chapter 9.
[27] *OC*, 128-131, 150, 232.

depends on our not doubting many things. He is fighting the very idea implicit in Stroll's thought that there is a sharp distinction between thinking (judging) and acting.[28] Certainty is not propositional but practical and though it may be helpful to express our judgements in propositions it is not necessary to do so.

Also, unlike most foundationalist theories Wittgenstein's justificatory scheme is not dogmatic. Moore's insistence that some things are just obvious to everyone and so his common sense appeal to what he sees is enough to refute the skeptic is dogmatic if anything is. But Wittgenstein never excludes there ever being any reason for abandoning a framework judgement. The certainty that characterizes our practices is such in *normal* circumstances but it is logically possible that things might change. Reasons for conceptual change do come about and this is why there is fluidity in our conceptual framework which speaks against dogmatism; it is an implicit admission that we are not infallible and we might have to reconsider conceptual connections (and consequently some of our knowledge claims). Wittgenstein does not take the dogmatic stance claiming that there are some things we are certain of that cannot be otherwise. Yet this is not a concession to skepticism. The fact that it is logically possible that we be mistaken doesn't mean that we can never know. Fallibilism and skepticism are not identical and conceding one need not lead us to concede the other. Without a river bed there would be no river. And without a conceptual framework there would be no judging at all. Yet, we have no assurance that our concepts and the connections between them will remain the same forever. If men started to grow on trees or cows started to laugh and speak, who knows what would happen to our certainties.[29] This is not a weakness in Wittgenstein's

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[28] See chapter 2.
[29] *Ibid.513, 425.*

thought; on the contrary, it reveals a deep understanding that the objective certainties that make up our conceptual framework are the ones we have in normal, everyday life in which statements of knowledge are restricted to everyday circumstances and variations of those. But this is not skepticism. It is just realizing that it is a contingent fact that nature is the way it is and stable as it is allowing us to have the concepts we have and thus express the judgements we express.

Three kinds of certainty

Wittgenstein distinguishes between what I take to be three kinds of certainty: subjective certainty and two kinds of objective certainty.[30] The first kind we come across in *On Certainty* is what Wittgenstein himself calls subjective certainty. This is a feeling of conviction and confidence that can accompany knowledge but is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for it. This kind of certainty is different from knowledge for two reasons. Firstly, because you do not need to have grounds to be subjectively certain of something--subjective certainty is a mental state that has no intrinsic relation to facts. And secondly, because you cannot be mistaken about being subjectively certain (for there is an objectivity associated with knowledge that subjective certainty does not share).[31]

The second kind of certainty comes from having compelling grounds for your knowledge claims. These grounds that make your claim objectively certain are neither subjective nor private, they are grounds that can be interpersonally assessed and for this

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[30] Carol Caraway also identifies three different kinds of certainty in *On Certainty* (she calls them subjective, epistemic objective and non-epistemic objective) and uses this distinction to show that Wittgenstein is consistent in his view concerning certainty and knowledge. ("Is Wittgenstein's View of the Relationship Between Certainty and Knowledge Consistent?", *Philosophical Investigations*, 1, (1978), pp.16-22).

[31] *OC*, 563, 245. Caraway agrees p.17.

reason disputes can arise as to whether something is indeed certain in this sense or not. Wittgenstein calls this certainty objective.[32] This objective certainty is associated with knowledge of normal empirical propositions and the availability of grounds and so I will call it propositional objective certainty. So far then, the traditional (Cartesian) coupling of certainty with knowledge is retained. But there is yet another kind of objective certainty that Wittgenstein talks about. I will call this normative objective certainty because this kind of objective certainty is the attitude we have towards certain judgements that serve as the undoubted framework within which our discursive (and other) practices take place.[33] The certainty we have towards these is not to be understood as merely a feeling that we may have or may not. No, this is an attitude[34] that everyone who has mastered our discursive practices and engages in our language-games will share and it will be evident in his making and accepting certain judgements and withholding others without question (and what he is likely to do given these).

Wittgenstein tells us that this certainty is not psychological to contrast it with a private and subjective feeling of certainty. Wittgenstein writes, "And that something stands fast for me is not grounded in my stupidity or credulity". Though our attitude of certainty is a sort of subjective certainty, it is a universally shared one. This agreement is what allows us to have the practices we have. This is why Wittgenstein prefers to call this certainty "logical". This is clearly brought out in many remarks: "...it belongs to the logic of our scientific investigations that certain things are indeed not doubted...*If I want the door to turn, the hinges must stay put*" (italics mine)[35], "...the explanation suggests

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[32] *OC*, 8, 270-73, 357, 82, 591.
[33] *Ibid.*167, 321, 415, 473.
[34] *Ibid.* 404
[35] *Ibid.* 342-343.

itself that the certainty is of a different *kind*—This seems to point to a psychological difference. But the difference is logical", "But, if you are ***certain***, isn't it that you are shutting your eyes in the face of doubt?'—They are shut."[36], "'The question doesn't arise at all.' Its answer would characterize a *method*."[37] Our language-games develop from this unreflective agreement so it is a logical requirement of our language games that these certainties cannot coherently be doubted. According to Williams, this logical requirement is a methodological one. That is, Williams claims that Hume tells us that our nature makes us not doubt certain things, that it is part of our psychology to ignore certain possibilities and certain doubts, but for Wittgenstein it is a methodological necessity with which we comply.[38] Ultimately it is our method of doing things that dictates what we hold constant, what judgements we accept without doubt.[39] Indeed, it is true that Wittgenstein had in mind more than just the basic ways in which our minds and our psychology work (like induction, cause and effect relations and the existence of the external world) as Hume did when he talked about absence of doubt. This is a point Strawson fails to identify specifically when comparing Wittgenstein's and Hume's views and on which they differ more than just "at least superficially".[40] And Williams is correct in saying that Wittgenstein applies this certainty to a variety of disciplines and language-games, from doing history and mathematics to the entire practice of doubt and inquiry. However, though it is true that our certainties cannot be doubted within our language-games the reason is not as pragmatic as Williams makes it to be. So when Wittgenstein

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[36] *PI*, p.224.
[37] *OC. 318.*
[38] Remember, the rules of language, the method for our linguistic practices, is part of "grammar", and it is dealt with in "logic".
[39] Williams (1996), pp.121-125.
[40] Strawson, (2000), pp.38-40.

writes, "If I want the door to turn, the hinges must stay put" his point is not that we do not doubt certain things in our practices because of practical limits. In other words, it is not so much that we found out that in order to make doors we need hinges and that's the reason we use them, but more than that, without hinges, there would be no door. This is the "peculiar logical role" of our certainties that Wittgenstein is trying to bring forward.[41] In other words, Hume believed that radical doubt cannot hold up because of human psychology: nature has made us in such a way that even though we realize we can't justify certain things, we cannot help but believe them. For Wittgenstein the only part that nature plays in this is that it has made us similar in interests, inclinations and sensibilities and this agreement allows us to have the practices we have.

Another major difference between Hume and Wittgenstein is that Wittgenstein is consistent in that he never questions what he claims we take for granted in our life and in our thinking. Hume tells us that skeptical doubts don't affect us except in our philosophy and that after all is said and done we will all go ahead with our lives with no problems just as he does playing backgammon with his friends. But in his writing he reaches the conclusion that skepticism is alive and kicking. Wittgenstein on the other hand, never admits the skeptical problem as real; neither in practice nor in philosophy. In fact, he is diametrically opposed to Hume in that Wittgenstein rejects the validity (indeed even the possibility) of the 'detached', 'philosophical' position from which philosophers (including Hume) ask us to look at our practices and which then leads them to philosophical pseudo-problems like that of skepticism of the external world.

Nor is normative objective certainty related to the availability of evidence for a claim. It is not because we have established the truth of these judgements or because we

[41] See *OC*, 137.

have conclusively proved them, that we are normatively objectively certain of them. This is why Wittgenstein says that normative objective certainty and knowledge belong to different categories. This kind of certainty is not epistemological in the sense that one is justified in being normatively objectively certain about framework judgements without needing or being able to give evidence for them.[42] Though Wittgenstein's remarks in *On Certainty* are obscure, I think what shows that there is definitely a difference between normative objective certainty and knowledge (and thus propositional objective certainty) are the remarks he makes about mistakes that I will soon discuss. For present purposes, suffice it to say that in the revealing paragraph 194, he writes: "...But when is something objectively certain? When a mistake is not possible".[43] Since knowledge needs evidence there is the possibility of a mistake in making a knowledge claim. But as we shall see, Wittgenstein tells us that a mistake (as well as a doubt) is excluded in some cases of objective certainty. These cases, I believe, are cases of a different kind of objective certainty than the one associated with knowledge. They are cases of normative objective certainty.

Wittgenstein's innovation is that he tells us that what makes our system of knowledge possible is nothing we can claim knowledge of. It is not a set of incontrovertible propositions, or a set of clear and distinct ideas from which the rest of our knowledge follows deductively. Certainty belongs to a different category from knowledge. The certainty we have been referring to is not propositional, it is the attitude that governs the practices that express a form of life.[44] Wittgenstein writes, "Giving grounds, however, justifying the evidence, comes to an end;--but the end is not certain

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[42] *Ibid.* 91, 111-112, 243, 307, 432. See section on the hierarchy of propositions.
[43] Caraway agrees, p.20.
[44] *OC*, 534.

propositions' striking us as immediately true, i.e. it is not a kind of *seeing* on our part; it is our acting, which lies at the bottom of our language-game", "It is characteristic of our language that the foundations on which it grows consists in steady ways of living, regular ways of acting. Its function is determined *above all* by action, which it accompanies".[45] The certainty that characterizes us does so because we have the form of life we do and it is an unreflective (pre-theoretical) attitude that accompanies our ordinary action. The most simple yet poignant example of this is every step we make: when we walk we have the most absolute certainty that our feet will find some kind of ground to support our bodies. There is not a shadow of a doubt, no hesitation in our walking, we do not question the continuing existence of the earth that supports us underneath our feet. Our attitude is one of complete certainty and this certainty of our form of life is our starting point. It underlies everything I do: that I talk to people and I ask where things are when I lose them, that I am sitting on a leather sofa, that I am writing on a yellow notebook with a pencil, that I reach out to pick up the blue mug from the coffee table in front of me and so on. Similarly, by accepting the judgement "this is a hand" without doubt (and without grounds) I can make statements about hands. I can say that I broke my hand, that I love your hands or that her hands are very dirty.[46] "It is like directly taking hold of something, as I take hold of my towel without having doubts. And yet, this direct taking-hold corresponds to a *sureness*, not to a knowing. But don't I take hold of a thing's name like that, too?"[47] "The origin and the primitive form of a language-game is a *reaction*; only

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[45] *Ibid.*204, 402 and *C&E*, p.42. See also, *Philosophical Grammar*, 12.
[46] *OC*, 369.
[47] *Ibid.* 510-511.

from this can more complicated forms grow. Language-I want to say-is a refinement. 'in the beginning was the deed'"(italics mine).[48]

The relation between our certainties and our structure of knowledge is not a causal relation or an evidential or an inferential[49] one as was traditionally thought, but certainties are direct applications of the rules implicit in our actions that make our activities themselves possible and meaningful. To use my NASA example, any piece of astronomical knowledge, for example that Mercury is closer to the sun than Venus, depends on our acceptance of the judgement that Venus, Mars, the Sun etc. are celestial objects. So these judgements don't do any work in providing support for our other informative claims. They are not like the foundations of a building that hold the walls up, they are more like a riverbed that allows the water to flow. For instance, Moore cannot use the certainty that his hand is a physical object to infer that the world exists, because in order for something to be a justification it must appeal to something independent. This and other certainties are not the reason for which we believe anything but within the context of holding these things constant epistemic practices are held in place. So by forming the system of judgements that will serve as the end point of justification and the common accepted basis of our thoughts and actions our certainties circumscribe all our epistemic claims. After we arrive at these, if one continues to ask for justification the only possible answer, Wittgenstein says, is "This is simply what we do".

It is possible that Wittgenstein referred to certainties as propositional after Moore. Wittgenstein agrees with Moore that what is foundational is certain but for Wittgenstein what is certain cannot be known (properly understood) and it is more than just having a

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[48] *Philosophical Occasions*, p.395. Also, *OC*, 538.
[49] "One does not infer how things are from one's own certainty" (*OC*, 30).

special acquaintance with empirical propositions—it is part of a complicated form of life. Wittgenstein challenges the silent assumption of classical epistemology that knowledge has foundations that are propositional, and radically changes direction. He takes away the Sisyphus of our traditional epistemology that is the foundationalist propositions and posits practice as the Atlas that keeps our system of beliefs in place. Though we talk of the foundations of knowledge as propositions that describe what we must take for granted to carry on our practices these propositions are external to our activities. This way, the legs of the problem of regress that haunted traditional foundationalism are cut off before they can run amok. There have been other foundationalists that also claimed that the foundations of knowledge are non-propositional because, they claimed, the foundations are experiences that conclusively justify experience-statements that in turn support a larger class of statements. We saw in the first chapter the problems such positions face. What is important to stress is that in these theories, unlike in Wittgenstein, experience was what justified the experiential statements based on them.

Peter Unger in "A Defense of Skepticism" defends skepticism on the basis that if you know something you must be absolutely certain of it. But, he tells us, certainty is a dogmatic attitude that involves "...The attitude that *no* new information, evidence or experience which one might ever have will be seriously considered by one to be *at all* relevant to *any possible* change in one's thinking in the matter."[50] Since we never have the right to be absolutely certain, Unger argues, we never really know anything. Now we said that the certainty Wittgenstein is referring to is one that pertains in normal

[50] Unger (2000), p.44.

circumstances.[51] He never excluded the possibility that if unheard of things happened (or if new discoveries are made) we might abandon some of our certainties. But this is the case concerning normative objective certainty that Wittgenstein says belongs to a different category from knowledge. How about knowledge and certainty then? Firstly, I think Unger makes the mistaken assumption that when we say we know something we mean that we can never be refuted. But, as Wittgenstein says, if you make such a claim you must be forgetting the expression "I thought I knew." [52] The mere logical possibility that I may be refuted cannot be held as a reason against my knowledge claim. In fact, it is a feature of knowledge claims that there is the logical possibility of their being refuted. This is what makes knowledge different from mere belief: it can turn out that you were wrong to say you know something but even though you can be wrong about what you believe, you cannot (except possibly in very exceptional circumstances) be wrong *that* you believe it. After all, the claims the skeptic is questioning are empirical claims, and these are by definition refutable. As Glock points out, only necessary truths are irrefutable so if you assume that knowledge claims are irrefutable then you are changing the concept of knowledge to apply only to necessary truths. In this case the burden of proof is on the skeptic (or Unger) to explain this sudden change.

It is clear, I think, that if certainty really amounts to what Unger claims it does, it really is a dogmatic attitude and if it really is connected to knowledge then we can never really know. But why accept such a strict conception of certainty? Surely I can be certain of something though I can admit that if some strange circumstances came up I

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[51] Normality is a statistical concept and Wittgenstein very correctly points out that we can recognize normal circumstances even though we may be unable to describe them precisely. (*OC*, 27)

[52] *OC*, 12-15.

would not be certain any more. For example, I am as certain as anything that my father has three children. Yet if someone were to show up and tell me he is my brother and could provide a convincing explanation and proof (e.g. a compatible DNA sample, my father's admission etc.) I would no longer be certain. It seems that I can be certain of something and also be aware that if strange occurrences took place I would recall my claim to certainty. Let's look at the two scenarios Unger puts forward to make his point. The first one is a person who is certain that two of his friends are married till he finds out that they were only pretending. Unger uses this example to show that even if someone is close to being absolutely certain of something, "one is not nearly as certain that no contrary appearance will show up."[53] In the second example someone is approached by government officials and told that what he thinks is an ink container on his table is really a poison container. In both these cases there is someone who is certain of something and then he finds out that what he was certain of was not the case. Now in both cases I think that the people in the examples thought they knew and so were certain. They thought that they had adequately established that what they believed was true and so they felt certain and also thought they were propositionally objectively certain of their claim. But since new evidence appears that they were unaware of they will recall their claim (and their certainty) and say they were certain but are not anymore. The certainty required for knowledge allows for defeasibility. Therefore, the mere logical possibility of counter-evidence showing up is not enough to challenge our claim. Only if there are specific reasons to believe that a possibility we had not considered is actually the case (as happens in Unger's examples) will we actually experience uncertainty. But in such a case, this is not a skeptical challenge anymore; it is just telling us that given new evidence it turned

[53] Unger (2000), p.45.

out we were wrong. Just like humans in a court of law, "our beliefs are innocent until proven guilty".[54] But it is not enough to shake our certainty that we can come up with a way that the grounds for our claim may fail to support it. We need something more: to have some reason to believe that the possibility that the doubt brings up could in fact be the case in this instance.

Wittgenstein would agree with Unger on most of his points. Right, propositional objective certainty does accompany knowledge claims as many times does the feeling of subjective certainty. And yes, knowledge claims are vulnerable to falsifying evidence. *But* we have to be clear about two things, Wittgenstein would add: 1) that there are different kinds of certainty and the certainty that is associated with the impossibility of doubt is a practical certainty that is connected to our linguistic and other practices. And even this holds against the background of stable natural conditions. And 2) the fact that we can be mistaken in saying we know does not lead us to give up all our claims to knowledge, only to accept fallibilism. It doesn't lead us to dismiss our right to believe, but to reject dogmatism (be that epistemological or skeptical).

Another criticism of Wittgenstein comes from Peter Klein[55] who attributes to Wittgenstein the view that we attribute knowledge of a proposition p to a person *only* if that person is not certain of p.[56] Klein claims that Wittgenstein's view is mistaken because even though when we attribute knowledge to someone we usually do not also attribute certainty to him, it would not be false (though it might be odd and misleading) to say that someone knows *and* he is certain. To illustrate this Klein draws the parallel between this and saying "This is not a house, it is a mansion" and says that though it may

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[54] Hacker (1972).
[55] *Certainty: A Refutation of Scepticism.* pp.117-121.
[56] So 1. X knows that p if and only if X is not certain that p.

be misleading to call a mansion a house, it is nonetheless not false.[57] Klein's point is that uncertainty is conversationally implied by knowledge claims but it is not logically implied by them and that therefore Wittgenstein in *On Certainty*, as far as this is concerned, is wrong.

This criticism can be overcome by considering the distinction between three kinds of certainty. It would be correct to say that according to Wittgenstein we attribute knowledge of p to a person only if he is not normatively objectively certain that p because if he were, he would have no evidence available for his claim. Propositional objective certainty is a feature of knowledge and subjective certainty is perfectly acceptable and, indeed, may even in more cases than not accompany knowledge. Of course that is not to say that these kinds of certainty always accompany knowledge. Religious fanatics have the greatest degree of subjective certainty but lack justification for their belief and we also see people (e.g. students) who have ample justification for a certain belief but do not feel certain. But in formulating his objection Klein seems to mean by certain, propositionally objectively certain. For in his account what renders something (absolutely) certain is evidence.[58] If we are talking about this kind of certainty Klein's point is, I think, correct but it is no objection to Wittgenstein. What is not compatible with knowledge, Wittgenstein would say, is normative objective certainty because this is the one associated with absence of evidence more certain than what it is evidence for and so rules out knowledge. This is why the case of certainty and

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[57] So Klein argues from analogy between (1) and
2. X is a mansion if and only if X is not a house
and claims that although it would be strange to say of some structure that it is both a mansion and a house, 2 is also false.

[58] Klein, pp.116, 117. And also p.121, "...philosophers in general have taken a position to be certain when it is supported by evidence of a sort which bestows upon it the highest degree of epistemic warrant."

knowledge as Wittgenstein describes it cannot be compared to the case of the house and the mansion. In the house/mansion example, as in the knowledge/propositional objective certainty example, we are dealing with a difference in degree between the two things and this is why though it may be misleading to call a mansion a house, or knowledge propositional objective certainty, it need not be false. But the case of normative objective certainty and knowledge is different because here there are different concepts at play (one is evidential and the other non-evidential) and so the difference is not merely one in degree but in kind. The mistake Klein makes is that he is using the notion of propositional objective certainty to make his point when that is not the one Wittgenstein intended when he said that knowledge and certainty belong to different categories.

If we go back to Descartes, we will see that in the *Meditations* he associates certainty with clear and distinct perceptions. This entails that what we are certain of is true, we know it and we cannot be mistaken about it. At first glance, this sounds plausible enough. We would think that if we are certain of something and any doubt or mistake is excluded then it must be true. Right? Well, Wittgenstein is taking us on a different journey altogether. He tells us that when we are certain, a mistake (and a doubt) is, in fact, excluded, but that doesn't mean that what we are saying is true. At least not in the way that empirical propositions are true. I will talk about truth in the last chapter but remember that certainty (which Wittgenstein characterizes as "something animal")[59] is an attitude that accompanies our practices and that consequently we have towards commitments that shape our ways of life. What is crucial in the understanding of this

[59] *OC*. 287, 359. George Santayana (1923) talked of "animal faith". The gist of his naturalist view is that enduring common sense justifies us in holding beliefs we have about the world and that are revealed in our action. Though these beliefs may not reveal to us the true essence of things they do so enough for practical purposes and we can't help but to hold them. Like Wittgenstein, Santayana sees the basis of knowledge as a-rational.

discussion is to remember how much Wittgenstein stresses the importance that trust plays in the learning process and in the adoption of a world picture. This is important to remember when we talk of certainty as an attitude shared by all, as an expression of will that doesn't necessarily have any bearing on what actually is.

Being Mistaken

In *On Certainty* Wittgenstein tells us that many of our false beliefs cannot be called mistakes. "How might I be mistaken in my assumption that I was never on the moon?" he asks and says that "...it is right to say to myself 'I cannot be mistaken about my name', and wrong if I say 'perhaps I am mistaken'..."[60] Wittgenstein maintains that in order for something to count as a mistake we must have ways available for putting it right. "I may be sure of something, but still know what test might convince me of error. I am e.g. quite sure of the date of a battle, but if I should find a different date in a recognized work of history, I should alter my opinion, and this would not mean that I lost all faith in judging."[61] In a series of comments he writes:

> 71. If my friend were to imagine one day that he had been living for a long time past in such and such a place, etc. etc., I should not call this a *mistake*, but rather a mental disturbance, perhaps a transient one.
> 72. Not every false belief of this sort is a mistake.
> 73. But what is the difference between mistake and mental disturbance? Or what is the difference between my treating it as a mistake and my treating it as mental disturbance?
> 74. Can we say: a *mistake* doesn't only have a cause, it also has a ground? I.e., roughly: when someone makes a mistake, this can be fitted into what he knows aright.
> 75. 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?

[60] *OC*, 661, 629.
[61] *Ibid.* 66, 231.

A mistake has to have grounds. In other words, there must be reasons for making a certain mistake. We must in principle be able to recognize a fact in light of which we could have avoided making the mistaken judgement we made, so we can answer the question: why did we go wrong? Thus, a mistake can lead to a reconsideration of our beliefs or a reevaluation of our evidence in forming our mistaken judgement, for it is within the language game of judging that we make mistakes. So when someone makes a mistake (a wrong judgement) it must be possible to fit it into what he knows.[62] It is not a mistake, and it is not even a judgement anymore, when something has gone so wrong that I think I have a different identity from the one I in fact have or if, as Wittgenstein says, I think I am called something other than my name. When someone says that he is Napoleon he is going against the very fabric that makes meaningful discourse possible. Of course, I may be confused about some applications of some concepts and then I am making a mistake that can be corrected but this happens when a system of concepts and judgements is in place. When someone claims that he is Napoleon, though, this is more than just a simple mistake, there is something pathological about it.[63] Here the aberration is too irregular to be called a mistake for it challenges the fundamental rules of linguistic usage that form the basis of our language-games.[64] This cannot be fit into what one knows because at this point it is not clear *what* one knows. If we doubt a framework judgement, other judgements will give way with it. So if someone kept thinking that he

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[62] See also 156.

[63] Even Descartes sees this in the *Meditations*, but he still goes on to talk like a madman. "...how could it be denied that these hands and this whole body are mine? Unless perhaps I were to liken myself to madmen, whose minds are so damaged by the vapours of melancholia that they firmly maintain that they are kings when they are paupers; or say that they are dressed in purple when they are naked; or that their heads are made of earthenware, or that they are pumpkins, or made of glass. But such people are insane, and I would be thought equally mad if I took anything from them as a model for myself." (First Meditation)

[64] *OC*, 196, 647, 102, 410.

is Napoleon, we might send him to the psychiatrist but telling him to be a bit more careful (as we would with someone making a mistake) would be of no use. Here it is a case of a severe conceptual confusion, but unlike the philosopher's conceptual confusion this seems to be incurable--the person entertaining such thoughts must be mad.

Imagine I hand over to you 100 dollars in notes of 10 and ask you to count them and you tell me that there are 150 notes (or 1500 dollars). Suppose that even though I know that there must be around 100 dollars there because I counted them and because the pack of paper bills I gave you was very thin, I decide to recount them just to make sure and I find them again to be 100 dollars. I tell you this, I show you the bills, I go through the counting with you and you still insist that there are 1500 dollars. Are you making a mistake? Did you just miscount? It seems that in this case you are not, you are not even counting incorrectly and probably nothing I can say can make you see where you went wrong. Mistakes take place within language-games, within a method but in this case you are not following the method at all. A person who says he is Napoleon or who insists on their being 1500 dollars instead of 100 has lost his competence in our (familiar) conceptual framework.

Therefore, there are not just the two possibilities of being wrong or of being right (making a mistake or being correct). Wittgenstein tells us that there are other forms of false belief that look like ordinary mistakes but are not. In cases like the above we are either severely conceptually confused, we have some kind of mental disorder, or we don't understand the words we are uttering. We are not conforming to the norms of description that we have been trained in—we are mad or we don't know what we are saying! In case like these the nest has holes in it so to speak and the whole conceptual framework

collapses: if I doubt that I have a body, or believe that I don't have one, I am either insane or do not know what I am talking about. It is this that Wittgenstein tells us when he says, "In certain circumstances a man cannot make a *mistake*. 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."[65]

Contextualism

Stroll characterizes Wittgenstein as a foundationalist but even though contextualist theories came after Wittgenstein's time and differ in some respects from his ideas we can see the seed of contextualism in Wittgenstein. One formulation of contextualism (supported for instance by David Lewis) is that standards of knowledge depend on context. So at any given time there are things that, as a matter of fact, we don't question and in order to justify beliefs we derive them from the ones we don't question. Though context plays an important role in Wittgenstein's thought,[66] it is not all judgements that are subject to contextual considerations. As I shall discuss more extensively in chapter 6, a considerable part of the framework cannot be given up no matter what and for Wittgenstein nothing can count as evidence for it in any context. Yet, it is part of his view that for some judgements what we have to accept as evidence for them varies with context. And whether a sentence expresses a normal empirical judgement or one that belongs to the framework will often depend on the context of its utterance. This kind of contextual dependence distinguishes Wittgenstein from

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[65] *Ibid.* 155.

[66] Already in the *Investigations* Wittgenstein stressed that the context of utterance is of major importance to the understanding and the meaning of a word or an expression. See also *Zettel*, 130-135, 174, *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology* I, 240, 913.

foundationalists and brings him closer to contextualists. That's why we see in *On Certainty* that the context in which we make a knowledge claim will be one of the factors that determine whether we uttered something meaningful and this in turn is related to the fluidity of what belongs to our conceptual framework. If we have specific reasons we can say we know something that it would be senseless to say in another context. If we are in a place where what looks like a hammer could be a missile, then saying we know it is a hammer could be a stressing of this possible confusion and our contending that we have good reasons to say that it is, in fact, a hammer. This is why "I know this is a hand" can be used to make a meaningful assertion.[67] And this, Wittgenstein keeps telling us, is due to the changing context of use that turns judgements of the riverbed into judgements that belong to the river itself. In other words, as the role of these judgements changes in our language-games, so does the range of permissible knowledge attributions.

Where most contemporary contextualists would disagree with Wittgenstein is his attitude to the skeptic. The line often taken up by contextualists is that in skeptical/philosophical contexts a skeptic's doubts are reasonable but in any other context they are just changing the subject. This way, contextualists can explain how we have knowledge but also why skeptical doubts are so appealing at certain levels of inquiry. Another way to put this, suggested to me by professor Horwich, would be the following. It is built into the rules of grammar that certain philosophical arguments are not to be taken seriously. However, rules are not written down for us and we cannot introspectively figure them out in their totality-- there is no kind of psychoanalysis or *anamnesis* that will reveal them to us. And so there is room for disagreement as to what these rules are. Problems arise when we are faced with philosophical paradoxes which

[67] *OC*, 350, 351, 423, 460.

usually amount to a clash between naïve common sense and philosophical ideas. The general view (and what Wittgenstein seems to think, though it is not always clear) is that in these cases philosophers are wrong and should reconsider their ideas, and naïve common sense is right (think of truth paradoxes that current minimalist theories face). But there is another line sometimes taken up and it is that rules can conflict each other. So, a contextualist could argue, in different levels of inquiry what is to be taken seriously varies, and so we have conflicting rules.

I think Wittgenstein would say that there is indeed room for disagreement but that doesn't mean that any kind of disagreement is acceptable. Though we may disagree about what the rules are exactly, or how far they go, there is a background of agreement within which such disagreement can take place. And, as I will argue in the following chapters, the skeptical position denies the common core of agreement that makes disagreement possible and meaningful. So Wittgenstein's position differs from contextualism because, for him, contextual considerations don't go all the way down—there is no context that can allow for skepticism of the external world. Yet, though he does not accept the skeptic's doubts as real, he does not believe that framework judgements are propositionally justified, as empirical judgements are. I can already see the skeptic rubbing his hands in delight and smiling like the spider watching the fly fall right into its web. But not so fast! Wittgenstein does not say that the framework judgements we are certain of are unjustified either. They are beyond justification, they are a-justified if you will.

Let me briefly give a word of support for contextualist theories. The most pressing objection to contextualism has to do with truth. It seems that there is no way to

pin down truth but that we can only talk of truth relative to a specific context. For example, whether I know how much I weigh depends on the context. Usually when I say I am 55 or 55.5 kilos nobody cares because it doesn't really matter whether I am off by half a kilo. But if I am trying out for a junior wrestling team in which no one over 55 kilos is allowed half a kilo would be of great importance. So what I am saying when I say I am 55 kilos varies with context and so do its truth conditions.

In order to deal with this point, it is useful to look at indexicals that have some element of common meaning while at the same time they have different truth conditions when uttered by different people, or by the same person on different contexts. David Kaplan[68] has drawn the distinction between the content and the character of an indexical. The content of an indexical is the part that changes in the meaning of an indexical on different occasions of its use. So, for instance, the content of the indexical "I" is the person uttering it. The character of the indexical is the function from the context to the speaker and so it is the part of the meaning of the indexical that remains the same in all utterances of it. The character is set by linguistic convention and determines the content of the expression in every context. So when I say "I am bored" and my friend says, "I am bored" the two utterances have the same character. If my friend says, "You are bored" to me it has a different character. Since for the contextualist the necessary level of justification for a knowledge claim or a knowledge attribution varies with context, we can apply the distinction between the content and the character of an indexical to knowledge. For example, let's take the case of my knowing that there is milk in the transparent bottle in front of the door of my house. We generally can distinguish milk from other

[68] Kaplan, pp.480ff. This discussion comes from Kaplan's disctinction, De Roses's discussion in "Contextualism and Knowledge Attribution" and the very helpful elaboration on these discussions in the Routledge *Encyclopedia of Philosophy* under the entry "contextualism".

substances and for the purposes of my everyday life my recognizing it as milk is enough to justify my claim that I know it is milk. But whether this is enough justification depends on the context. More justification would be required if there were a mad man on the loose who substituted milk bottles with bottles with a substance that has the same observable qualities that milk has but can kill small children. Then obviously I wouldn't know that there is milk in the bottled unless I had it chemically tested. So when I say, "I know there is milk in the bottle" in the first, normal, instance and when I say I don't know it when doubt has been raised because of the mad man there is no contradiction. Because what I say when I say I know varies in the two cases. Both times "know" is used with the same character: that is, that I believe that there is milk in the bottle, that it is true and that I am in a good enough epistemic position with respect to it. But its varying content is the level of justification that is to count as adequate ("good enough") in the specific context in question. The epistemically relevant possibilities and standards vary from instance to instance. We are very strict sometimes in our requirements and very loose at other times. The truth of a knowledge attribution can be determined in this way: it varies with the context of the person making the knowledge claim. It depends on the language-game he is playing, because the conditions for knowledge vary with context. Of course, a defense of contextualism needs a lot more elaboration than I can give it here. But the indexical character of knowledge can overcome the objection that contextualism leads to a hopeless relativism because the truth of knowledge attribution is thus determined.

Another line of attack against contextualist theories comes from Peter Unger who tells us that the terms "knowledge" and "certainty" are absolute terms like the term "flat".

So in order to correctly call something flat, nothing can be more flat than that. If you claim that something is flat but there is something that is (or might be) flatter than that, then what you initially thought was flat, is not flat after all. So it is, he tells us, with knowledge: for someone, X, to know something, Y, there must be no one who is in a better epistemic position than X is with respect to Y. And regarding being certain, Unger writes: "If it is logically possible that there be something of which a person might be more certain than he now is of a given thing, then he is not really certain of that given thing".[69] So we never really know anything and we are never certain of anything and nothing is ever flat. But it is difficult to see how Unger can maintain that when we call something "flat" what we mean is that it is "absolutely" flat. Suppose I say my desk is flat and the surface of my phone is flat and Unger shows me these surfaces under a microscope and I see they really are quite bumpy at the micro level. So he wants me to accept that nothing is really flat, as nothing is really solid in the micro level because of the spaces between sub-atomic particles. Yet, in the way we ordinarily use the word "flat" the surface of my table and of my phone *is* flat. And that remains true even though in the face of Unger's new standard of flatness, it may not be considered so. Nor is it that we speak without being too precise in everyday life. We call many things flat that are not absolutely flat in Unger's terms and we do so aware that they do not conform to this standard. And they don't need to conform to it, for to call something flat correctly depends on the context and the aim of the characterization. We operate in normal circumstances, and our words reflect those circumstances so that the way we use the word "flat" and the word "knowledge" assumes a normal setting. If we find ourselves faced with specific reasons we will raise the standard, but just because there are (or could

[69] Unger (1971), p.212.

be) situations like that doesn't take away my ability to know in normal situations. Just as if I have a paper I wrote in the 10th grade and I got an A in, and present it in graduate school I don't expect to get an A for it. I might not even get an F because it is unreadable by the present standard. But that doesn't mean that I didn't deserve an A for it when I was in the 10th grade or that if my 10th grade cousin gives it in it shouldn't get an A (whether she should use it is another question).

Barry Stroud, in *The Significance of Philosophical Scepticism* puts forward a view that resembles the move of the contextualist, but as a defense of skepticism. Stroud tries to reconcile the skeptical position with common sense, telling us that we can retain the correctness of our knowledge claims while also admitting that the skeptical position is right. In order to retain the intuitiveness, and relevance, of the skeptical position, he tries to reconcile our having the right to say we know with the truth of the skeptical position that we don't really know.[70] For if the skeptic's conception of knowledge is different from the ordinary conception of knowledge then the skeptic's problem is not really threatening. So Stroud tells us that in everyday life certain knowledge defeaters are excluded for practical purposes but in a detached, philosophical position we would all agree that these knowledge defeaters we are normally happy to ignore *do* defeat knowledge.[71] He gives an example in which he believes the truth conditions for a knowledge claim are violated but (justified) assertibility conditions are met.[72] I am at a party and someone asks me whether John is coming. I say that he is because he told me so on the phone a minute ago and he also said that there is someone at the party he

[70] The problem of the intuitiveness and relevance of the skeptical position is often discussed in the literature. Doran(1996) questions its intuitiveness with an enlightening discussion as does Harrison (1999).
[71] Stroud (1984), pp.71-72.
[72] *Ibid.* pp.58-63.

absolutely wants to see. Also, John is very trustworthy, reliable, a good driver and lives close by. However, John never shows up at the party. As it turns out, he was hit and killed by a meteorite as he was walking out of his house (the first one big enough to kill man to hit the earth in 150 years). Stroud claims that since in this example the best possible conditions for making a knowledge claim obtain I was justified in saying that I know that John will come to the party. Yet, it turned out to be false—here is a perfect example, Stroud says, of a situation in which a knowledge claim is assertible but false.

It seems to me that the position that Stroud is putting forward is a bit schizophrenic and completely misrepresents the common sense conception of knowledge. In ordinary life we do not make knowledge claims the way Stroud thinks; if we believe the skeptic we will not say that we are nonetheless correct to say we know. If the justification given for a claim is not good enough then neither are we correct to say we know, nor is it true. Having adequate grounds for a knowledge claim is both part of its assertibility conditions (relevance and other contextual conditions also playing part) and part (but not all) of its truth conditions (the proposition in question must also be true and I must believe it).[73] To see this more clearly notice the catch in Stroud's example. The grounds the speaker had for making his knowledge claim in the first place are perfectly good-- it happened though that he was wrong through no epistemic fault of his own. This is exactly why he was correct to say he knows: because his grounds *did* support his claim. If they didn't support his claim we wouldn't say that he was correct in saying he knows—that is just not the way we talk of knowledge in everyday life. Initially, though, Stroud's point was different. His point was not that the skeptic reveals something that we were

[73] See also McGinn (1989), pp.26ff—we largely agree on this discussion.

unaware of that made our justification inadequate but that he introduces a much more rigid condition for our knowledge claims which has the effect that we never knew what we thought (and claimed) we knew.[74] These conditions of knowledge, Stroud tells us, are not the ones ordinarily used because, ordinarily, we are caught up in the nitty-gritty of practical affairs and we only entertain doubts if a deficiency in our knowledge claim is shown to be present.[75] The defect the skeptic points to is not included in these and is only entertained in the philosophical mode of thought. And in that context, the skeptic wins the game. But this cannot be, Stroud cannot have his cake and eat it too. If the skeptic is right, common sense cannot be because the two are incompatible.

Stroud tells us that it is a "simple and obvious fact" of knowledge that "...we must know the falsity of all those things that we *know* to be incompatible with the things we know."[76] I think Wittgenstein would say that any kind of sheer logical possibility is not enough to challenge our claim. It is true that it is part of the practice of asserting knowledge claims that we rule out things that might hold that would defeat them. But we do not, and we are not required to, rule out all logical possibilities. Now the skeptic (and Stroud) will respond that the possibility that the person in our example didn't exclude is not just a logical possibility. It is a real possibility that John could have been hit by a meteorite and, as such, must have been excluded if our knowledge claim is to be justified (and true). But here Wittgenstein could again say that it is not enough to specify a doubt. We have to have reasons to believe that it might obtain in this case. But if we look at our normal practice of making and justifying knowledge claims this is not something that we need to have excluded. If we had reasons to take it into consideration we should have,

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[74] Stroud (1984). p.40. See also McGinn (1989).
[75] Stroud (1984), p.52.
[76] *Ibid.* pp.27-28.

but then the challenge wouldn't be a skeptical challenge threatening our ever being able to have knowledge. It would be a specific reason to think it might be appropriate to withhold a knowledge claim in this case. As I have said fallibilism is different from skepticism: the possibility that we might be wrong doesn't mean that we can never know. If it turns out that we were wrong, yes, we would say we thought we knew, or that we were certain but are not anymore. But this doesn't mean that we can never know.

Now, following his reasoning in wanting to draw a parallel between this case and the Cartesian predicament, Stroud would want to insist that if after all John showed up at the party a bit delayed and I saw him, I would still have to say I don't know John is there.[77] Because if Stroud wants to be consistent he would have to say that not only we never knew because we hadn't ruled out the possibility of a meterorite, but that it is possible that the man at the party is $John_2$—John's long lost identical twin that even John didn't know existed. After all, according to the "simple and obvious fact" about knowledge this possibility has not been excluded and if it were true it would defeat our knowledge claims. But no one at the party (except maybe the rude and philosophically inclined host) would say that I am justified in my claim but don't really know. No, I think everyone would agree that I do know that John is at the party and would exclude the identical twin story as silly except if there were a specific reason to think it might be true-for instance, if John's mother stormed into the party with his birth certificate and told us that John indeed has an identical twin who is also a compulsive liar and who goes around at parties pretending to be John. In this situation though the case would lose its skeptical character for here there is a specific and present reason to doubt.

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[77] My treatment was inspired by Doran. This line of thought is indebted to her discussion on the intuitiveness of Cartesian skepticism.

What the (very rude) host says is true: the speaker in Stroud's example didn't know but was correct in claiming that he did. But Stroud's example aims to show more. He wants us to see that in a detached, putting-all-practical-purposes-aside context, the layman would say (just as the philosopher would) that even though I saw John at the party I don't know he has arrived. And not only because we know that the twin brother story actually obtains. No, Stroud wants us to see that even if that were just a possibility, in a detached mood the layman would agree that I don't know. And hence the philosopher is not "...inventing a conception of knowledge stricter or more demanding than that of the scientist or the lawyer or the plain man."[78] But I don't see this. That one can rightfully claim to know while being wrong is something we can all agree to: a knowledge claim can be justified and false. But this is not the question. The question is whether the layman will agree that when I see John at the party, the mere possibility that this might be his twin brother is enough to defeat knowledge. But the layman won't agree to this for if there is no reason to believe this a possibility then it won't defeat knowledge.

[78] Stroud (1984), p.70.

4. The Limits of Doubt and the Philosophical/Skeptical Perspective

So the obvious question to ask is, fine, in certain contexts skeptical doubts do not qualify as real doubts at all, but what about in a philosophical/skeptical context? Does all this mean that Wittgenstein in the end concedes the skeptic's point? The answer is definitely no.[1] Wittgenstein's aim in *On Certainty* is not to cast doubt on our knowledge and certainty nor does he say that we know only relative to relaxed standards. His aim is to undermine the force of the skeptical argument, not to refute it by giving a proof that the external world exists. Faithful to his non-revisionism, he makes it clear that when we are speaking without philosophical intentions, claims to knowledge such as Moore's are perfectly acceptable.[2] He is raising a red flag to the philosopher who is dogmatic. He is telling people like Moore not to forget the contingency of our knowledge. Not to forget how much of it is based on trust ("The difficulty is to realize the groundlessness of our believing") and the kinds of beings we are, and how reality is not bound to our attitude. But he is also telling the skeptic that this is not a threat to our knowledge. How can that be? Well, Wittgenstein tells us, the fact that we can imagine a doubt doesn't mean we are in doubt, in other words, our imaginative capabilities alone do not form a ground for real doubt. The skeptic might claim he doubts that what Moore is raising is a hand but

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[1] It has been suggested to me in conversation that Wittgenstein has a lot in common with Pyrrhonian skeptics but it is essential to point out some differences. First, Wittgenstein's metaphilosophy is not shared by the Pyrrhonians. The idea, that is, that philosophy should aim to an overview of language with the aim to cure us of the philosophical disease and to bring to light nonsense. Also, apart from the suspension of belief that the pyrrhonians require, they would undermine our beliefs with the accusation of dogmatism. Wittgenstein leaves our beliefs intact and only comments on their role in our language-games and their appropriate context of utterance. (Not to deny of course that he reacts to theoretical beliefs that are given metaphysical emphasis).

[2] *OC,622,*

whether he does or not will be seen in his actions. The proof of the pudding is in the eating (an action!): will he put his hand on the fire and keep it there? I think not. As Wittgenstein tells us, it seems that some people just like to talk more about things than we do![3] We do know a whole lot of things and we are certain of many others. He is not that the standard that the skeptic is setting is too high and so his doubts are illegitimate, but that there is something inherently wrong with the skeptic's position and that his doubt is unintelligible. So what is the mistake skeptical philosophers make?

The skeptical position, Wittgenstein tells us, just as our difficulty with it, is just another pseudo-problem that arises from the way philosopher's misuse language. As long as we accept what philosopher's have told us in the past 2500 years we will find the skeptic's questioning not only natural but irresolvable-- Bishop Berkeley was right in saying that philosophers first raise a lot of dust and then complain they can't see! If we look at the way words are used in our language-games the problem will dissolve into thin air. For we will see that the things we are certain of don't stand on unshakable foundations of proof, and that the attempt to offer a proof for them was barren from the outset. Wittgenstein doesn't offer a deductive argument to defeat skepticism by establishing a connection between language and the world. He offers an alternative picture of our language-games (as described in chapter 2) and shows that the skeptic misuses "knowledge" and related words.

Wittgenstein makes many points against the skeptic. Given his aphoristic style of writing and that *On Certainty* was never completed, I am not sure whether he saw these points as forming a single unified position or whether they were different thoughts on the same issue that were never worked out as a whole. In what follows I will try to connect

[3] *Ibid.*7, 338, 427. See also 4, 224, 427-428, *PI*, 84.

his thoughts as much as possible but whether they meant to be so connected is an issue that, here at least, will remain unresolved.

The aspects of Wittgenstein's philosophy of language discussed in chapter 2 that are carried on to *On Certainty* from the period of the *Investigations,* as well as his sketch of the world picture, come together in Wittgenstein's dissolution of skepticism. For the reason the skeptical philosopher misuses words is twofold. First, because he fails to distinguish framework judgements from empirical beliefs that have a different logical role in our language. Ultimately, he is treating cases that must be distinguished as if they were the same by imposing on them a philosophical picture. So he uses words and expressions in different domains assuming that their grammar remains the same[4] and assumes that since in some cases we can doubt and be mistaken it is possible that we can doubt and are mistaken in every case. But this, Wittgenstein says, is wrong; it is like saying that because we can sometimes play a game incorrectly we can make the leap to saying that all games may always be played incorrectly. So the skeptic is claiming to raise a doubt where doubt is unintelligible.

This then leads to the second reason: that the skeptic disregards that our practices of doubt and justification make sense given the rules for the use of language. We have methods of justifying claims and settling doubts. There is a point when we reach framework judgements where no more doubts can be raised and no more justification is needed. For example, it is part of the meaning of colour words that when you have arrived at an explanation involving a sample there is nothing more to explain. This is not a theory of sense data, it just means that it is part of the way we use colour terms that the correctness of a colour attribution can be settled by reference to samples in these

[4] *Diarii 1930-32*, par.88.

conditions. To take the further step and ask for justification is where the skeptic stumbles. For it is part of the way we use and understand these expressions that this counts as a conclusive explanation. If you ignore this, if you doubt an internal relation (e.g. between the concept of a colour and the conclusiveness of an explanation by reference to samples), you are not being more cautious, you do not become a better epistemologist, you just don't understand our concepts. By this I don't mean that we cannot doubt certainties because they are meaning constituting, as is sometimes suggested.[5] One reason why that cannot be the case is that there are certainties, such as "I have never been to the moon", which don't seem to be meaning constituting. No, I don't think the reason we don't doubt them is that they constitute meaning, but *because* we don't doubt them these certainties are (partially) constitutive of the content of the concepts (and the meaning of the words) they are made up of.

Traditionally it was said that we can have knowledge only where doubt is excluded, but Wittgenstein reverses this. We can properly talk of having knowledge only where doubts can arise. The reason for this is that a doubt, like knowledge, needs reasons for arising and, in principle, must be resolvable. When Wittgenstein talks about doubt he is thinking of a social practice that has certain rules and standards just like justification and not just the arbitrary use of the expression "I doubt..." or of equivalent expressions. If I believe that my letter will reach the desired recipient in Greece because I wrote the address on the envelope and then threw it out the window, nobody in his right mind (and of course things being as they are) will claim that my belief is justified. On the other hand, if I go to the post office, get a stamp and the post-office clerk sends the letter off, I should be justified in believing that my letter will probably reach its destination. This is

[5] See Williams, "Is Wittgenstein a Foundationalist?", p.2.

because there are rules and standards of justification that we expect to be met, and there is also a method of doubting. This is why we distinguish between legitimate and illegitimate, real and unreal doubts and good and bad justification. Just beginning a statement with "I doubt..." doesn't mean that you are expressing a real doubt. For example, if I doubt that Iceland is an island, I will check an atlas, look it up in books, ask a geographer, and maybe even go to Iceland itself to check. But if all this doesn't convince me and I prefer to hold on to my doubt and no kind of evidence will convince me of the opposite, then I am not playing the language-game of doubt correctly and I have ceased to make sense. My doubt in this case, to use another of Wittgenstein's metaphors, is like an engine idling, it does nothing and if a doubt I express does not affect my activities, it is not a real doubt. Because doubting is only possible in "particular circumstances."[6] it is not something that can be applied in every situation. This is shown in the example of a person looking for something in a drawer.[7] If a person looks in a drawer for something and doesn't find it there after the first or second (thorough) check, opening the drawer and looking again and again is a sign that he hasn't learned how to look for things. If he had he would know that it is not only futile and silly to keep looking at the same place but also senseless. To recall another of Wittgenstein's examples, that would be like buying many copies of the same newspaper to check that the information you read on the first page is correct. Searching (in the same place) comes to an end and it is an essential feature of ordinary doubts that there are ways that they can be resolved.

> "If e.g. someone says "I don't know if there's a hand here" he might be told "Look closer".—This possibility of satisfying oneself is part of the language-game. Is one of its essential features"[8]

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[6] *OC*, 225.
[7] *Ibid.* 315.
[8] *Ibid.* 3.

We can say we can imagine the opposite of a proposition being true but that doesn't mean we can in fact doubt our initial proposition. That's why we are told that a professor will stop a student who doubts everything—because doubts come to an end. Wittgenstein is urging us to see that doubt is not only removed by reasons. In certain cases doubt doesn't come up even though reasons are lacking. When we make experiments we don't doubt that the test tubes will not disappear in the middle of the experiment, that the numbers we write down will not change place when we are not looking and so on. Yet this is not part of the experiment itself, it is part of the stable background in which the experiment takes place. If we try to supersede these limits of doubt our activity will lapse, so if a child points to his toes and says he doubts their existence we will correct him telling him that that is not what we call a doubt.[9]

Let me digress a little. Peirce's thoughts on doubting and his relationship to Wittgenstein are sure to come up in the mind of the attentive reader because a lot of what they say is very similar. Wittgenstein is notorious for not citing or referring to his influences and sources as he shamelessly says in the introduction to both the *Tractatus* and the *Investigations*. So though he never mentions Peirce (and his pupils and colleagues never heard him mention him either)[10] this is not enough to dismiss that Wittgenstein ideas came from him. We know from Hallett[11] that Wittgenstein never read Peirce or referred to him in any of his writings but the question is whether he knew his ideas from other sources and whether they were a direct influence on him. The most

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[9] *Ibid.* 255 This is why "...our *acting*...lies at the bottom of the language-game." (*OC*, 204) See also Waismann, p.245: "You can only ask where you can look for something. And you can only look for something where there is a method of looking for it. To look for something means to look *systematically*". (italics mine)

[10] Hardwick, p.30.

[11] Hallett, pp.759-776.

obvious connection is the other pragmatist that we know Wittgenstein to have read, William James. We know that Wittgenstein read the *Principles of Psychology* and the *Varieties of Religious Experience* in 1912 (that contains a quote that summarizes Peirce's "How to Make our Ideas Clear").[12] However, that was before the *Tractatus* so it seems that there was no direct influence in this case. Another point of contact is Frank Ramsey who was a great admirer of Peirce's work, as he acknowledges in *Truth and Probability*. Yet Ramsey's interest was more focused on mathematics and logic and not on pragmatism so we can't assume that he discussed with Wittgenstein Peirce's ideas on doubt. (Note also that Ramsey claimed that his pragmatism came from Russell).[13] Yet another possible source of exposure to Peirce's ideas was the Moral Sciences Club at Cambridge. Russell might have talked to Wittgenstein of Peirce there (even though it seems that Russell didn't think much of Peirce), but again we know that the two of them had a falling out before *Chance, Love and Logic* (that Russell read) was published. I think, therefore, that Wittgenstein knew of Peirce and of some of his ideas but that there was no direct influence that would allow us to make the claim that Peirce is where Wittgenstein's ideas come from.[14]

Regardless of this, there are themes that these two philosophers converge on, even though their philosophies are different in some major ways (their attitudes toward philosophy's relation to science is one major divergence). They both see reason and language as practices exercised in the context of a community. And Peirce, like Wittgenstein, believes that doubt can only exist if there are some beliefs that are assumed

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[12] p.435ff.
[13] Ramsey (1990), p.51.
[14] Guidance for what to read on this issue comes from J.Upper's reading list posted on the internet during the time I was writing my prospectus.

to be certain and which give us the standards for what can be doubted and what can count as evidence towards the resolution of doubt. They both repudiate the Cartesian view of the solitary inquirer who begins from scratch with nothing and they insist that in all cognitive activities and scientific inquiries, including doubting, we begin by taking for granted a certain number of things. Both thinkers also share a certain anti-dogmatism. I don't want to go into a specific analysis of Peirce's philosophy here, but since his writing is very similar to Wittgenstein's but much more clear, by occasionally appealing to it we can shed light on Wittgenstein's aphoristic remarks.

The most important point that Peirce makes on this issue is that without a real and living doubt a proposition may be taken as an assumption in an inquiry. It is not enough to put a proposition in the form of a question in order to get a genuine doubt and reject an assumption.[15] This is in stark opposition to Descartes who believed that the grounds of a doubt need not themselves be certain.[16] According to Peirce, doubt is an uneasy state of affairs from which we want and struggle to free ourselves, and it is the result of "some surprising phenomenon, some experience which either disappoints an expectation, or breaks in upon some habit of expectation. A genuine doubt a "real and living" one, arises in the course of action and is something that presses to be resolved. If we claim that we entertain a doubt that makes no difference in the way we act, then our claim is idle and we are not really doubting. Peirce, like Wittgenstein, finds Descartes' alleged hyperbolic doubt not to be real because, for him, it is psychologically impossible to doubt everything. We can't doubt everything and shouldn't pretend we can. He writes:

> "We cannot begin with complete doubt. We must begin with all the prejudices which we actually have when we enter upon the study of

[15] Peirce, p.115.
[16] Kenny, p.205. Descartes' doubt is based on the *ad hoc* ground of the evil daemon.

> philosophy. These prejudices are not to be dispelled by a maxim, for they are things which it does not occur to us *can* be questioned. Hence this initial skepticism will be a mere self-deception, and not real doubt; and no one who follows the Cartesian method will ever be satisfied until he has formally recovered all those beliefs which in form he has given up. It is, therefore, as useless a preliminary as going to the North Pole would be in order to get to Constantinople by coming down regularly upon the meridian. A person may, it is true, in the course of his studies, find reason to doubt what he began by believing; but in that case he doubts because he has a positive reason for it, and not on account of the Cartesian maxim. Let us not pretend to doubt in philosophy what we do not doubt in our hearts."[17]

In Wittgenstein the point is put thus: it is part of the language game of doubt that not any kind of possibility, and especially logical possibility, is enough to form an intelligible doubt. As we said, there is an internal relation between understanding concepts and forming judgements. We will not say of someone who is not willing to make certain judgements that he has grasped a concept. For if he doesn't make certain judgements (e.g. he points to all parts of the body and refers to them as hands or refers to all dark colours as "black") it is an indication that he hasn't grasped the concepts involved. Ultimately, in order for us to say he has understood a concept he must be able to make enough correct judgements using it. He must be able to recognize what falls under certain concepts and what judgements one can (correctly) make using them. As such, certain concepts and conceptual relations are the basic tools for thinking and doubting and cannot themselves be doubted.[18] So Wittgenstein agrees with Peirce that there is a

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[17] Peirce, pp.28-29.

18 *OC*. 115. See also 509, 522-523. The question was raised to me whether Wittgenstein believes that skepticism requires doubt. The problem was posed like this: the Pyrrhonian skeptic will say that the evidence, p, we have for q does not really support q without ever appealing to doubt. So there is skepticism without (appeal to) doubt and hence scepticism that Wittgenstein's work does not effect. It seems to me, however, that the only way we can say that no doubt is expressed here is that no sentence was formed beginning with "I doubt...". But surely there is a doubt even here: it is doubted that p supports q and therefore it is doubted that we can (correctly say we) know that p. So the question here is not whether Wittgenstein thinks there can be skepticism without doubt, but what it means for anyone to think it.

limit to what one can consistently doubt. Entertaining a doubt is parasitic on our holding some things constant and these things are our certainties, our ways of judging. The method, that is, that we have for forming questions and resolving doubts.[19]

Wittgenstein is saying that it is part of our language-games that certain procedures are enough to establish a claim, that the ways to conclusively verify a statement are built into our practices. As we grow up and are gradually introduced to our language-games we learn to make judgements by grasping the samples or the criteria for saying what something is ("really") like. It is essential to our learning how to make judgements that we internalize the grounds it makes sense to offer (or expect) for a claim.[20] Of course, not all unsuccessful or irrelevant appeals to grounds (for doubt or justification) can be dismissed based on the meaning of the terms involved. If someone wants to give support to a political point by reference to the Old Testament the unreasonableness of this explanation would not be a result of misuse of words but from the different areas of discourse that are being appealed to.[21] Understanding concepts and making correct judgements using them are internally related.[22] Though it is an empirical fact that we have the words we do, that our concepts and our use of them is contingent, the way we use them is partly constitutive of the meaning of the judgements we make using them. And hence, it is part of their meaning that raising a doubt is unintelligible in certain situations.

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[19] "I should like to say: Moore does not know what he asserts he knows, but it stands fast for him, as also for me; regarding it as absolutely solid is part of our *method* of doubt and enquiry" (*OC*, 151)

[20] Glock discusses what goes into this process in discussing Austin's defense of common sense. Many of my ideas on bringing this discussion into the considerations in *On Certainty* come from there, though I am not sure that Glock would agree with this application.

[21] Glock (1990).

[22] *OC*, 126.

So Wittgenstein is urging us not to take the skeptical doubt at face value but to look and see whether we *really* understand the skeptic's purported doubt. Wittgenstein wonders what leads us to think that "there are physical objects" is a hypothesis and identifies this tendency in the representational theory of perception.

He discusses this in sections 52-54 of *On Certainty*[23] and warns us against the assumption that sense data language and physical object language are somehow different in kind and that this explains why reports about the former are immune from error while reports about the latter are not.[24] But why do sense data statements have this privileged status in our epistemology? Because they refer to our mental states and as such they are immediately accessible. What is the characteristic of this accessibility then, is it that there is no possibility of error on our part? Well, Wittgenstein points out, if you leave behind the theoretical presuppositions with which you entered this discussion and instead you look at our language-games, you will see that this immunity of error, and hence the indubitability of certain judgements (and propositions) is not something peculiar to the language-game of sense data but an essential component of our linguistic practices.[25] Our referential practices have the same logical status when we talk of sense data as when we talk of physical objects. In both cases a mistake, and a doubt, is inconceivable.

Of course the skeptic will react to this and say that you might be mistaken that what is in front of you is a chair but you cannot be mistaken about having a chair

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[23] In these pages I am relying heavily on Williams's discussion of these paragraphs in "Wittgenstein's Refutation of Idealism."

[24] See discussion in chapter 2 about sense impression language being a (new) linguistic technique parasitic on physical object language. (*Zettel* 420-435) And it is also questionable, as Austin (1962) writes (p.113n). that we cannot be mistaken about sense data statements and so they are certain (for it is not impossible that we can be mistaken in our report about what we immediately perceive).

[25] See also Austin (1962) who makes similar points, pp.114-115.

impression. But then, as Wittgenstein points out, you have to make a meaningful contrast: you have to say that the chair "doesn't exist, - as *for example* does...."[26] The skeptic cannot make this contrast because he is saying that maybe nothing exists. But, Wittgenstein asks, "Wouldn't that be like the hypothesis of having miscalculated all our calculations?"[27] It is, and we are just going around in circles. "There are physical objects" can be seen as a hypothesis only if we assume that sense data are all we can ever know and that is possible because it is possible "that all things around us don't exist". That is, because "there are physical objects" is a hypothesis.

Wittgenstein tells us that we tenaciously hold on to the illusion (a picture that holds us captive) that it is the nature of sense-data experience that makes doubt impossible and then we are led to the idea that talk of objects is an inference from that (the nature and validity of the inference of course being a philosophical can of worms). Once we buy this the natural step is that "there are physical objects" is an empirical judgement open to doubt. But the special logical role of certain judgements is not something that is imposed by experience or by the facts they seem to describe. It is due to the grammar of our language, to the rules of use that underlie our linguistic usage. It is part of our practices that we cannot be mistaken about certain judgements, and this applies as much to describing your sense experience, doing an elementary mathematical calculation, or bringing a glass of water to someone who asks for it.[28] After all, we learn to think by learning to form judgements, to talk (or to communicate through language—being able to utter words is not necessary). And as we said, we do that by learning a set of judgements about individual objects around us. So a pre-condition of thinking, of

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[26] *OC*, 56.
[27] *Ibid.* 55.
[28] *Ibid.* 54, 447, 455. See also Williams "Wittgenstein's Refutation of Idealism".

engaging in our practices, is to have mastered physical object language. To question that, is to undermine what makes it possible for you to raise meaningful doubts in the first place.

But then why do we find the skeptical reasoning appealing? If the skeptical doubt is an illusion how come we don't see this immediately and get ourselves tangled up in philosophical puzzles? Wittgenstein identifies the problem in the idea that knowledge is a kind of mental state.

> "'I know' has a primitive meaning similar to and related to 'I see' ('wissen', 'videre'). And 'I knew he was in the room, but he wasn't in the room' is like 'I saw him in the room, but he wasn't there'. 'I know' is supposed to express a relation, not between me and the sense of a proposition (like 'I believe') but between me and a fact. So that the *fact* is taken into my consciousness. (Here is the reason why one wants to say that nothing that goes on in the outer world is really known, but only what happens in the domain of what are called sense-data.) This would give us a picture of knowing as the perception of an outer event through visual rays which project it as it is into the eye and the consciousness. Only then the question at once arises whether one can be *certain* of this projection. And this picture does indeed show how our *imagination* presents knowledge, but not what lies at the bottom of this presentation"[29]

If we see knowledge as a mental state, a propositional attitude towards the content of which we have a special authority, we also have to incorporate in our idea that knowledge is about facts—after all, this is why unlike a sincere report of a belief that cannot be mistaken, a sincere knowledge claim can. As Williams says working with the above quote, a mental state cannot guarantee facts and so if we accept that knowledge is a (peculiar) sort of mental state, the only possible conclusion is that the only 'facts' we can

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[29] *Ibid.* 90. See also 12, 21, 42. .Compare *PI*, 149—the idea is always that whether someone knows something or not can be seen in what he does, not by his psychological state/mental state. Wittgenstein returns again and again to counter this view, derived from Hume, that knowledge is a doxastic mental state that is characterized by intensity or vivacity. The idea that knowledge is a mental state was in the air during Wittgenstein's lifetime. For example, H.A.Prichard in *Knowledge and Perception* saw knowledge as an infallible state of mind that needs to be distinguished from the feeling of certainty.

know are ones about our immediate sense experience. The door to skepticism of the external world is now not only open but unavoidable, because sense data is all we can really know. And so we have accepted the idea that reports of experience are different in kind from reports about objects in the world and that different epistemic standards attach to them in virtue of belonging to these different kinds. But Wittgenstein urges us to see that it is this very idea that is responsible for the illusion that there is a further doubt behind the ordinary one. If we free ourselves from the idea that knowledge is a sort of mental state, we will free ourselves from the idea that the limits of knowledge are imposed by nature (or our psychology as Hume would have it) and see that they are imposed by the structure of our language games.

So Wittgenstein is saying that Moore seems to be (and believes that he is) making a statement about the world establishing therein the connection that the skeptic is denying (very much like the paradigm case argument does).[30] What he is not seeing is that the indubitability of his statements does not come from their being securely connected to the world, but comes from their role in our language-games that establishes their use. The skeptic does not come against undeniable facts but against fundamental grammatical rules—his questioning doesn't come to an end because we arrive at propositions that are known to be true, but because we arrive at judgements that it doesn't make sense to doubt. But why is this the case? Because when an activity is not based on ratiocination, when certain actions and ideas are animal reactions that develop from our form of life, the question of reasons doesn't come up.[31] Following a rule is not a kind of interpretation

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[30] Wittgenstein attributes to Moore the idea that knowledge is a mental state. I am not sure this is a fair treatment of Moore. However, I do not go further into this because I don't think it is essential to his general criticism of Moore that otherwise I think is correct.

[31] *OC*, 475.

or inner process that justifies our action—it is an unreflective response based on our form of life and training.[32] Ultimately, it is the misrepresentation of (the applicability of) the notion of reasons that has lead philosophers astray. Just because we find it natural to follow a rule a certain way and we lack further reasons, that doesn't need to lead us to doubt—doubt can be out of place even if it is not removed by reasons.[33] To question what reasons we have to do something is to question why we do this instead of something else, that is, why we made the choice we made. But there is no choice here, we follow rules blindly "without appealing to anything else for guidance".[34] And it is this undeliberative use of language that precludes the necessity or possibility of giving grounds. There are no reasons that we follow rules the way we do beyond the way we find it natural to proceed and our training.[35] This is what "this is what we do" means. And this is why Wittgenstein says "to assert something without grounds is not to assert it without right": the ways we find it natural to (re)act provide a basis for our epistemic claims, they give us the right that the skeptic questions.

This is how Wittgenstein dispels the foundationalist problem of infinite regress. Wittgenstein tells us that "In the beginning was the deed", that the way we talk and the way we judge, justify and doubt stem from (are refinements of) our form of life.[36] These shared patterns of action are not amenable to propositional justification; they are what make propositional justification possible. The starting point of everything is that we

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[32] See Wittgenstein's whole discussion of rule-following, for example *PI*, 211, 217 *Zettel* 301, *OC*, 110, 204.
[33] *OC*, 78, 110, 130, 204.
[34] *PI*, 218, *OC*, 495. This lack of choice is why when someone says "this is a hand" or "this is red" in normal demonstrative contexts it strikes us as odd. For an extensive and enlightening discussion on rule following and choice in the *Investigations*, see McGinn (1984), pp.22ff.
[35] *OC*, 139, *BB*, p.77
[36] *OC*, 357, 358. "Now I would like to regard this certainty, not as something akin to hastiness or superficiality, but as a form of life."

begin from when we are just babies with certain judgements that stem from the way "we think and live".[37] Though we cannot give reasons for these, this should not be the cause of a feeling of epistemological inadequacy because we are dealing with a domain of human life that does not need to be given a foundation. Philosophical questions might be in some sense theoretical but that does not mean that in forming them we can abstract ourselves from the practice of inquiry or from our conceptual system.[38] Part of this practice is that there are intelligibility constraints. After all, even if it were possible to achieve the level of abstraction that the skeptic requires, what guarantees that there would be something left to contemplate? It is part of our epistemic lives that it is part of the meaning of our terms that in certain contexts asking for justification is nonsensical. The skeptic asks us to take up a position of justification independent of this (a view from nowhere, as Thomas Nagel puts it) and he doesn't see that our methods of justification (just as our methods of doubting) arise directly from the way we think and live.[39]

There is a similarity here with the way Wittgenstein deals with the problem of induction: at a certain point we have reached the level where reasons give out. Wittgenstein is telling us that there is no reason for carrying on as we do apart from the fact that we find ourselves agreeing in certain judgements and on what counts as evidence for them. But this agreement is not a result of reasoning anymore than it is a result of reasoning that the squirrel will accumulate nuts for the winter. We see here the difference between Hume and Wittgenstein. Hume tried to find something with which to justify our belief in matters of fact but unable to do so attributed our beliefs to custom or

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[37] *PI*, 325.
[38] Williams, "Wittgenstein's Refutation of Idealism" p.15.
[39] *OC*, 471: "It is so difficult to find the *beginning*. Or better: it is difficult to begin at the beginning. And not try to go further back." The difficulty Wittgenstein is referring to is to avoid the temptation to take that extra step outside of our form of life that is impossible for us to take.

habit. For Hume all we have is human nature and reason cannot overcome the gap between this and the world. So we cannot justify induction. "...this propensity is the effect of *Custom*. By employing that word, we pretend not to have given the ultimate reason of such a propensity. We only point out a principle of human nature..."[40] So at the end of the causal chain Hume posits not a reason, for no such thing can be found, but a cause, a hypothesis we cannot help but hold. For Wittgenstein, on the other hand, there is nothing more after human nature is done with induction. There is no dichotomy between the causal explanation and the conceptual point of whether induction is justified. Exactly because he is not a reductionist, there is no clear distinction between the two and he rejects the very appropriateness of the question that leads to the epistemological problem that Hume is grappling with.[41] The crucial difference is that for Hume the great problem is that the past cannot justify our belief about the future and so he is lead to skepticism. While for Wittgenstein, nothing grounds our form of life, no explanation is needed but that is not something that leads to skeptical despair.[42] Certainty does not need the rational foundation that philosophers search for, for after a certain point (after we have described the way our language games are constituted and the way we learn language) there is nothing left to explain.

> "The difficult thing is not, to dig down to the ground; no, it is to recognize the ground that lies before us as the ground. For the ground keeps on giving us the illusory image of a greater depth, and when we seek to reach this, we keep on finding ourselves on the old level. Our disease is one of wanting to explain."[43]

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[40] Hume (1975), Section V, Part 1.
[41] OC, 499, PI, 324-327, 427-486
[42] See *PI*, 481.
[43] *OC*, 166

The question here is whether there is a legitimate notion of justification that goes beyond our practices of justification. I think, and I think Wittgenstein thinks, there is not. Given what we have discussed so far, the description of justification as a practice stemming from our form of life seems to me to give us a much more complete, and better for that, picture of our epistemic lives. It is up to the skeptic now to show why his (theoretical) notion of justification is the one we should opt for. It is true, as contextualists keep reminding us, that if we put practical limitations aside (time, resources etc.) our standards of justification might become a bit more rigorous. For how much it would be reasonable for us to take a possibility seriously will depend on how costly, time consuming etc. it would be for us to be mistaken. Justification varies with context in many ways. If the possibility that our being mistaken is low, or if it doesn't really matter whether we might be mistaken, we might ignore possibilities that in other contexts we would have taken into consideration. This is (almost) trivial. But it won't lead to radical skepticism.

It seems that we have accepted the skeptic's standards and arguments without having been given enough reasons. After all, nowhere in our epistemic lives do we see a commitment to the epistemic standards that the skeptic is putting forward. If we manage to let go of the skeptical picture (and that is not easy because it has dominated philosophical thought for centuries as the intuitive position to take) I think that Wittgenstein shows us why it is not so intuitive after all. In doing so he puts forward a different view that is not untenable, thus shifting the burden of proof on the skeptic who now has to show that his way of looking at our epistemic lives is better.

The point in effect being this: the skeptic begins his questioning and inquiry with his feet firmly in our form of life and doesn't realize that it is this very form of life that allows him to engage in his doubting. So he fails to see the crucial difference between empirical judgements and framework judgements, and asks for grounds where it is unintelligible to do so. It makes sense to ask for grounds when one is expressing a normal empirical belief but not when one is applying fundamental rules of linguistic usage that prescribe the undoubted acceptance (even if sometimes qualified according to circumstances) of judgements that are constitutive of our language-games and practices at large. This is why the skeptic's questioning remains in the air and cannot be manifested in action: because he too is committed to these judgements he tries to doubt. The fact that he is committed to them is shown in his engaging in our practices that is, itself, a tacit expression of his acceptance and certainty of framework judgements. So when he tells us that we should not look away and ignore the embarrassing fact that we cannot justify our framework judgements we can now see that this is not an embarrassing fact at all. We don't justify them because we don't have to. Affirming such judgements is an expression of authority as competent agents in our form of life, the very form of life that allows us to have language, to think, to judge and to doubt.[44] If the skeptic does try to really doubt them nonetheless, the tool he has for asking the questions he does, the tool he has for even understanding what he is questioning breaks down.[45] This is why in the very beginning of *On Certainty* Wittgenstein writes: "From its seeming to me—or to

[44] I am in agreement with McGinn (1989), chapter 8.
[45] *OC*, 369, 456. Echoing the *Tractatus*, 6.51.

everyone—to be so, it doesn't follow that it is so. *What we can ask is whether it makes sense to doubt it.*"(italics mine)[46]

What Wittgenstein is also saying, that never occurred to anyone, is that even though practices serve as foundations they do not stand in any sort of justifying relation to any proposition. Now the assumption that justification is always propositional is a result of a view of the world that is characteristically Cartesian: a contemplative subject cognitively separated from the world it inhabits who seeks justification introspectively will seek to provide this justification in the form of propositions. But this way we have stopped looking at people as the beings they are and in the world, that is we have de-contextualize them and see them as objects of study cut off from their environment and their practices. That is a misrepresentation. We are thinking of an artificial abstraction and this is an illegitimate conceptual shift and the questions that arise from it are only pseudo-questions. What Wittgenstein is saying, is that the skeptic wants to step out of all language-games in order to assess them and while he claims to have done that, in reality, in *practice*, he can't.[47]

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[46] *OC.* 2.

[47] *Ibid.* 120, and similarly 204, 232.

Heidegger discussion in *Being and Time* of the problem of the external world bears similarities to Wittgenstein's thought. He writes:

> "...the question of whether there is a world at all and whether its being can be demonstrated, makes no sense at all if it is raised by Da-sein as being-in-the-world—and who else should ask it?....world is essentially disclosed with the being of Da-sein.... The 'scandal of philosophy' does not consist in the fact that this proof is still lacking up to now, but *in the fact that such proofs are expected and attempted again and again*.... Correctly understood, Da-sein defies such proofs, because it always already *is* in its being what the later proofs first deem necessary to demonstrate for it.... It is not a matter of proving that and how the 'external world' is objectively present, but of demonstrating why Da-sein as being-in-the-world has the tendency of 'initially' burying the 'external world' in nullity 'epistemologically' in order first to prove it." (pp. 188, 190, 191—part I, chapter 6)

For Heidegger the relation between us and the world is different from that between a subject and an object. Knowing is grounded in our being-in-the-world. We are not (and we don't see ourselves as) beings that just gather information in our heads, which we then compare to the

Wittgenstein's views about language discussed in chapter 2 relate to his views about knowledge in *On Certainty*. He rejects the realist idea that to understand/know the sense of a sentence is to know what has to be the case for it to be true (since for the sentence to be true it must first have a sense) and tells us that having concepts, knowing the meaning of words, means being able to apply them, in many cases, being able to use the criteria that would justify us in asserting a sentence that they are part of. Citing such criteria is one answer to "How do you know?" (when the question involves reference to samples the answer is "I speak English"). In this way Wittgenstein turns epistemology on its head: we are justified in making a claim (and a belief) based on criteria or samples except if specific circumstances hold that would justify a doubt. Traditionally sense was connected to the conditions that would make a sentence true, so sense was seen to be

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outside world. We are in the world so we don't need to make a leap to leave the 'inside' to go to the 'outside'. This is why knowing doesn't *create* a "commercium" between the world and us because the relationship is there already. Traditional philosophy, Heidegger tells us, has made the mistake of seeing our relationship to the world, and our epistemic position, as a subject-object one and it is this fundamental mistake which leads to skeptical problems. (*Being and Time*, Part I, chapters 2 and 3)

So Wittgenstein and Heidegger react to the Cartesian view of the world of a human being in some sense cognitively cut off from the world and try to bring us back into the world. The world is something intelligible to us from the outset and not unreachable by us, the disengaged subjects. Both stress the importance of action and of the background against which all human activity takes place. It is this background, in Wittgenstein our form of life and world-picture and in Heidegger the notion of pre-understanding, that allows us to make sense of the world and makes our experiences intelligible. And for both even though to some extent we can talk of this background it plays a different role from the things we are constantly aware of and refer to everyday. For Wittgenstein and Heidegger this background is the medium through which we are connected to the world and which makes it intelligible to us, for it supplies the stage for meaning and knowledge to exist. We see therefore, that both Wittgenstein and Heidegger oppose traditional foundationalist thinking and offer an alternative in which activity and the setting in which it takes place is crucial. This is not to deny that their ideas diverge substantially in many respects. They do. For example, for Heidegger our everyday life and our relationship to *das Man* which is an essential part of it, is in large part the inauthentic mode of being—Wittgenstein doesn't exhibit such moralizing in his writing as is almost always present in Heidegger. Also, Heidegger doesn't focus on everydayness because it is the most characteristic or important aspect of our existence (care and temporality are the fundamentals). Yet, for both our starting point and what philosophers have neglected and must return to is the context in which we function and the social practices we are immersed in our everyday, pre-theoretical activities.

independent of whether you can know something or not. As Hacker points out, as long as this conception of sense held fast the skeptical problem was always grinning in front of our face.[48] Now the question, if there is a question, is no longer "what would make 'p' true?" but "what are the criteria that justify the assertion 'p'?" In this case, if there are no specific reasons to doubt, the criteria are enough to justify your assertion that 'p'.[49] Of course, as I said, in light of new discoveries we might have to rethink conceptual connections, and so some of our rules (though some cannot be touched), and thus what would justify us in asserting p. But again, this a form of fallibilism, not skepticism.

Also, Wittgenstein didn't believe that words have a meaning like an aura that accompanies them so though we can elucidate the concept of knowledge he would deny that a definition of "knowledge" can give us the necessary and sufficient conditions for all knowledge past, present and future. And though he never mentions the definition of knowledge as justified true belief, I think that what he says is consistent with knowledge being, more or less, justified true belief. Of course, we distinguish between true and false beliefs and call knowledge only the former. This is why Wittgenstein insists that knowledge is not a subjective mental state but has to do with the claimant's epistemic position (whether he can provide enough evidence for his claim). But Wittgenstein's point is that justification for something must be more certain than what it is justification for. So when you get what is maximally certain, like Moore's propositions, it becomes inappropriate to talk of justification, and hence of knowledge. So justified true belief can be knowledge while what Moore cites is not.

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[48] Hacker (1972), p.304.

[49] But, as Stoutland says, this doesn't mean that the meaning of a sentence is *constituted* by assertibility conditions. Because, for Wittgenstein, for something to be assertible it must first be a proposition, which means that it is in a context in which its sense is determinate. Hacker (1972) spells out how the change discussed in the text above takes place in Wittgenstein, pp.161-163.

We can see what all this means by looking at Stroud's example of aircraft spotters, which he uses to elucidate the nature of our everyday epistemic position.[50] Aircraft spotters are trained to identify aircraft by a manual according to which: an aircraft with characteristic x, y and z is an F aircraft, and if it has characteristics x, y and w it is an E aircraft. Now, unknown to the trainee aircraft spotters there is another kind of plane that has characteristic x, y and z just like the F aircraft but also has characteristic v' instead of v (that F has) and is classified as a G aircraft. The writers of the manual are aware of this difference but have not included G aircrafts in their manual because it would have made it too difficult to recognize F's. Also because G's are not many, they are reconnaissance planes only and so not dangerous and therefore it doesn't matter if they fly over the spotter's territory. So, Stroud says, even though the rookie aircraft spotters are correct given the manual when they identify a plane as an F based on their seeing characteristics x, y and z, they can't distinguish F's from G's so their claim does not amount to knowledge.

Stroud here ignores the distinction between grammatical rules (explanations of meaning) and empirical propositions that are subject to doubt.[51] In his account the concept of an F is given to the spotters by the manual as a plane with features x, y, z. Stroud would say that this is what the spotters took F to mean but the real meaning is given by the more elaborate criteria of the authors. What Stroud doesn't seem to take into consideration is that if we have different criteria for the use of two concepts and we have different explanations for them, then we have two concepts. So the rookie aircraft spotters are working with a different concept of an F plane than the authors of the

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[50] Stroud (1984), pp.67ff.
[51] See Glock's (1990) discussion on criteria and concepts for a discussion on this distinction.

manual. Given the concept of an F they have from the manual their claim to knowledge is perfectly justified *and* correct.[52] So when Stroud says that the spotters don't know they are seeing F's, he is confusing two concepts that should not be assimilated: that of the F's given by the manual and that of the F's used by manual writers. Since the rules are constitutive of the meaning of the terms, Stroud should not say that the rookies are wrong to say they know but right given the manual.

How does this connect to the skeptical position? Because it reveals another reason why we are fooled (even if momentarily) to accept the skeptical position as legitimate. To begin with, Stroud uses this example to show how our epistemic position in everyday life compares with the skeptical (Cartesian) position. He is telling us that while we are like the rookie aircraft spotter and we are content with our knowledge claims given the information available, once the skeptic points out the skeptical possibilities we see that we can never be justified in claiming we know. However, the skeptic starts off with our concepts but in forming his doubt he tries to challenge the rules of grammar that make his doubt meaningful. In order to challenge our claims he has to use our concepts but in order to reach his skeptical conclusion he changes our concepts on us. He changes the concept of knowledge by changing criteria and standards just like the authors of the aircraft spotter's manual change the concepts of aircraft F. The skeptic will say that he is not changing our concepts, he is just looking at them disconnected from the practical limitations that we impose on them in our everyday life. But that is not true. The skeptic is actually trying to challenge our concepts by making conceptual moves that these concepts, and our conceptual framework at large, do not allow. His doubt can only get off the ground if he changes our concepts, but then his questioning

[52] Williams (1996) agrees, p.207.

doesn't touch us. The skeptic can use a concept of knowledge that is different from ours and reach his skeptical conclusion and avoid any contradiction with knowledge claims we all (including him) make and rely on in our everyday life. In this case he equivocates and so his claims when contrasted with ours are nonsensical and his problematic will be of no consequence to us.[53] Or he can be inconsistent, claiming he knows many things in his life (e.g. that prolonged use of heroin causes addiction) that he really can't know according to his skeptical reasoning. This is why Stroud wants to say that skeptical reasoning is an extension of ours cut off from practical concerns. However, neither the meteorite nor the aircraft spotter's example that Stroud offers will quite do the trick. Both aim at making us accept that in our everyday practices we use the concept of knowledge no differently than the skeptic does. Once we accept this we are half way through the door of Cartesian skepticism. But the truth is that if Stroud's examples are to do the job he wants them to, we would never accept them. For what Stroud should really say in order to draw his parallel is that even if the aircraft spotter sees the plane with features x, y, z, and v' and even if we saw John at the party, we should still say we didn't know. It could have been $John_2$ or a hologram of a G plane and so Stroud would say, we should refrain from saying we know just because this is logically possible.

What if the skeptic, though, accepts that given our concepts (rules) his doubts are illegitimate, but questions whether our concepts (rules) are the correct ones? The first thing to note here is that Wittgenstein insists that there is nothing external to our practices that grounds them. Yet, the fact that our acceptance of certain procedures as settling

[53] See Doran (1996) and Harrison (1999).

certain questions is ungrounded, doesn't mean that it is mistaken.[54] Once, again, when there is no choice, the question of justification is inappropriate. The deeper point is that any talk about the world, any description of it, takes place through a framework that is constitutive of the meaning of the terms we use in our descriptions. The rules of grammar are prior to talk of truth and falsity, and any justification procedure takes place with these as a background. In other words, our agreement and the acceptance of certain basic judgements, and thus meaning, exists prior to the formulation of empirical judgements. And when we reach our grammatical rules or their direct application, our commonly accepted and used explanations of meaning, we have reached "bedrock" and nothing more needs or can be said. This is not to say that there is no justification, it is to say that this *is* justification.

The reason this question is appealing is because it rests on a very specific and skepticism-laden notion of objectivity.[55] We see Stroud making use of this notion when he admits that the correctness of the aircraft-spotters claim is conditional on the definition of the manual, but then questions whether the manual itself is correct. He writes: "Whether the manual is correct or not is itself an objective fact. In this case we outsiders know it is not correct." He draws a parallel between the distinction of the author's position vis-à-vis the beginner aircraft spotters and the distinction between the position we are in in our practical life and the "detached 'external' standpoint" of the skeptic. He adds that "...we do have a conception of things being a certain way independently of their being known or believed or said to be that way by anyone" and that "...the world exists and is the way it is quite independently of its being known or believed by us to be

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[54] *PI*, 289.

[55] See also Austin's (1962) discussion to get a feel of the same point, and Doran's (1996) discussion on how the skeptic uses this to build his point.

that way."[56] I think Stroud is right about one thing: it is part of our ordinary conception of reality that things are a certain way independently of whether we know or believe them to be so. This sense of objectivity is part of our form of life and of many of our language-games (e.g. of description and of measurement—that's why we talk of illusions, appearances, mistakes of judgement, unobstructed points of view etc.) So far, so good. Stroud is right to say that in this sense this is a platitude—after all, that's exactly why we sometimes have to change our minds. He continues saying that this doesn't imply the impossibility of knowledge. And I have to agree if we are talking about the "platitude" involved in our ordinary conception of knowledge. But let's take another look at what Stroud is really saying.

Stroud is telling us that there are two different perspectives: the philosophical and the common sense one. He tells us that even though the two perspectives seem opposed they are in fact compatible because for practical purposes in ordinary life we settle for assertibility conditions instead of truth conditions. Therefore we can comfortably hold on to the intuition we all share that we know a lot while also admitting the truth of the skeptical position that he finds unassailable. However, here we have come up against a wall. For this "platitude" that Stroud refers to is very different from the "platitude" we all admit. The idea of objectivity that we have in our ordinary life *is* compatible with knowledge exactly because nowhere in this notion of an independent reality is there the idea that it is unknowable. But this very idea is built into the concept of objectivity as Stroud (and the skeptic) uses it.[57] For what Stroud is in effect saying is that there is a

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[56] Stroud (1984), p. 77 ff., 81-82.

[57] Rorty (1989) also uses this "philosophical" notion of objectivity in his attack on the ideal of attaining a true picture of reality. But the everyday notion of objectivity that is part of our

world out there that could turn everything we say to be false and there is no way to ever be sure. But then what is this "reality" he is talking about?[58] For it surely isn't the one we talk about in our everyday life. If we have no criteria to establish when we are talking about it and when not then the word is unusable for us. Stroud is making the same mistake he makes when he says that we could be wrong in every use of a term, even when it is an explanation of meaning. He is disregarding the fact that in this case a term of this sort would be completely indeterminate, and so it would have lost its meaning.

In order to understand "a looks like b" we have to first understand "a (really) is b". Grammatical rules for the use of words, expressions and concepts limit the ways that something can be a real x or a fake x. The question here is what the skeptic means by "real" and "mistaken" when he tells us that at any given time we might really be mistaken. Though criteria are not mentioned in *On Certainty* as such, they are implicit in the discussion of mistakes. When Wittgenstein tells us that a mistake needs grounds he is saying that when I say I might be mistaken I must have an idea of where I can possibly have gone wrong, what the possibility that I am invoking is. And this is what criteria give us: the grounds for supposing we might be mistaken in this case. The skeptic is disregarding the fact that it remains unclear what it means to deny an assertion (or be mistaken in asserting something) if there is no practice that makes it clear.[59] And if it is not clear how an assertion can be mistaken then it is not clear what one is asserting in the first place. Without criteria (or sample relations) for saying that "a is b" the contrast "a

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language-games includes most of what the philosophical notion involves. Including the essential distinction between what we experience and the object that is the subject of our experience.

[58] See Austin (1962), and Glock (1990) on Austin for the use of the word "real".

[59] One of the major points pushed by Wittgenstein of course—see Nielsen Kai, p.357ff and Harrison in p.230.

looks like b" could not even get off the ground and the concepts of "looking like" and "really being" would be of no use.

Here the accusation of verificationism will be heard. For in order to distinguish between appearance and reality you have to find out one way or another. I think it is true that in order to believe that something is the case you need to have some idea at least of what it would be like for it to be the case. To understand a term used in a description we need to be able to understand what it refers to, how it is being used. So when the skeptic describes (what appears to be) a possible state of affairs, if his description is to make sense we need some idea of how we would determine that his description applies to our situation. To understand what it means for something to be an empirical fact we need some idea of what it would be to be in empirical contact with it, what its distinctive characteristics would be. What I think the deeper point Wittgenstein is trying to make here is that in order to make a meaningful descriptive statement like "I am 1.71 meters tall", you need to show how it fits into the practice (language-game) of measuring (people's heights).[60] Only if we have rules for when it is correct or incorrect to use a certain concept or expression, can we use them to make statements that are either true of false. This, though, doesn't entail any kind of reductionist analysis like that of the verificationists—it is innocuous and shouldn't offend anyone. It is just to say that in order to have meaningful descriptive language we need rules for the use of that language that sanction different uses in different empirical situations. But these rules of use that

[60] A variation of the example Harrison uses, pp.228-230.

are tightly knit to empirical situations can only make sense if we can experience these situations.[61]

The skeptical hypothesis relies on the plausibility of a possible state of affairs. But it is crucial to the skeptical position that there is no way of determining when this supposed state of affairs applies. The position is necessarily vacuous since the hypothesis it relies on is in principle unfalsifiable. So we have no idea when we can talk about this reality Stroud appeals to if we have no criteria for its correct use, and hence his term "reality" has no meaning. If we are going to use the term "objective reality" and contrapose it to "reality" as we normally refer to it, then, if the distinction is to be meaningful, we need to have criteria for when to apply one term instead of another. But we are not given any such criteria by the skeptic. So his position is irrefutable because "objective reality" is posited as unknowable to begin with. But then, not only is he begging the question for skepticism, he is guilty once again of equivocating on both "reality"[62] and "knowledge". For when we talk about knowledge we are not talking about something that it is impossible to reach and when we talk of reality we do not talk of something that it is by definition impossible to know. This does not show that our concept of knowledge is defective, it just shows that we are using concepts different from

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[61] The Logical Positivist's idea that whatever cannot pass the test of the verification principle is meaningless is very objectionable and was not so innocuous. Wittgenstein would not deny that there are many assertions that are not descriptive of matters of fact and yet are perfectly meaningful.

[62] I agree here with Glock (1990) and Harrison. Austin's (1962) study of the word "reality" shows how it is a normal word that we use to refer to the (material) world around us. Indeed, when learning how to recognize, individualize and describe objects we learn how to distinguish between "real" instances of something and "fake" ones. We learn this by getting a firm grip of what counts as an "x"—only after this do we learn to make judgements concerning fake "x's", good and bad imitations of "x's" and so on. Of course, it is trivial to point out that sometimes it is difficult to distinguish between the two, but the point is that talk of a mistake is possible exactly because it is possible to distinguish between correct and incorrect judgements.

those of the skeptic who makes "reality" by definition unknowable and knowledge by definition impossible.

5. Some Objections Considered

In this chapter I will deal with some basic objections raised against *On Certainty*. The first one is the "Gricean" one that raises the question whether Wittgenstein in his criticism of Moore's reply to the sceptic, is confusing semantics with pragmatics. This is an objection frequently heard and a variation of which is found in Ayer's paper "Wittgenstein on Certainty". I will deal with this objection only in the first part of this chapter under the title "Grice" and what I have to say can also be applied to Ayer's formulation of the problem. Then I will take up a few additional objections that Ayer expresses and conclude with Jonathan Adler's idea of tacit confirmation, which, if correct, could spell ruin for Wittgenstein's position.

Grice

In "Logic and Conversation" Grice lists several rules of conversation. Among them are that speakers convey as much information as they can and that utterances have some point. The "Gricean" argument relating to Wittgenstein would be the following. If no doubts have been raised about p, it would be pointless for me to insist that I know that p (since p is not in question). Therefore, when I hear someone say he knows that p, I assume, and I assume he believes, that p has been called into doubt or is in some way open to doubt. But this is not part of what the utterance "I know that p" means (similarly, that it is not part of the meaning of the sentence "It is raining" that one believes it is raining). The implication of the Doubt-or-Denial condition that makes an utterance of this form conversationally felicitous is detachable from the assertion of knowledge.

Hence, while Wittgenstein may be right that there is something odd about Moore's statement, it is not that the statement is nonsense, but that it violates the conversational implicature of claims of knowledge. The gist of the "Gricean" objection is that when someone, Moore, says, "I know this is a hand" it might be an odd use of the expression because it is pointless (since we all know it) but it can be true nonetheless. It seems Wittgenstein has confused meaning with conditions of felicitous assertion.

Grice doesn't elaborate on the case of knowledge claims except briefly in his discussion of statements like "X looks red to me" in "The Causal Theory of Perception" (admittedly he doesn't want to commit himself to an analysis of 'I know this is a hand" too but he says his account may apply).[1] "X looks red to me" seems to imply that the redness of X is in some ways doubtful, but upon closer inspection this seems not to be so. That the redness of X is doubtful is an implicature of the act of saying "X looks red", not part of the meaning of "looks". This discussion is prompted by "Logic and Conversation", a chapter preceding "The Causal Theory of Perception" in *Studies in the Way of Words* in which Grice draws the distinction between implication and implicature on which the problem discussed here is based. In a similar vein, John Searle says that Wittgenstein committed the "assertion fallacy" of "confusing the conditions for the performance of the speech act of assertion with the analysis of the meaning of particular words occurring in certain assertions."[2] What I have to say about the "Gricean" objection can be also applied to Searle, but there is an important caveat. When Wittgenstein talks of meaning as use it applies to a much larger group of linguistic activities (for example,

[1] Grice, p.237.
[2] Searle, p.141.

giving grounds, telling jokes, measuring quantities etc.) and expressions than what we call a speech-act.[3]

To understand Wittgenstein's position we must remember that whether an utterance is nonsense or not is not (only) determined by its linguistic form but also depends on the context of the utterance and, of course, on what has preceded between the people engaged in the conversation.[4] There are many different explanations of meaning that show us what it makes sense to say and they are all tightly connected to the context and the purpose of the utterance they are used in.[5] If someone out of the blue said, "I know this is a hand" we would be puzzled as to what he means because we wouldn't be able to place his statement. We wouldn't understand what use it is being put to because "the background is lacking for it to be information".[6] If the context is supplied the air of mystery surrounding the sentence, and our puzzlement, dissolves. The intention of the speaker, if you will, the way his thoughts connect to this, allows us to make sense of his utterance.[7] This is not because meaning is an inner, mental, state but because the use the expression is being put to becomes clear. Now we can see whether the speaker used the sentence to make a descriptive statement or to specify a rule. It is this that Wittgenstein means when he says that meaning is not determined by the context but it needs such

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[3] As Hacker points out that Wittgenstein doesn't mention speech acts, nor did he ever identify the meaning of an expression with the speech act(s) that are performed in its utterance. Even though he did say that an expression of pain such as crying is substituted by "I am in pain", he never said that "I am in pain" *means* crying. Even though pain behaviour is a criterion for pain, it is not identical to pain and "pain" doesn't mean pain behaviour. Hacker (1996), p.244. See *PI*, 244, 304

[4] *PI*, 486, p.221, *OC*, 212, 229, 348-50,

[5] Indexicals are an obvious example of context playing a role in reference. Hacker (1996) shows how Wittgenstein takes this a step further and also shows how the use of expressions like "trying" or "recognizing" varies with the context.(p.247)

[6] *OC*, 461.

determination.[8] Providing a context cannot make an obviously nonsensical utterance like "colourless green ideas sleep furiously" meaningful. But it can make a latently nonsensical utterance, one that needs (philosophical) elucidation in order to be revealed as nonsense, into a statement that we understand, for example, by giving us the thoughts that preceded the utterance or by giving the specific reasons (that we might not have noticed) for one's saying such a thing.[9]

A sentence can be nonsensical even though its linguistic form may be one that the correct context allows to be used to make a meaningful statement. It is not always clear whether the context allows for a sensible utterance of the sentence in question because often we can immediately imagine a context in which this sentence can be meaningfully uttered.[10] And this is often confused with the sentence being used to make a meaningful statement in this case too--we confuse: 1) what the sentence would mean in another context. 2) what someone is trying to convey with his use of the sentence and 3) the sentence being used meaningfully in the present context. So for Wittgenstein one way to have nonsense is for the speaker to use an expression in a context in which it doesn't have a determinate sense, that is, in a context in which no conditions have been determined that would make it true (or false). The reason we are prone to assume that since some uses of this sentence are meaningful then this use is meaningful too, is that we confuse our psychological state with the logical status of an expression. This mental state may lead us to (falsely) believe that we mean something by a sentence that has a familiar expression in it even though in this context of utterance the expression doesn't play its

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[7] *Ibid.* 469.
[8] *Ibid.* 348 see also 464.
[9] *Ibid.* 554.

ordinary role and we have failed to specify a new one. So we think an expression means something only because it is accompanied by a mental state that also accompanied (past) meaningful sentences that have that expression in them. Under the spell of this illusion that comes so naturally we easily pass over illegitimate uses of sentences without hesitation and this leads to nonsense and philosophical pseudo-questions.[11]

Some sentences, such as "green ideas sleep furiously", we immediately identify as nonsense based on their form. In contrast to these, there are some nonsensical sentences that we don't immediately recognize as nonsensical. Such cases are the ones that come up in *On Certainty*. That is, knowledge claims about utterances that are direct application of fundamental grammatical rules that, because of their similarity in form to normal empirical propositions, are often erroneously taken to have a similar role. A common reason that we take them to be meaningful is that the opposite of a fundamental grammatical rule is inconceivable. Fundamental grammatical rules govern the acceptance of certain sentences and thus (partly) determine internal relations between words (expressions). So because the opposite of these is inconceivable to us, we often make the mistake of assuming that because of their immediacy we *must know* them. This is why we are all (at least at first sight) inclined to say that Moore's "I know this is a hand" is not nonsense. It is exactly because we all agree that what he is raising is a hand and we are all so confident about it that we want to say that of course we know it—after all it could not be otherwise! This initial response ignores the fact that Wittgenstein's objection is

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[10] *Ibid.* 10.
[11] *Zettel*, 451.

not concerned with the object referred to (he never questions that Moore's "this" is a hand) but with whether Moore can correctly say he knows it.

So we have Moore saying, "I know this is a hand" and Wittgenstein saying that this is neither true nor false since he is talking nonsense. Grice's caveat seems appealing because we all understand what Moore is trying to do and we all are inclined to accept what he is saying. Wittgenstein doesn't disregard the way we ordinarily talk (and if he wants to be faithful to his non-revisionism he'd better not try to tell us how we should talk!). Yes, we make knowledge claims about all sorts of things, and we make Moore-like judgements. And we usually let them pass—sometimes because we don't want to be too finicky and sometimes because we understand from the context what someone is trying to say. But in philosophy such loose linguistic behaviour can lead to confusion and so we must assemble grammatical reminders about Moore-like judgements and the expression "I know".[12]

Wittgenstein's point is that in a context like that of Moore's proof, "this is a hand" is a direct application of a fundamental linguistic rule falling back on a sample in language. It thus reaches the end point of any explanation (or justification). So displaying a charitable nature, Wittgenstein tells us that we must now see what Moore is trying to do when he says he knows this is a hand. If in saying that he "knows" Moore is making the point that he speaks English and that as any competent speaker he recognizes that this is a hand beyond any doubt, then we understand what he is trying to say and we agree with the point he is making—he is normatively objectively certain. Similarly, if by "I know..." the point Moore is trying to make is that he has a very strong feeling of

confidence (he is subjectively certain)[13] and there is nothing that could convince him of the opposite we would again have to agree with him—nobody in his right mind would deny that this is a hand.[14] If "I know..." has some such function Wittgenstein would have no objection. "...it made sense for Moore to say "I know this is a tree" if he meant something quite particular by it."[15] Indeed, he even grants that in these cases all Moore could be accused of is making an odd utterance or doing philosophy.[16]

So what *is* nonsensical about Moore's claim? It is absolutely basic for Wittgenstein that in order to make knowledge claims correctly the claimant must be able to provide grounds more certain than his claim. This connects to Wittgenstein's objection to the suggestion that knowledge is a kind of mental state. It is as if Moore is reporting a mental state that guarantees that what he says is a fact, as if it follows from his knowledge claim that what he says is true. But this is not how knowledge claims work: they are not a report of our mental state but a reflection, a guarantee if you will, of our epistemic state. "...Giving the assurance "I know" doesn't suffice. For it is after all only an assurance that I cannot be making a mistake, and it needs to be *objectively* established that I am not making a mistake about *that*."[17] Merely saying "I know p" does not guarantee or entail "p". So in order to preserve (the objectivity of) knowledge two things are needed: p, obviously, but also grounds. This is why "Instead of if 'I know it' one may

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[12] *PI*, 464—so we can move from disguised to patent nonsense.
[13] *OC*, 86. Moore's certainty can be a reason for his belief but it is not reason enough for a knowledge claim to be justified.
[14] *OC*, 245.
[15] *Ibid.* 387. See also 423-424. Here we see that Wittgenstein would grant that if Moore is just flouting the maxim of quality ("Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence"), so if his aim is to make a point by his utterance that is not epistemological, then what he says is not nonsense, but just odd.
[16] *OC*. 19.

say in some cases "that's how it is—rely on it"".[18] The availability of grounds is thus necessary for knowledge claims to be meaningful and so also is the possibility of doubting the grounds that we give to justify our inference to knowledge. Hence the "specialised" use of "I know": the connection, that is, of knowledge claims with the possibility of intelligible doubt. The very questioning of your right to make a knowledge claim can arise only where a doubt makes sense and thus only where grounds for a knowledge claim or against it (and thus for doubt) are available. One doubts what one has reasons not to believe, when one believes that a mistake might have been made. So in order for a doubt to be intelligible you must be able to specify what mistake might have been made, what the reasons are for your doubt. If these reasons were overcome then we would have reasons to believe and even, possibly, evidence for knowledge. The possibility and intelligibility of reasons for doubt then go hand in hand with the possibility (and the intelligibility) of reasons against doubt. These reasons can be used to support or defeat a knowledge claim. So a doubt implies that a mistake may have been made and so also the possibility of specifying the source of the mistake, the reason that is, for putting forward a doubt. Thus one can respond to a doubt by giving reasons for how he knows—reasons that will explain that the mistake implied by the doubt has not been made. Ultimately this is the link between the concept of knowing and the concept of doubting: both need reasons to be intelligible.[19] The point is that it doesn't make sense to use "I know this is a hand" in a Moore-type context in an epistemic sense[20] because it

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[17] *Ibid.* 15– see also whole section 11-18.
[18] *Ibid.* 176.
[19] I fall back on Williams' treatment of this in "Wittgenstein's Refutation of Idealism".
[20] We can use the expression "I know..." in what Hacker calls "non-epistemic" senses: to insist in our seriousness in uttering something or as a way to end a tiresome conversation. For

wouldn't make sense to say something like "I am inclined to believe that this is a hand" or "I think this is a hand" or "I doubt this is a hand".[21]

Contra Grice, according to Wittgenstein, being able to give reasons (and thus the possibility of doubt) *is* part of the meaning of the expression "I know..." It is not just something that is conversationally implied when we use the expression "I know..." We can illustrate this using Grice's own test of cancellation, part of which is that if we can say "X but it doesn't mean that Y" then Y is not part of the meaning of X. Let's first take a simple example of a knowledge claim. Imagine the following conversation between myself (E) and my friend:

E: "There is absolutely nothing to eat in the fridge"

F: "There is some lentil soup."

E: "Are you sure? I just looked and the fridge only had water and milk in it"

F: "I know there is."

This seems incomplete and I expect him to tell me how he knows. Maybe he didn't tell me because I know he is trustworthy and so if he says he knows, I trust that he has good reasons to say so. What if, though, he were to say "I know there is lentil soup in the fridge, though I am not saying that there are any reasons that one could give for it." I really wouldn't understand. What does it mean to say you know if you can't give any reasons? If you can't answer the question "How do you know?" Not giving reasons is one thing. If instead he had said, "I know...but I have no reasons for saying it" then we would just say that he didn't know. At most we would say that he believes it or has a

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example, a dentist is drilling on my tooth, I tell him it hurts, and he insists that I can't be hurting because he has given me ample anaesthetic. In this case I can emphatically insist: "*I know* it hurts" to stress my point. Or, if someone goes around and keeps enumerating things that exist I might at some point just say "oh, enough, I know the table exists!" (see Hacker (1996) p.246)

[21] This is also to be found in *PI*, II-p.221.

(strong) intuition, that he feels (subjectively) certain. This is because knowledge is not a psychological state like believing even though it too might be accompanied by a strong sense of confidence, of subjective certainty. If you say you believe something and I assume your sincerity and a degree of reasonable coherence with your other beliefs, I will accept your claim. If your claim seems bizarre I might ask what led you to this belief, but the fact that you believe it remains intact. Knowledge though has an objectivity attached to it that belief doesn't.[22] The criteria based on which we ascribe knowledge are neither private nor subjective. They are "generally accepted axioms" by which we can be said to know or not know certain things. If my friend tells me he knows there is lentil soup in the fridge because he dreamed it I would not be satisfied nor be convinced that he knows. If, on the other hand, he tells me he knows it because he just opened the fridge and ate some, it will be reasonable for me to accept it (if I have no reasons to believe the contrary). But if he says "I know there is lentil soup in the fridge though I am not saying that there are any grounds that I or anyone else could have to know this" then I wouldn't know what to make of his statement because I truly wouldn't understand what he means by saying he knows (as I wouldn't accept your doubt as intelligible if you told me you doubt but you have no grounds for doubting). I can't evaluate his claim because I don't understand it. The implication of the possibility of the giving of reasons (for or against) is not cancellable from knowledge claims.

Wittgenstein grants that in some cases it makes sense to say, "I know this is a hand". In Moore's case though, the problem arises because there is nothing more certain that "this is a hand" that could count as evidence for it. And more than this, Moore

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[22] *OC.* 179, 550-551.

doesn't need any grounds for his claim. As Wittgenstein has pointed out, our understanding of the meaning of an expression is shown in our correct use of it, which includes being able to distinguish between the context in which it makes sense to assert it and the context in which it doesn't. If you understand what "this is a hand" (or just "hand") means then you will also understand that, unless certain conditions hold, you do not need to give grounds for your statement. So a knowledge claim cannot properly be made, no doubt can come up, just as the question "how do you know?" or "why do you say that?" is out of place. For it is part of the grammatical rules that govern talk of objects or samples that we all (almost unconsciously) pick up when we learn our language that in demonstrative contexts and where no grounds for doubt exist, no justification is needed for such a claim and no doubt can be raised about it. This is because the method of comparing a statement to reality is internally related to the meaning of that statement.[23] So when you are directly applying a fundamental rule of linguistic usage no grounds are needed or indeed possible.

The question that comes up is why isn't seeing a ground? I think this is why. In many, even most cases, visual experience, seeing a hand, is the cause of our saying "There is a hand here." It is the occasion for applying the linguistic rule, but it is not a reason. Just as when I see a sign with an arrow pointing to the right and I turn right, saying I turned right because "I see it points to the right" is not the reason I follow the rule that way. There is no reason, I just unreflectively follow the rule that way. There are no grounds more certain than this habitual response, there are no considerations more

[23] *Philosophical Remarks*, 77. This is a result of picking up how to identify the criteria that would justify us in asserting the proposition—see Glock (1990) for an in-depth analysis.

certain than the way we use words—this is why I think that according to Wittgenstein Moore cannot properly say he knows that "this is a hand". The criterion for justifiably asserting "this is a hand" is not that we see it. There are no criteria in this case Wittgenstein says, just an unreflective exercise of an ability, that of using words in accordance with our natural inclinations and training in our language-games.[24] However, as I have pointed out before, this is not to say that my seeing cannot be evidence for someone else. In some cases we do certainly have exchanges like this:

A: Here is a hand [or: This is a hand]

B: How do you know?

A: I see it.

For instance, such a conversation could take place when a soldier is on the phone reporting to the base what he finds in the battlefield. For most of the day all he comes up with are unidentifiable body parts. And then, he finds a hand. In such cases though, where seeing is indeed offered as a reason, doubt is also admitted. The seeing responds to the doubt expressed. So the general point that Wittgenstein insists on, that it makes sense to talk of knowledge only when there is room for doubt, is retained.[25]

Ultimately what is nonsensical for Wittgenstein is claiming knowledge of the propositions that have a special logical role (that of manifesting rules) in our language games. For there is no conceptual connection between the use of samples in explanations of meaning (and thus as direct applications of rules) and the possibility (or necessity) of giving reasons, of doubting etc. This is the "groundlessness of our believing": we have

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[24] See chapter 2 above.

[25] There is another possible course one could take here that professor Levin pointed out to me. We could push up the rule-following argument to the premise "I see a hand." So, how does Moore know he is seeing a hand? This is what is called "seeing."

reached "rock bottom" in our explanation by reference to samples and no more explanations, or evidence, can be given (in the sense that no evidence we could give would be more certain than what it is evidence for). Here the distinction cannot be made between "this is a hand" and "I know this is a hand" because the latter either is the same as the former, or it has no clear meaning, and it is up to Moore at this point (or the "Gricean" interlocutor) to explain what "I know I have a hand" means. If we want to be able to give it a truth-value it must first have a specific sense. So if we don't know what use the word "know" is being put to then it is not clear what truth value we can ascribe to his assertion or even if it can have a truth value at all.

In this much Wittgenstein and Grice would agree: in a variety of interpretations Moore's statement can be saved from the accusation of being nonsensical.[26] But if it is made as an epistemic statement (as it seems to be) then, Wittgenstein says, Moore is guilty of using the concept of knowledge where it cannot do what it is supposed to and in relation to samples where its use is excluded.[27] Consider this: Wittgenstein didn't say that if Moore had said, "I don't know this is a hand" it would have been false. But if saying you know this assertion is pointless because, as Grice would say, the Doubt-or-Denial condition is not fulfilled since everyone knows it, then the assertion that you don't know it should be false. But Wittgenstein explicitly says that it is not nonsense because it is superfluous.[28] And he didn't say that it is false but nonsense because whether it is

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[26] *OC*, 387-388.
[27] *Ibid.* 403, 414.
[28] *Ibid.* 348, see also 464. McGinn (1989) claims that one reason why Moore's utterance is nonsense is because it is obvious to everyone and so doesn't convey any information. This is wrong, for in order to see that an utterance is obvious one must first understand it, so it cannot be nonsensical.

appropriate or not to ascribe a truth-value to a sentence that expresses an assertion depends on the use that we put that sentence to.[29]

All this also clarifies the points that Ayer brings up when levelling his own version of the Gricean criticism against Wittgenstein.[30] Ayer asks the seemingly innocuous question whether if the proposition that I am seeing red is true it doesn't make sense to say that I know it. Putting it this way makes the question seem obvious and the question look (almost) silly. Of course, if a proposition is true *and* we can provide enough evidence for it, it makes sense to say we know it. Wittgenstein would have any objection to this. If this were all there is to the question, the discussion between Ayer and Wittgenstein would mostly be focused on the word "true". The question here though doesn't have to do with the connection between knowledge and truth but between knowledge and the possibility of justification. And it is exactly because of this requirement that in normal demonstrative contexts both an assertion of "I know this is red" and an assertion that you don't know are a confused use of language--for both imply that one has (or could have) evidence for one's claim, a confusion that with the necessary clarification can be identified either with loose talk or nonsense. The nonsensicality in this case doesn't come because we are questioning the (subjective or normative objective) certainty or the indubitability of this claim. Wittgenstein is happy to grant these to Moore. The nonsensicality comes from confusing these with our having an

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[29] Following the reasoning in pp. 152-153 above, in denying that it is part of the meaning of "know" that knowledge claims can be made only where there is possibility of doubt, Grice also needs to deny that the requirement of justification is part of the meaning of "I know...". But in this case it is not clear what the meaning of "I know..." consists in (as opposed to "I believe...", "I suppose..." etc.).

[30] See Ayer, p.229.

epistemological relation to our claim. A relation, that is, that is based on the possibility of supplying evidence for it.

Admittedly, Wittgenstein in *On Certainty* doesn't spend much time on the issue of nonsense and it doesn't seem to be the focus of his discussion. In remarks 58-59 he writes:

> "...'the expression 'I do not know' makes no sense in this case'. And of course it follows from this that 'I *know*' makes no sense either. 'I know' is here a *logical* insight. Only realism can't be proved by means of it."

These remarks point to two things. One is that if we disregard the epistemic use of the verb "know" we can understand what Moore is saying. That is, that as a competent speaker of language he has an undeniable authority to claim that this is a hand. This is an authority though, Wittgenstein wants to stress, that is not connected to the giving of evidence, as the use of "I know..." necessitates, but to the direct application of a fundamental grammatical rule that excludes reasons for or against it (and thus also doubt). And this is a logical insight in the sense that it reveals the logical structure of our language, our normative use of it. It is a reminder of the rules that govern the grammar of certain concepts and words. The second point is connected to the first: what is nonsense is the use of sentences in circumstances where they either blatantly violate the rules of grammar or where they don't have a determinate meaning (for if the language-game is not specified the meaning of a sentence isn't either). More specifically in this case when we rely on grammatical rules as if they depend on the world for their truth. Whereas it is not the world, some metaphysical necessity, that excludes knowledge that this is a hand, but a twofold convention: of the expression "I know..." meaning what it does, and the role of

samples in our language-games that excludes doubt as well as the possibility of giving evidence as "I know..." requires.

I think the test Wittgenstein would apply to the expression "I know..." would not just be the test of cancellation and detachment of the D-or-D condition that Grice suggests.[31] Instead, his test would involve this question: can we say without contradiction, "I know I have a hand—even though I am not suggesting that I can give any grounds for it"? Therefore the basic questions would be: what grounds can one give for one's knowledge claim and if there are no grounds then what are we using "know" to do? Being clear on these questions we can then see whether Moore's knowledge claim is meaningful or not. We will see that you can't ask the first question without contradiction and so it is part of the meaning of "I know" that it needs grounds to support it and the implication of giving evidence when you say you know is not cancellable.

So I think Wittgenstein's point is not defeated and it is certainly not to be ignored. The Gricean has a point: Moore's use of the expression "I know..." *is* odd and inappropriate. But Wittgenstein is saying this is not all that is wrong with it. Wittgenstein is aware of the objection that odd remarks are not necessarily nonsensical--what he is saying is that the oddness of *some* remarks *does* conceal nonsense.[32] And it is not always obvious in our everyday (sometimes loose) talk that the implication of giving reasons and of the possibility of doubt is part of the meaning of the expression "I know..." Though it is so inappropriate to make knowledge claims when no grounds for doubt exist that we would need some explanation to understand what a person making

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[31] Grice (1989), pp.224 ff.
[32] *OC*, 396-398, 552.

such an odd utterance is saying. I want to suggest that this is a strong incentive towards reconsidering how clear the pragmatics/semantics distinction is (in this case), towards reconsidering, that is, the general argument for reducing meaning to use: use is definable in terms of particular cases of use, and meaning is definable in terms of use, perhaps directly in terms of particular uses. It really seems that the implication of the possibility of giving grounds is not detachable from knowledge claims and as such it is part of the meaning of "I know..." (as is, by extension, the possibility of questioning those grounds). And so when Moore is saying he knows, he is undertaking a responsibility to justification that in this case does not exist, so "know" makes no sense.[33] So if Grice is to insist that what Moore is saying makes sense then he must answer the question "What do you mean when you say you know?". For in claiming that such an utterance may be misleading but it is true nonetheless, it is assumed that the utterance has a clear-cut meaning. Once the use is clarified the question of sense and nonsense can be settled without our being led astray by our imagining possible uses and getting confused about the current one.

A.J. Ayer

Ayer's article "Wittgenstein On Certainty" is one of the few pieces that level a direct barrage of criticism on *On Certainty*. I believe that it rests on a misreading of Wittgenstein.

[33]*Ibid.* 243. Because there is no justification you can give and this is exactly what the skeptical argument relies on (only it disregards the fact that no justification is needed).

1. Common Sense and Science.

Ayer seems to attribute to Wittgenstein the belief that being certain about something means that it is inconceivable that it turns out not to be true.[34] Yet Wittgenstein never says such a thing. Certainty is an attitude of absence of doubt but it does not involve the logical exclusion that things might turn out otherwise than we thought or expected.

Next Ayer claims that the problem Moore faced of how to analyse sense-data propositions can be applied to Wittgenstein too but in his case the problem would be how to analyse propositions of common sense.[35] For instance, Ayer asks, are electrons and neutrons literally part of the objects we see? Firstly, it is not clear that electrons and neutrons are part of common sense. They are part of basic science taught in schools, which then, through educational inculcation becomes second nature to us when we talk of the microstructure of objects. Also, Wittgenstein tries to clarify the way we use the term "knowledge" and how doubt functions in our life and thus to show the procedural confusion underlying skepticism. But this is not a defence of common sense, for he believed that common sense cannot be offered as a solution to philosophical problems, at most it can avoid the question.

> "You must not try to avoid a philosophical problem by appealing to common sense...Philosophy can be said to consist of three activities: to see the common-sense answer, to get yourself so deeply into the problem that the common sense answer is unbearable, and to get from that situation back to the common sense answer. But the common sense answer is no

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[34] Ayer also asserts on page 232 that Wittgenstein assimilates empirical propositions that are certain to propositions of logic. This is deeply flawed if the propositions of logic are all considered in the same way and if all empirical propositions are considered the same way. (See chapter 2 "Hierarchy of Propositions").

[35] Ayer, p.243ff.

> solution; everyone knows it. One must not in philosophy attempt to short-circuit problems."[36]

To get out of the problem is not to dogmatically insist on common sense with Moore (and Stebbing), telling us what we *really know*, and what there *really is* by showing the skeptic the table that is in front of him. As far as Wittgenstein is concerned the realist is as far away from common sense as the idealist is. Responding to the sceptic by reference to common sense is just an indication that the realist doesn't understand the skeptical position. We have to show the inherent mistake and confusion in the skeptic's questioning. To show, that is, that what the skeptic tries to put forward as an insight about the way things are is nothing but a confusion about the workings of language (because the skeptic treats words in isolation from their context). But this cannot be shown with the aid of common sense because nowhere in common sense is there any explicit description of our conceptual framework, our methods of justification, our norms of description, the sensible limits of doubt and so on.

Nevertheless, I think the answer that would be in accordance with Wittgenstein's thought would be that philosophy is, or should be, a conceptual investigation not a physical one—that is the job of science.[37] What something reduces to is not part of common sense but is the object of a particular discipline of physics, and it should be from the physicist that we expect an answer to it. Philosophy should not extract philosophical conclusions from science, it should only be clearing up misunderstandings by getting an

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[36] *Lectures*, 109. See also *BB*, pp.48-49: "...the common-sense philosopher-and that, *n.b.*, is not the common-sense man, who is as far from realism as from idealism...the trouble with the realist is always that he does not solve but skips the difficulties which his adversaries see, though they too don't succeed in solving them. The realist answer, for us, just brings out the difficulty...".

[37] According to Wittgenstein, philosophy doesn't increase our knowledge like science does. Science explains, philosophy describes and it only increases our understanding of the source of the puzzlement that lead us to philosophical problems. *PI*, 89, see also *Diari 1930-32*, par.65.

overview of the new concepts introduced in our conceptual framework by science. Science tells us, for instance, that neutrons are part of the micro-level of objects and thus modifies our forms of representation.[38] Philosophy comes in later to clear up (linguistic) misunderstandings that arise from these modifications. So, the philosophical questions (or pseudo questions) that Ayer is asking are not part of the investigation/ description of our conceptual framework that is Wittgenstein concern but are part of an activity that Wittgenstein finds highly problematic. To drag him into this question is to drive him into the fly bottle.

2. Dreaming

Ayer's discussion of Wittgenstein's remarks on dreaming are more interesting and fruitful. Before getting into them let me briefly go through the "dream argument". In the *Meditations*, Descartes introduces the dream argument in order to show that no perceptual statement, and hence no perceptual belief, is ever immune from doubt. In building his doubt in the first meditation Descartes goes along with our natural inclination that we might have reasons to doubt some statements about our perception of objects but surely we can't doubt that we are here reading this treatise and holding it in our hands. So while he acknowledges this intuition as a valid one, he then tells us that we all have had many realistic dreams. This should be enough for us to realise that waking experience cannot always be distinguished from dreaming experience and so we can't exclude the possibility that our current experience is also a dream. Another way to make this clear is to offer it in argumentative form, one possible formulation of which being as follows with R

[38] See chapter 2 above.

standing for the proposition that what I see is real and D standing for the proposition that I am dreaming:[39]

1. It is possible that D is true. ◊D
2. If D is true then R is false. D→–R
3. If it is possible that D is true, then it is possible R is false. ◊D→◊–R
4. Therefore it is possible that R is false. ◊–R
5. If it is possible that R is false I do not know that R is true. ◊–R→–kR
6. Therefore I do not know that R is true. –kR

What Descartes does at the beginning of the *Meditations* with this argument is draw the distinction between what appears to us to be the case and what actually is the case, and between our inner state and the outer world-- after all if I can't distinguish between my being awake and my being asleep everything I may be wrong about everything I see or think.

Even though Wittgenstein makes only two[40] explicit references to dreaming in *On Certainty* he makes two points that seem to be directed to this problem indirectly throughout the book. The first is explicitly stated in paragraph 383 and connects to the whole discussion of doubting in *On Certainty*. It is that a complete doubt is self-defeating because a doubt that doubts everything cannot get off the ground. And since a consistently carried out dream hypothesis must lead to an all-encompassing doubt, the dream argument must be rejected. In the first part of what follows I will try to show why the dream hypothesis, if carried out consistently, cannot be upheld. However, it must be

[39] This is a version of the dream argument offered by professor Landesman in a seminar on skepticism at the Graduate Center.

remembered that this isolated remark on dreaming relies for its force on Wittgenstein's whole conception of how doubting works within a system of grammatical rules and how a doubt only makes sense against the background of certainty. The second point is that it doesn't make sense to suppose that we are now dreaming, and when the sceptic entertains such a question, his question is nonsensical. Wittgenstein makes this point in only one paragraph at the end of *On Certainty* so I will try to elucidate what he means.

Wittgenstein keeps repeating that in order to doubt a particular proposition we must hold our grammatical rules constant. If we don't do that and try to doubt everything all at once our doubt will defeat itself and so it really won't be a doubt at all. Descartes' is a good example here, because his doubt relies not only on the certainty that he knows the meaning of the words he uses, but also on the certainty that dreams very often resemble waking life.

In his methodologically sceptical phase in the first Meditation Descartes professed his doubt to be complete. He said he would provisionally take everything as false that can be doubted. But he didn't. He never doubted the meaning of his words, or of any word, which he should have if indeed he wanted to consistently argue that his doubt is universal (even if only methodologically) and that everything might be a dream. Maybe his words mean nothing, or they may mean something very different from what he thinks they mean, or intends them to mean—if he is to doubt everything, he must take this possibility into consideration too because after all, it is an empirical fact that a word (or an expression) means what it does. Wittgenstein writes: "If, therefore, I doubt or am uncertain about this being my hand (in whatever sense), why not in that case about the

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[40] *OC*, 383, 676.

meaning of these words as well?"[41] For someone to express a doubt he must have the conceptual (linguistic) tools to do so. However, if the rules of grammar stand fast (as they must in order for a doubt to be possible) the questions the sceptic is trying to raise cannot be raised. If I am to doubt everything, I have to also doubt whether my words have meaning since it is an empirical fact that words have the meaning they do. I must also doubt whether I am even doubting what I profess to doubt, since I also have to doubt my mental states. So a universal doubt defeats itself. Wittgenstein adds, "I am not more certain of the meaning of my words than I am of certain judgements. Can I doubt that this colour is called "blue"?"[42] If I understand the word "blue", I will be able to recognise that something is blue and I will understand when people make judgements that involve the word blue. For example, I should have no trouble understanding someone who says, "Did you see my blue sweater?" or understanding that he is saying something true when he says, "The Oxford dictionary of philosophy is blue".[43] This point is the previous point in a different dress: to make judgements using a word we must know its meaning. But if we know the meaning of our words, our doubt is not universal. So we are not dreaming for there is one empirical experience that we are certain of and that is that we understand what Descartes is saying. We understand the argument so there is something empirical we are certain of, and so we are not dreaming.

In the last entry of *On Certainty* Wittgenstein directly addresses the problem of dreaming:

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[41] *Ibid.*456.
[42] *Ibid.* 126.
[43] Mistakes are not excluded because conditions change that sometimes make sight more difficult, but generally we are able to tell when something is blue and when someone is making a correct or incorrect judgment concerning objects that are blue.

> "'But even if in such cases I can't be mistaken, isn't it possible that I am drugged?' If I am and if the drug has taken away my consciousness, then I am not now really talking and thinking. *I cannot seriously suppose that I am at this moment dreaming.* Someone who, dreaming, says "I am dreaming", even if he speaks audibly in doing so, is no more right than if he said in his dream "it is raining", while it was in fact raining. Even if his dream were actually connected with the noise of the rain."[44](italics mine)

Ayer says that if Wittgenstein claims that one can't truly believe that one is dreaming, it must be because if one is dreaming one can't have beliefs. And, Ayer adds, he cannot see any good reason why not being conscious entails that one is not having thoughts that are either true or false.[45] But I don't think this is the point Wittgenstein is trying to make in this paragraph. What Wittgenstein is saying here is that not every utterance is an assertion. This has nothing to do with whether the words I am using are meaningful or with the assumption that everything that is dreamed is false, as Ayer seems to think.[46] I think the important point Wittgenstein's is making (which I highlight with italics in the quote) is that when the skeptic asks whether we are dreaming, his question is nonsensical because "I am now dreaming" said literally violates our rules of grammar.

Contextual considerations are part of our rules of grammar and there is no context that sanctions a literal use of "I am dreaming." Since the sentence "I am dreaming" cannot be sensibly stated, there is nothing to argue about. The sentence in other contexts can be an assertion that can be true or false but here no assertion has been made, according to Wittgenstein. The fact that someone utters a string of words that can be used to make a statement doesn't immediately mean that they are used in this way. If an utterance is not contextually appropriate it is not clear whether the words produced were just a spontaneous production of sounds or whether the person uttering them understands

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[44] *OC*, 676. See also *Zettel*, 396.

them at all. The illusion that the sentence in question is meaningful is strong because we understand all the individual words in it and because the peculiarity of the sentence "I am dreaming" (that it doesn't have a literal use) is often overlooked.[47] Of course there are a number of meaningful uses of "I must be dreaming", or "this *must* be a dream". If I won 200 million dollars in the lottery I might say that I must be dreaming. If Keanu Reeves walks up to me and invites me to his house I might think "I must be dreaming", or we might use it when something horrible happens and say "I can't believe that just happened, it must be a dream". And of course we can say of other people that they are dreaming--then we are referring to someone else as when we say of someone else that he is dead. But we can't literally and meaningfully say the same of ourselves because if I am dreaming, just as if I am dead,[48] I am in no position to assert any proposition including this one. "I am dead" sounds like it is meaningful because we understand what it would be for someone else to be dead. So we also understand "Suppose I were dead..." but if the sentence continued "...and I said/did..." we would obviously object to our interlocutor.

The point Wittgenstein is making is that the mere fact that the words making up a sentence are familiar, it doesn't mean that any utterance of them is meaningful. We can't literally say that "I", the person who is talking to you, am sleeping right now and dreaming. Panayot Butchvarov claims that there are literal uses of the expression "I am dreaming" and uses the example of wining a million dollars as one instance when the

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[45] Ayer, p.238.
[46] *Ibid.* p.239.
[47] Of course there are rare cases when you say or do something in your sleep and someone asks you about it. Then in a state between sleeping and being awake you might say, "Ignore me, I am dreaming". But this is a case when you have a moment of being awake in between dream states.

expression is literally used. I don't see how he sees this as a literal employment of the expression though—after all we can say "I can't believe I won a million dollars, I am dreaming" and then say, with perfect consistency, "OK, time for bed now".[49]

So if someone were to say, "I am dreaming" we would assume that he meant it metaphorically. We would try to explain to him (if we believed he was being serious) the meaning of the verb "to dream". We would never take him to be talking literally even if we were in a philosophy class. Because we couldn't understand a man who seriously claimed that he doubts that he is awake (which is what he must be doing if he seriously believes he is dreaming), Wittgenstein says that when someone says that he might be dreaming what he is saying is nonsense. There are rules of language that allows us to talk of one situation being the case instead of another. These rules may not be explicit or specifiable[50] but we all have a working acquaintance with them that makes our assertions meaningful and, in some cases, infallible. Any attempt to formulate these rules (maybe in terms of criteria) will involve use of the words "normal" and "usual" and so will be disregarded as being circular. That though, should not lead us to shout victory for the sceptic. Even if we cannot describe something exhaustively, we might be perfectly capable of recognising it.[51]

Let's put the problem in Wittgensteinian terms in connection to the whole picture given in *On Certainty*. For an expression to be meaningful there must be a use for it in

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[48] Suter (1989) points out the similarity to "I am dead".
[49] See also *OC*, 350. Similar to the lack of context in this example, I believe Wittgenstein wants to suggest, is uttering something when you are sound asleep. If we are around the person sleeping and he says "it is raining" when we know it is, even though the context is not clear we can easily provide a context for it and attribute to him a meaningful utterance and this is where the confusion arises.
[50] *OC*, 27, 87.

accordance with rules of grammar. A distinction between A and B, therefore, is meaningful if there are standards for its correct and incorrect application. So we either need criteria to distinguish A from B or an ostensive distinction, either of which will be constitutive of the meaning of A and B. Of course, there are terms that draw distinctions that do not obtain, for example the term "omnipotent"—we have no examples of an omnipotent being but we understand the word and have a concept of it. The important thing is to have some (working) indication of what it would be for them to obtain or not obtain (were a mistake can have been made). In the case of dreaming as the sceptic posits it, it is logically impossible that such conditions ever obtain. There are no features that could guide our use of "dream" and "awake". But a concept that we have no idea how to use is one that is vacuous.[52] There is nothing that could count as a criterion for asserting that you are awake, so the contrast between being awake and dreaming as the sceptic uses it is vacuous. The features that give life to a distinction must be features that can guide our use of it. The concepts the sceptic uses cannot give us rules for the use of the expressions he uses. He needs these rules to make his concepts meaningful but if he provides them he undermines his point. The sceptic is guilty of equivocating. The ordinary concepts of "dreaming" and "being awake" are based on the differences that we recognise between the two states even if we cannot conclusively specify them. And we all learn to recognise the different states so readily that we can talk about our dreams and

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[51] See chapter 2 on the indeterminacy of our language.

[52] As Glock (1990) says, this is a point that is in Wittgenstein's sense "logical", concerning the meaning of our words: the very notion of a concept and the very notion of a rule require such specifications as are unavailable in this case. And without such specifications there is no concept at all. And, even though the whole dream argument is initially raised because we can't exhaustively specify criteria for distinguishing when we are dreaming form when we are awake,

tell when other people are awake or asleep. We buy into the sceptic's argument because he uses concepts familiar to us and he uses our grammar to try to express something that is not part of our grammar at all. And so, Wittgenstein tells us, there is really no argument to refute.

3. Berkeley's Idealism

Lastly, Ayer also claims that Moore's common sense answer and Wittgenstein's certainties are useless against Berkeley who unlike other skeptics "...refuses to make the assumption that anything other than a spiritual substance is capable of existing unperceived".[53]

> "[Berkeley's] contention was not that the existence of things at times when they were not perceived was a possibility that happened not to be realised but that it ought not to be admitted as a possibility. He opted for a radically different way of interpreting experiences, in which this realistic assumption has no place. Consequently, Moore's and Wittgenstein's certainties do not touch him"[54]

Now, the skeptical point is that we have no right to make certain claims. But given this point the skeptic then has a choice; to either stop making certain assertions and so throw away the whole discourse within which such assertions are made, or to reconstruct the discourse. The latter option is motivated by the initial skeptical point but it is more subtle. In other words, you can continue to make certain assertions but they are not strictly speaking beliefs—they are analogous to fictional claims. So you share practical

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we *do* distinguish between the two and we all do so very successfully. That's why we can and do have this distinction notwithstanding philosophical pseudo-puzzles.

[53] Ayer, p.242.

[54] *Ibid.*

commitments along with everyone else, but not theoretical ones.[55] This is convenient because it is a way of having your cake and eating it too. Our norms of description are useful instruments and we have the right to talk of the world using them, but beyond that we cannot go.

I think Wittgenstein sees idealists as expounding this second, more sophisticated form of skepticism.[56] Of course Berkeley denies that he is a skeptic. He tells us that we can be sure that external objects exist because they are just collections of ideas. And ideas must be caused by something. But a cause, unlike objects, is active so the cause of our ideas must be an active being, namely God. And though scientific and mathematical theories are useful because they allow us to arrive at formulae that in turn make predictions possible, we have no reason to say they actually exist.[57] So we have justification for ideas since God is not a deceiver, and we have practical reasons to talk of particles of sorts, but we have no warrant to talk of objects, or of particles, existing in reality. Therefore, the idealist like Berkeley, just like the skeptic has no practical doubt,

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[55] Examples are Hartry Field's views on mathematical entities, and Van Fraasen's view of scientific entities. Such views are often called "fictionalist" because they see entities postulated in theories as useful fictions. It is obvious that we do use some theories the way fictionalists say and that such a local attitude is part of science. We use Newtonian mechanics to build bridges, but we know that its field of application is very limited and that it can't be used with most of our current theories. Another example would be the reality of the "spin" of photons and other point particles in string theory. However, it is not clear to me how this fictionalist attitude can be applied to all theories as the above mentioned philosophers, and Berkeley, claim. In this case, I am not sure what the difference would be between merely "accepting for practical purposes" and believing. Apart from this, I think Wittgenstein would say that there is no space in our practices for the debate over whether the familiar objects of our world are physical or not. That, as I shall discuss in the next chapter, would be doing away with the substratum of agreement that makes further disagreement, and fictionalist views (locally applied), possible. For it is part of the core reactions we find ourselves agreeing in given our common form of life which is beyond the scope of any real doubt.

[56] I am indebted to Paul Horwich's suggestions for the idea of treating Berkeley's idealism as a factionalist position.

[57] *De Motu*, 72.

and carries on the way we do, but still insists on a further, deeper doubt. In paragraph 19 of *On Certainty* Wittgenstein writes,

> "..the idealist....will say that he was not dealing with the practical doubt which is being dismissed, but there is a further doubt *behind* that one.— That this is an *illusion* has to be shewn in a different way."

But, as I have argued, this further doubt cannot be sustained and so this position is as inconsistent as the first, straightforward skeptical position. I have analyzed this extensively in the last chapter so I will not go into it in detail, but some points can be made.

The idealist is telling us that instead of saying that the tree is a solid object in the garden or that it is brown and green we should rather say that it is an idea that is not really brown and green but only *looks* green to us in certain circumstances. What he doesn't realize, it seems, is that these contrasts belong to the same linguistic system that being green or brown or being solid belong to. We can only talk of things not being green or brown or solid in a linguistic system in which we can also talk of things being green or brown or solid. Only if we can make such contrasts are *our* concepts being used according to their normal content.[58] But this is exactly what is missing in Berkeley's use of these concepts and so like the normal skeptic he too is guilty of not being faithful to the concepts he is using to form his supposed doubt. So in evaluating Moore's response to Berkeley, Wittgenstein would agree with Ayer that Moore's reply is inadequate and inefficient. If your reply to Berkeley is "I know this is a physical object because I know this is a hand" it *would* be pointless because the first part of this statement is exactly what

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[58] *BB*, 46 ff. Of course, this would necessitate finding criteria for distinguishing real ideas from false ones. Berkeley relies on the notion that something "looks like" something else without realizing that this way of talking relies on physical object language. As discussed in footnote 7

Berkeley begins by rejecting and the second half he wouldn't deny. But more than this, as I argued at the beginning of this chapter, it would be a misuse of language. Of course Wittgenstein would agree with Ayer: there's nothing we can tell someone like Berkeley (except maybe, "Rubbish!").[59] But he would disagree with him that we must refute Berkeley. Instead we must make explicit and dissolve the illusion that he shares with the skeptic that there is a further doubt behind our everyday, practical doubts.

In a sense then, as Wittgenstein says, under this view the facts remain intact, it is the interpretation of the facts that is changed;[60] we used to talk about objects as physical things, now we call them ideas. Saying that a tree is an idea though is not to say that we should not water it or that we should not be careful not to drive into it.[61] Pragmatically we are all on the same boat as Berkeley. And Wittgenstein would say that we should not make the mistake of thinking we see a different (new) object just because we have a new way of looking at it. That would be like saying that something other than our form of description has changed when we draw a chair in pointillist style and when we draw it in cubist style.[62] Then we would just be guilty of confusing what are characteristics of our forms of representation with characteristics of the world; we would be confusing grammatical sentences with statements of fact. And only under this illusion will Berkeley think he has found out a truth about the world that contradicts ours.

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of chapter 2—this dependence is something that Carnap doesn't acknowledge either when he says that we can opt to use one kind of framework instead of another.

[59] *OC*, 498.

[60] Hacker (1972), pp.199-200 discusses this similarly and I fall back on his writing for my structure. However, Hacker focuses on the autonomy of grammar and doesn't relate this to *On Certainty* as I think he should have in discussing Wittgenstein's views on idealism. To be fair though, Hacker is interested in these passages about pain and sensation language.

[61] *BB*, p.57ff. Similarly, when Unger claims that the surface of the table is not really flat, he is not saying that if we put something on it, it will slide off or topple over.

> "...*this* is what disputes between Idealists, Solipsists and realists look like. The one party attack the normal form of expression as if they were attacking a statement; the others defend it as if they were stating facts recognized by every reasonable human being."[63]

If Berkeley thinks that he has achieved an insight in the ultimate nature of reality, an insight that will prove our norms of description to be false then he is mistaken, for a norm of description is a way of stating facts and so cannot be true or false. What can be true or false is what is asserted using such a notation. Grammar cannot be justified by reality, for it is that through which we represent reality. So even though we could communicate with Berkeley on many practical levels, some things he would say would be unintelligible to us and nothing we could offer him as reasons would satisfy him—at most we could hope to persuade him. We can tell him he is wrong but it would be equally wrong to assume that we are the keepers of the Truth.[64]

Tacit Confirmation

I have made passing remarks on Jonathan Adler's views in *Belief's Own Ethics* but his theory of tacit confirmation deserves separate treatment. Adler supports evidentialism (the view that beliefs should be held for adequate reasons), denying that there are foundational basic beliefs (beliefs that are not supported by other beliefs). Instead, our knowledge is supported by a large number of "well-founded background beliefs"[65] which are well founded because they are tacitly confirmed in our practices without effort and often without us realizing. The gist of his idea is, I believe, that in

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[62] *PI*, 401.
[63] *Ibid.* 402. We see here that Wittgenstein implicitly refers to the mistake of the paradigm case argument offered by common sense realists discussed in chapter 2.
[64] *OC*, 24.
[65] Adler, p.165.

confirming hypotheses in our everyday life such as that there is milk on the grocery store shelf or that ducks will eat bread thrown in a pond, we also confirm assumptions auxiliary to such hypotheses such as that there are ducks or that there are cows. Specifically, Adler argues that my seeing my feet is evidence for my belief that I have two feet, and this is supported by my background belief that my visual processes and judgments are reliable. I use my vision regularly and successfully and if it were seriously deficient I would notice. Since I do not notice such a deficiency this is one source of tacit confirmation for the belief that sense perception is reliable.

Adler aims to rule out "radical skeptical alternatives and their surrogates, where radical skepticism denies the possibility of knowledge or reasons altogether".[66] However, at the end of chapter 6 Adler talks of belief in other minds, which he says is "overwhelmingly tacitly confirmed".[67] He continues, "this is a response available to us given our modest ambitions" and adds a compromising footnote saying, citing Stroud, that his response is "everyday" and not meant to be "philosophical", as Moore's is. I think that "within any ordinary exchange" no one will seriously question that other people have minds. But if you are going to give a philosophical account of belief and support tacit confirmation as Adler does, then obviously what is on your mind is a philosophical position and the skeptic's questioning will come up. A Moorean response such as Adler's (in attitude if not in intention) will not satisfy the skeptic, who denies the starting premise of tacit confirmation. What Stroud says of Moore applies to Alder also: he does not "stick closely enough to the straightforward, everyday response."[68]

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[66] *Ibid.* p.7 see also p.17.
[67] pp.184-185
[68] Sroud (1984), p.120. See also p.123ff.

Adler cites Wittgenstein's remark: "Why do I not satisfy myself that I have two feet when I want to get up from the chair? There is no why. I simply don't. This is how I act." He grants that we normally are not called to satisfy (justify) ourselves that we have two feet. But he gives an alternative reason for this: that we have overwhelming evidence from seeing, feeling and using them every day, and tacit confirmation of the reliability of the processes by which we come to acquire this evidence.[69]

Now, evidence supports a hypothesis but Wittgenstein would deny that in cases such as seeing our feet we form any hypothesis. The skeptic will resist this, saying that what we see is a hypothesis we form based on sense-data, an assumption (which Adler does not question) that as we have seen Wittgenstein dispels.[70] Given that there is no hypothesis formed, evidence is impossible, inappropriate. But even if it were appropriate, seeing something cannot be evidence for it. After all, if I see something I do not need evidence for it.

Even if we grant Adler that these are hypotheses he ignores another distinction, that between corroborating evidence and grounds.[71] I understand corroboration as a failure of falsification. It is true that that we have two feet is not experientially falsified. However, my seeing that I have two feet is no more certain than that I have two feet and so citing my sense perceptions will not satisfy a demand for grounds. As I have argued, unless we are in a context in which appealing to sense perception is more certain than the proposition in question, my pointing at my feet as evidence is as defective as your doubting my having them. To be sure, I can defend my actions by offering certain

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[69] Adler, pp.176-177.
[70] See chapter 4, and chapter 2, section C for the discussion on evidence and chapter 5A on Ayer.
[71] A similar distinction is made by Morawetz.

considerations as Moore does, but that is not equivalent to justifying them with reasons. Here we need to be reminded of the difference in certainties. There are certainties that cannot doubted (or treated as open to falsification) without seriously compromising one's ability to judge at all ("A table is a physical object"). And then there are ones for which some evidence can be given to someone else but that doubting them myself in ordinary circumstances makes no sense ("my name is E.V.").[72] The question here for Adler should not be what justifies these different certainties but whether we really can, and what it would mean to treat them as subject to falsifying evidence. This and other certainties form the core of our practices and treating them as being open to question, even if only in talking of confirmation (which Adler says obtains when a hypothesis risks being falsified), only compromises (your competence in) those practices themselves. Adler may be right in saying that the distinction that applies to simple organisms between reasons for action that *explain* the organism's behaviour and that organism's reasons does not apply to our perceptual practices that are affected by alterations in circumstances.[73] But surely there is a difference between a *description* of what must be unquestioned so that our practices exist as they do and grounds that *justify* those practices.

What is said here must be distinguished from the "too sophisticated objection" that Adler addresses. That is, that (background) beliefs such as "beliefs arising from perception are reliable" are arrived at automatically without reasoning and so there is no room for reasoned argument for them. That objection says that these beliefs do not arise

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[72] See chapter 2, "Hierarchy of Certainties".

[73] Adler, p.168. Of course, our perceptual judgements are affected by alteration of circumstances that is indeed part of our practice, but the question here is when has our perceptual practice itself changed? When were we faced with different circumstances altogether? As I said in chapter 2, Wittgenstein doesn't give an answer to what would happen if nature changed drastically.

through reasons and the "fruits [of tacit confirmation] are not available to us as reasons".[74] Adler replies that such an objection is too demanding because it assumes that only explicit beliefs can count as reasons. The objection here is not that we cannot make reasons for certain beliefs explicit, but that treating them as needing reasons is misunderstanding their role in our conceptual framework. They are not unjustifiable, they are a-justifiable. To put it in Wittgensteinian terms, such certainties are logical insights, external to our language-games and thus not ways of giving grounds. Adler though continues, "Like perception, our assertional or testimonial practices work under conditions that risk falsification."[75] But do they? Isn't it this that Wittgenstein questions when he points out that just because we can sometimes play games wrongly it doesn't follow that we may all have always played the game (or all games) wrongly? Sure, individual perceptual judgements and testimonials can turn out to be wrong, this is part of the practices themselves, but could all of them? In that case the very question of right and wrong, and the very practice of testimony would collapse. Again, we are not saying that automaticity as opposed to "an internal grasp of one's reasons" shows that reasons must be explicit beliefs,[76] but that the role of these "automatic" ("animal") responses does not leave room for doubt. The skills Wittgenstein appeals to do not need reasons for they develop from a common form of life and training.[77]

Adler attributes Wittgenstein's view to the confusion between differences in attitude and differences in confirmation. He writes: "As long as our certainty does not control the world, prediction is always a risk". Our certainties definitely do not *control*

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[74]Adler, p.168ff.
[75]*Ibid.* p.169.
[76] *Ibid.* p.171.

the world. But unquestioned acceptance that we have two feet is part of the system that sets one up to talk of the world so asking whether it is true, whether it is confirmed or falsified is deeply inappropriate.[78] It is not the difference in confirmation that causes the difference in our attitude. It is a logical difference; relating to the role of certain judgements in our language games. But also, talk of prediction (even in a weak sense) is misleading. We do not predict that sense perception is reliable any more than we predict that our friends have minds. It is something that we do not question, not something that is open to question but for which the question is always positively settled. After all, in normal circumstances (which are the vast majority of circumstances in which we rely on certainties—not in philosophy when we question them) we don't even consciously entertain thoughts about the minds of the people we interact with or about the earth continuing to support us when we take a step forward.[79] Alder says: "As a matter of logic, any statement essentially involved in deducing a prediction risks falsification should the prediction fail", but since there is no "genuine" prediction involved here, there is no risk of falsification and consequently no confirmation.[80] If we rejected our background beliefs we would be rejecting the system that gives rise to the possibility of evidence. Of course it looks like our "background beliefs" like the (ordinary) reliability of sense perception are (tacitly) confirmed by the world since any contrary evidence is explained as a mistake and is not allowed to challenge the certainty. Since certain judgements are what we hold constant the overwhelming evidence we seem to have for

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[77] See chapter 2, "Samples" and "Criteria".
[78] See chapters 2 and 6.
[79] See *PI*, II, p.178.
[80] Adler, p.165, p. 177. For a point similar to Wittgenstein's on the "verification" of certain propositions see Austin (1962), p.118.

them..."consists precisely in the fact that we do not *need* to give way before any contrary evidence". Because "it is anchored in all my *questions and answers*, so anchored that I cannot touch it."[81]

If anything, it is Adler who seems to confuse confirmation with certainty or our right to believe. For he is saying that auxiliary hypotheses are overwhelmingly tacitly confirmed and that is why we believe/accept them. But this is the other point of misunderstanding that Wittgenstein has warned us against: success in judgement is determined within a method of judgement so it cannot be the *reason* for adopting or relying on a method of judging.[82] Adler might well deny this and say that my belief that I have two feet is successful period. But as Wittgenstein replies to the comment "*all* my experiences shew that it is so", "the proposition to which they point itself belongs to a particular interpretation of them".[83] After all, the skeptic can take all the tacit confirmation that Adler appeals to and support his interpretation of experience: the evil deamon supplies us with experiences that are coherent and always successful in confirming that interpretation. Adler writes, "The proverbial problem of underdetermination of hypotheses by evidence would then arise only with respect to rivals concocted to evade falsification."[84] But it is exactly these that provide the skeptical challenge. The consistency appealed to does not adequately respond to the problem of underdetermination that a theory offered as a direct response to skepticism should be able to handle.

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[81] *OC*, 103, 657.
[82] *Ibid. 130-131.* Discussed in my chapter 6.
[83] *Ibid.* 145.
[84] Adler, p.166.

Now, Adler claims that "the mileage to be gained by claiming that background beliefs are not justified is to assimilate them to beliefs like the fundamental personal one, and then to argue, by parity, that if we are not going to reject the former-indeed, that we are going to maintain them tenaciously-then we are similarly entitled to do so for the latter". I don't think Wittgenstein is saying that *because* we are entitled to hold fast background beliefs *therefore* this justifies us in holding religious beliefs.

Working with the comparison with religious beliefs Adler writes,

> "The tacit confirmation view supports our ordinary discriminations-beliefs that there are other minds or that there is an external world achieve enormous tacit confirmation, unlike beliefs that people are basically good or that god loves us. If you reject the tacit confirmation view, you must provide an alternative account of the vast epistemic divide between these background beliefs (e.g., there are other minds, there is an external world) and the forefront one (e.g., people are basically good)..." [85]

I suppose that the real concern here is whether we are just at the mercy of our methods of justification and thus in danger of accepting beliefs without good enough reasons. Relating to the specific issue at hand, that of religious beliefs, the question is whether we are committed to saying that whatever the theist accepts as adequate reasons for his beliefs, are in fact good reasons. I am not sure that if we accept what Wittgenstein is saying we have to accept this also.

Note that in *On Certainty* only one substantial remark is made about belief in God and it has to do more with how children adopt beliefs on trust, than it is about religious belief *per se*.[86] So there is not enough for us to work with in *On Certainty* to address

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[85] p.185
[86] *OC*, 107.

Adler's point. However, some considerations can be put forward without though implying that they constitute an adequate treatment of Adler's concern.

The first thing is that Wittgenstein rejects the traditional demand for justification and explanation that Adler, like the skeptic, is after.[87] His whole point is that we should aim at a description of our practices and accept that justification ends at some point, that just because we cannot give reasons, it doesn't mean that we are acting irrationally. What he is trying to do is to defeat the following foundationalist (and empiricist, I suppose) dichotomy: that either our practices are justified by self evident foundations or nothing at all and we are led to skepticism. I think that Wittgenstein, in exploring our world picture and how we acquire it, is feeling his way around in *On Certainty*. He makes descriptive remarks (that are not meant to be explanatory) about, and comparisons with, how we acquire belief in God, how we hold fast some scientific propositions etc. and considers different practices in order to familiarize himself, and us, more with our own. This doesn't mean that everything he considers is part of what he would commit to. Keep in mind that *On Certainty* was not a book Wittgenstein was writing for publication, it is a collection of his notes, and I think it is safe to say that in reading it, we are witnessing, so to speak, a man working out his thoughts. So he never commits to what counts as a single epistemic practice or how far it goes. And as Colin McGinn points out, only if that were clear could we rightfully accuse him, or object to him, that he is limiting the legitimate epistemic application of our norms and saying that the language game of

[87] It would be a mistake to think that the considerations Wittgenstein on rule-following are an attempt to explain our practices. It would be wrong to think this because Wittgenstein insists that following a rule *is* acting in a certain way, it is not *manifested* in action. So when we describe practices we do nothing more than describing rule following and *vice versa*.

religion is subject to different epistemological standards.[88] Given this, and given also that there are no grounds for our certainties and that our relation to them is not an epistemic one, Wittgenstein is not committed to saying that the theist's reasons are good, or even good for him.

The second thing to note is that Wittgenstein denies the existence of an absolute, immutable, standard of reasons-- it is clear, I think, that he believes that as our view of the world changes, our practices change[89] so the general fear that we hang on to our practices in the face of contrary evidence, or that we generally accept empirical beliefs without enough evidence is unfounded.

Though it is true that it seems to be part of the Wittgensteinian view that religious beliefs--or many of them--are groundless beliefs, it is not part of this view that they are to be treated in the same way and be assimilated to the belief of the external world. The idea in *On Certainty* is that the undoubted acceptance of certain judgements is an intrinsic part of our practices and that there are some judgements that we all find ourselves agreeing in that are characteristic of our form of life. And though, as we said, parts of world pictures vary, there are some things that are most intimately connected to the form of life that all humans share and which are constitutive of the way we understand and interpret experience. There are some things that we cannot imagine to be otherwise that form the unmoving core of our world picture such as: the table is a physical object, other people have minds, $-(p \wedge -p)$. But there are other parts of our world picture that can and do change and parts that we don't all share. Now, for people who believe in an almighty

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[88] McGinn (1984), p.121-122.
[89] *OC*, 5, 48, 65, 336.

and benevolent God, that God loves us is part of their world picture and hence part of what they understand and interpret experience with.[90] For them there is no divide between this and other certainties. Everything that could be seen as contrary evidence to this belief will be interpreted as confirming evidence. The fact that the man of my dreams stood me up at the altar will not be seen as evidence that God doesn't love me, but that He does and that He made sure that I didn't end up with the wrong man, or that a little child was run over by a car is not to be understood as God's lack of love, but as an indication of this love and that He wanted that child to be an angel close to him.

Of course Wittgenstein would acknowledge the difference between our conviction that there are physical objects that every rational human being holds (though maybe not consciously entertains or expresses), and the belief that God loves us or that people are basically good, that many rational people don't. In normal exchange we wouldn't criticize someone for the former, but we could for the latter. However, if you were in a context of believers nobody would criticize you for your belief that God loves you. The divide exists for those that don't share that part of the world picture with us. Not because we know one but not the other but because for non-believers the belief that God loves us, or that people are basically good is one open to dispute, whereas for believers it is not. It lies "apart from the road travelled by inquiry".

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[90] *Ibid.* 107.

6. VERIFICATIONISM, RELATIVISM AND TRUTH

A. Verificationism

I want to begin this chapter by briefly addressing the question of whether Wittgenstein's saying that we can talk of knowledge only where grounds can be given points to verificationism. By verificationism I mean that the meaning of a proposition is its method of verification. A lot has been written about verificationism in the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein's objection to the Logical Positivist's attributing to him a verificationist theory of meaning and his break with verificationist views in the pre-*Investigations* period. I want to say some things about how Wittgenstein's remarks in *On Certainty* relate to this.

Wittgenstein tells us that there are cases in which it is meaningful for us to say we know something and cases in which it is nonsensical. The distinction depends on what the role is in our language-games of the judgements we are claiming knowledge of. So why isn't it meaningful to say, "I know the chair is a physical object"? Because a knowledge claim presupposes the possibility of giving evidence for your claim more certain than what you are claiming knowledge of and there is no such evidence we can give for the chair being a physical object.[1] In only this sense is Wittgenstein saying that the meaning of a knowledge claim depends on whether we have methods available to verify it. Such a knowledge claim is nonsensical not because the meaning of a proposition is its method of verification, as the logical positivists said, but because the propositions "the chair is a physical object" is being used as if it were expressing an

[1] *OC*, 14-15, 483-4.

empirical belief when it is not.[2] Of course we can say that we know it (Wittgenstein stressed that philosophy should be non-revisionary), but the important thing is that this is only like saying that you know that something is a rule of chess. This is not to say that it is meaningless because we can't *now* verify it.[3] It is part of the system that supplies us with a method for the verification of empirical beliefs[4] and no further reasons can be given. This is where Wittgenstein tells us we have reached rock bottom and our spade is turned—not because we have reached the ground, but because there is nothing left to dig.

One of the basic tenets of Logical Positivism is that we must be silent when it comes to metaphysics because there is really nothing to speak about. Otto Neurath wrote, "The conclusion of the *Tractatus*, 'whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent,' is at least grammatically misleading. It sounds as if there were a 'something' of which we could not speak. We should rather say, 'If one really wishes to avoid the metaphysical attitude entirely, then one will "be silent," but not "about something".'"[5] For Wittgenstein unverifiable propositions can still be meaningful, for instance "Pick up the flowers from Mr. Jones" or "This is a hand". Inquiring after the possible methods of verification of a proposition can be helpful sometimes, not, though, because this is identified with its meaning but in order to help us clarify its grammar, the role it plays in our language-games. Another way to do this is to see how we learn it or how we teach it to a child. He writes characteristically, "Asking whether and how a proposition can be verified is only a particular way of asking 'How d'you mean?' The answer is a

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[2] *Ibid.* 36, 53.
[3] *Philosophical Remarks*, 228.
[4] *OC*, 250 see also 307.
[5] Ayer (1959), p.284

contribution to the grammar of the proposition."[6] Wittgenstein remains faithful to views he expressed to G.F.Stout. That is, that to find out that you can provide no evidence for a statement that is more certain than the statement itself tells us something important about the statement but not that there is nothing to understand.[7] In the case of the certainties it tells us that their logical role in our language-games is different from that of normal, verifiable, empirical propositions. This kind of painless verificationism avoids the reductio of the positivists that the verification principle isn't itself verifiable, because Wittgenstein is describing what we actually do and how we behave. So just looking at our practices and describing what we do would be enough to verify Wittgenstein's own claim.

B. Certainties and Rules

The problem of what grasping a rule consists in is one that Wittgenstein toiled with extensively.[8] He was opposing the idea that grasping a rule is connected to a private interpretation of a sign. For if it is, we have to admit that there can be different interpretations of a rule that lead to different applications. So the sign alone does not give a criterion for its application. Kripke put forward the following problem.[9] Since Wittgenstein rejects the idea that following a rule is connected to a private mental process, there is no way that past ways of following a rule can determine future behaviour in accordance with it. His (in)famous example is 68+57. Suppose that all the times we have computed addition so far we have done it with numbers less than 57: how can we

[6] *OC*, 353.
[7] Monk, p.287-288.
[8] *PI*, 191-7, 202, *RFM*, I, 122-130.
[9] Kripke, (1982).

now, with this new addition, be sure that the correct answer is 125? Why not say, Kripke continues, that instead of addition we have been performing "quaddition". For any two numbers (x,y) smaller than 57 addition and quaddition give us the same result; otherwise x quus y is 5. Wittgenstein tells us that whether one is following a rule, whether someone is doing addition or not, can be seen by what he does. The problem that Kripke raises (and from which he concludes that Wittgenstein's conclusion is a skeptical one) is that what one does is equally compatible with doing addition or quaddition. Therefore, he concludes, we cannot know whether we did addition or quaddition in the past and we don't know what function to project (and so whether 5 or 125 is the right answer to 68+57). We can never know whether we are following a rule correctly, or which rules we follow.

This thought is exactly what Wittgenstein was trying to defeat and this is why he rejected the supposition that following a rule is determined by an interpretation of it. Wittgenstein responds that the only criterion available, and the only criterion necessary, is behavioral: whether we are following a rule correctly or not (and hence whether we understand it) can be seen in practice. There is an internal relation between a rule and its application, the rule itself gives us the standard of correctness. It is true, of course, that if there were no agreement in what counts as following a rule there would be no concept of what the rule prescribes, for example, if there was no agreement that 1000, 1002, 1004, 1006...accords with the rule "add 2" there wouldn't be the concept of addition. But if this is the case then there is no meaning or following a rule independently of a community, and this sounds awfully relativistic.

a. Agreement in Forms of Life

Let's begin with the question: what is a form of life?[10] A form of life circumscribes a field of activities and responses that exhibit a kind of regularity. Patterns of more or less fixed modes of action characteristics of being human like following rules, giving orders and describing colours,[11] walking forward, considering other people's feelings (even if in differing degrees), eating, taking care of our children, thinking of and preparing for the future, making choices, having expressive body language and facial features, questioning, hoping etc.[12] A form of life includes and circumscribes all this plexus of activities and reactions. The existence of a common form of life is a presupposition of our having language-games. But I want to stress that this doesn't mean that our language and our other means of expression are causally grounded by our form of life. The distinction to keep in mind is between:

1. We wouldn't have concept C unless we all agreed in doing X. (And also seeing (1) helps understand C)

and,

2. C is definable as X or C is a description of X.

Wittgenstein rejects reductionist claims of type 2 in favour of the relation described in 1 and I will discuss the nature of this agreement. Our form of life, like our language-games, cannot be justified, superseded or completely described.[13] And because a form of life is not explanatory, Wittgenstein does not present an exhaustive system--mentioning it gives the background of our thought.

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[10] This is an expression that Wittgenstein uses only 7 times in his writings: *PI* 19, 23, 241, pp.174, 226, *OC*,358 and *Lectures and Conversations*, p.58. (see Kindi p.207). For most of my views on forms of life, and the importance of this notion in Witgenstein's later work I am largely influenced by Lynn Baker.

[11] *RPP*, I, 630.

[12] *PI*, 25, 199.

[13] For an extensive discussion on forms of life see Kindi, pp.207-210.

Wittgenstein recognizes the danger that the agreement he talks about might be understood as just a (linguistic) consensus.[14] Even though he is notorious for seeming to advocate a hopelessly relativistic view, another view comes forward. He writes:

> "The language-game 'What is that?'—'A chair.'—Is not the same as: 'What do you take that for?'—'It might be a chair'[15].

And also,

> "'So you are saying that human agreement decides what is true and what is false?'—It is what human beings *say* that is true and false; and they agree in the *language* they use. That is not agreement in opinions but in form of life."[16]

The agreement that Wittgenstein has in mind is not an agreement in opinions. It is an agreement in norms of description and, in turn, an agreement in action and judgements that boils down to a common form of life. This common way we find it natural to go about things is neither just a matter of habit nor a result of our deciding that this is how we are going to do things. No, there is a broader context of agreement in our behaviour. Both biology and culture come into play. We find ourselves agreeing in many things, so much so that we can talk of a normal reaction to what direction to look at when someone is pointing, or to a normal way of extending the sequence 1000, 1002, 1004...given the rule "add 2". If we didn't find ourselves agreeing in so many things we do, if there weren't standard reactions, our language-games wouldn't be possible. There is a regularity in our nature that allows us to share concepts and thus to make sense of our judgements.[17] For example, if we didn't have the memory we have we wouldn't have the

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[14] *RFM*, VI-30, *PI* 241, *Lectures on the Foundations of Mathematics* (henceforth, *LFM*) ,pp.183-4.

[15] *Zettel*, 417. See also *OC*, 271, 317.

[16] *PI*,241

[17] Because of their simpler nervous system rats are unable to internalize the direction they have to take at each choice point in a T-shaped maze in order to get out (the sequence they should follow is either right-right or left-left). And since the choice point is always the same in a T-shaped maze they do not have any external stimulus to associate with the choice point. So the sequence has to be stored within the animal, which they cannot do. Also monkeys: they can learn how to

practice we call "mathematics" (though we might have had some other practice). If we didn't discriminate between tastes and sounds the way we do we wouldn't have the concepts of taste and sound that we have. If we got a different result every time we made a measurement there wouldn't be such a thing as measuring, or if we all continued the series 1000, 1002, 1004...differently there wouldn't be such a thing as continuing the series. A dynamic exchange takes place here—our practices are made possible by our agreement (not necessarily verbal) and the normativity of our practices in turn reinforces the agreement.[18]

Our response to signs, as our response to rules, is not based on reasons, it is not theoretical. It is part of what Wittgenstein calls our "inherited background" that we adopt as naturally and unconsciously as we do a tradition.[19] Traditions are gradually formed by shared behavioural patterns and when we act in a way that is traditional (customary) we do not hesitate to reflect. One of the things we inherit in a community is our language.[20] So what does Wittgenstein mean when he makes the distinction between "opinions" and "forms of life"? No one would dispute that there is some conventionalism in language.

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open complex locks to get to food, but if there is a sequence of locks to be opened in a particular order, they have trouble. (Broadbent, pp.46-47) Humans, on the other hand, are generally able to do this due, partly, to our larger nervous system that allows us to handle large quantities of information and sequences of stimuli. What I want to say in this respect is that it is not because we can form rules that we are able to find our way out of the maze but because we can do this we can then form the rule and say we are following it.

[18] The idea of an "autocatalytic process" (one that catalyzes itself in a positive feedback cycle, going faster and faster once it has started) might be helpful to keep in mind in the remainder of this chapter for roughly seeing how this reciprocal relation could work (though changing the definition from "going faster and faster" to "expanding"). A way to show this bidirectional link which, as I shall argue, steers clear from the Scylla of naturalism and the Harybdis of conventionalism, would be to cite such an autocatalytic process. We find ourselves agreeing in our feelings of similarity, importance, the way we store things in memory etc. and this allows us to develop (normative) practices. In turn, these normative practices reinforce the agreement and allow us to expand it to new aspects and field (as we shall see happens with mathematics).

[19] *OC*, 94.

[20] *PI*, 454.

Wittgenstein is saying that this is not all that goes into our language, it is not just definitions that settle the matter.[21] After all, a definition can be misinterpreted. So how come we don't misinterpret definitions? How come we overcome the open-ended aspect of rule following? Here is where the agreement in forms of life comes in. We agree in the meaning of our terms because we agree in our practices, not only on definitions but on how we apply them. We generally do agree about when our words are correctly applied and this is essential to the existence of language and communication in general. Wittgenstein writes:

> "...the phenomenon of language is based on regularity. Here it is of the greatest importance that all or the enormous majority of us agree in certain things. I can, e.g., be quite sure that the colour of this object will be called 'green' by far the most of the human beings who see it....We say that, in order to communicate, people must agree with one another about the meaning of words. But the criterion for this agreement is not just agreement with reference to definitions, e.g., ostensive definitions—but *also* an agreement in judgments. It is essential to communication that we agree in a large number of judgments."[22]

What Wittgenstein is saying is that it is not a matter of judgement that we normally apply words as we do. We naturally react to certain stimuli in the same way (for example when we see green) and it is this agreement in reactions (judgements) that makes language possible. So training comes in as far as learning the words goes, but that wouldn't be enough if there wasn't a deeper agreement in our judgements of what words are (correctly) applied to. He writes:

> "The word 'agreement' and the word 'rule' are *related* to one another, they are cousins. If I teach anyone the use of the one word, he learns the use of the other with it."(*PI*, 224)
> "The use of the word 'rule' and the use of the word 'same' are interwoven..." (*PI*, 225)

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[21] McGinn (1984), pp.54ff. discusses this more extensively than here--my discussion is influenced by his.
[22] *RFM*, VI-39, see also *PI*. 239-240.

> "...It is no use, for example, to go back to the concept of agreement, because it is no more certain that one proceeding is in agreement with another, than that it has happened in accordance with a rule..."(*RFM*, VII-26)

If two people understand a rule they will agree in what constitutes following it and in what constitutes doing the same thing. So if they judge that two people are doing the same thing, they will say that the two are following the same rule. Similarly, if two people are wondering whether an action accords with a rule, it would be pointless to wonder whether doing one thing is the same as doing another, because it is this very sameness that they are trying to establish. The words "rule", "same", "agreement" are interwoven. For example, logical relations are formed in the context of agreement but this agreement, Wittgenstein tells us, is not what creates logical relations. This agreement is presupposed in our language-games, not established within it *ad hoc* and it is not the reason we all follow a rule the same way.[23] We don't first make up the rules and then start to use words. No, as I said in discussing "red is darker than pink", logical relations between "red" and "pink" are established within the judgements that we make and agree in. If there wasn't unreflective regularity in our responses language and logic wouldn't be possible. So though when we make a judgement we take logic as a given (in the background if you will) this is only possible because there is a regularity (and agreement) in judgements of what follows from what, what is consistent with what, when two statements are equivalent, and so on.

b. Mathematics

In *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*, Wittgenstein repeatedly refers to mathematical propositions as rules and there is overwhelming evidence that at the time

[23] *RFM*, VII-9, *Zettel*, 319.

that was his view. However, there still remains the question of how a sentence, a sequence of signs, say "2+2=4", that can be used in many different ways in many different contexts and which doesn't seem to prescribe any specific behaviour, can be said to be a rule. Of course, we can say that "2+2=4" does prescribe behaviour because it says that if you see 2+2 you must say it is equal to, or you must substitute it with, 4 (if you say anything). But this way almost all sentences can be said to be rules in disguise. "The earth has existed for many years past" can be said to be a rule that every time you talk of the earth you are (and must be) talking of something that has existed for many years past, or "the library is open today" can be said to be a rule that the library is something that is open today.[24] But this doesn't seem to be right. It must be kept in mind that the *Remarks* were written in the period between 1937-44[25] whereas *On Certainty* was written in the last two years of his life between 1949-51. So though it is sometimes helpful to go back to the *Remarks* to shed light on the remarks on mathematics in *On Certainty*, Wittgenstein's ideas might well have changed a bit in this period. The reason I say this is that in *On Certainty* Wittgenstein includes some arithmetical propositions (namely, "12×12=144", "a+b=b+a" and "2+2=4") in the world picture. I said that certainties of the world picture are not themselves rules but are the direct application of fundamental rules such as "Accept 'x' in all circumstances". And in *On Certainty* Wittgenstein writes:

> "...both propositions, the arithmetical one and the physical one, are on the same level." (447)
> "We learn with the same inexorability that this is a chair as that 2×2=4" (455)

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[24] Though Wittgenstein doesn't elaborate on it, his problem seems to be in his mind also when he writes, "One almost wants to say 'any empirical proposition can, theoretically, be transformed...', but what does 'theoretically' mean here?" (*OC*, 321)
[25] *RFM*, p.29.

> "If the proposition 12×12=144 is exempt from doubt, then so too must non-mathematical propositions be." (653)[26]

Wittgenstein wants some epistemic parity between the language-game of mathematics and the language-game of physical objects; basic mathematical statements and physical-object statements are on the same level, both part of our world picture. So Wittgenstein is assimilating one class of nominally empirical propositions to basic mathematical ones. Therefore, if propositions of the world picture are not strictly speaking rules but direct applications of fundamental rules, then it is plausible to think that we should look for the same treatment of basic mathematical statements. The way to see it, I suggest, is this. We have fundamental rules that govern our acceptance in all circumstances of basic arithmetical/mathematical propositions (e.g. "2+2=4", "a+b=b+a"). And then we have derived rules for more complicated propositions. In other words, once we pick up the basic rules, we can pick up the rest based on those through proofs—we get to see the new propositions by following the fundamental rules,[27] just as we learn the basic rules of a game but are not taught how to play every part of the game-- that is something that we figure out as we go along.

One of the first steps in mathematics is learning arithmetic. And we learn basic arithmetic by accepting certain computation e.g. by memorizing the multiplication table that usually consists in multiplications of numbers from 0 to 9 (or 10).[28] We learn these

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[26] See also OC, 651.

[27] *RFM*, I-33, IV-30.

[28] The difficulty here would be to find exactly what falls under the label "basic", but as I said in chapter 2, I think that would be the wrong thing to be preoccupied with. What is basic in mathematics might vary from students, or non-mathematicians in general, to people who deal with mathematics professionally. Wittgenstein talks of "12×12=144" and this might be not only because when learning the multiplication table (at least in my school) we were also given a few examples of multiplication of numbers above 10 with themselves (ex. 11×11, 12×12, 25×25 etc), but also because we learned to square numbers and these are ones that constantly come up during

and we get good grades and a pat on the back once we pick up the technique. And indeed, if you question the result of basic computations, the answer you get, is something like "this is how it is". So far then, the idea that the fundamental (and unspoken) rule governing these computations is "Accept 'x' in all circumstances" is still plausible. Also, because we don't learn mathematics by learning rules but by learning judgements, at the level of fundamental rules it is difficult to distinguish between a rule and the direct application of a rule.[29] So this might explain why it looks like, and we are prone to say that, the rule is "2+2=4". So I think it is plausible to say that the normative exclusion of dispute (as the normative exclusion of doubt) is part of the fundamental rule.[30] Because "Accept 'x' in all circumstances" is more or less "Do not ever doubt 'x'", and "x" stands fast for us because what we are taught in school can be expressed like this:

'Dispute about other things; *this* is immovable-it is a hinge on which your dispute can turn."[31]

Given this parity between the language-game of mathematics and the language-game of physical objects, it is helpful to look a bit more at the former. Wittgenstein writes:

> "What does mathematics need a foundation for? It no more needs one, I believe, than propositions about physical objects—or about sense impressions, need an *analysis*. What mathematical propositions do stand in need of is a clarification of their grammar, just as do those other propositions." (*RFM*, VII-16)

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that procedure. So though we may disagree as to whether they are basic or not, by force of practice, they are ones most of us remember.

[29] As Wittgenstein says, the rule is not needed.(*OC*, 44, 46) We don't learn to calculate through a rule but by learning to calculate. For example, Peano's axioms are probably subject to fundamental rules. Though most people might not have explicitly entertained them, or know what they are, anyone who knows mathematics (is able to do maths) will assent to them if they are formulated.

[30] This interpretation of mathematics in *On Certainty* was suggested to me by Paul Horwich.

[31] *OC*, 655.

> "'Mathematical certainty' is not a psychological concept. The kind of certainty is the kind of a language-game...What has to be accepted, the given, is- so one could say-*forms of life*." (*PI*, pp.224-226)

Wittgenstein's *bête noire* in the philosophy of mathematics (and not only) is Platonism, the idea, that is, that mathematics makes objective claims that are true or false depending on whether they accurately represent mathematical entities. As far as Wittgenstein is concerned, Platonism not only does not pin down mathematical truth but the positing of abstract entities serves no purpose. The problems that arise in Platonist/realist theories concerning the truth of mathematical statements and our knowledge of the mathematical world are well known.[32] For example, if we cannot directly perceive mathematical objects but can only intuit them through the "mind's eye" then how can we ever know that we have arrived at the truth? And what happens if different people have different intuitions about this correspondence relation? Wittgenstein tells us that it is essential that we agree in our results and so, independently of what our insights might be, they won't help if we don't agree in application.[33]

For Wittgenstein then, the most basic feature of mathematics is that we all agree in our results. We are taught a procedure and we all apply it the same way (except for the occasional mistake), and if someone were to constantly arrive at different conclusions we would simply call him abnormal.[34] So we learn a set of basic mathematical propositions that become second nature to us, and whose undoubted acceptance has become "fossilized"[35] in our conceptual framework.

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[32] For one example, see Paul Benacerraf's "Mathematical truth", (*Journal of Philosophy*, LXX, 1973).
[33] *RFM*, I-3.
[34] *Ibid.* I-112.
[35] *OC*, 655, 657

The dilemma in mathematics is usually posited as a choice between two options: Platonism and conventionalism. Wittgenstein is urging us to see in mathematics and our conceptual framework at large, that these are not our only two options. He is trying to defeat the idea that either knowledge, justification and rationality must be founded on something that is necessary and directly perceived or else on nothing at all. He is trying to show us two things. First, that the fact that our methods are to some extent contingent (because it is *logically* possible that there be other methods) does not mean that they are arbitrary or chosen. And second, that the fact that they don't stand on the unyielding foundations that philosophers have traditionally wanted doesn't imply skepticism.[36] Reasons have an end in those ways of acting that we find ourselves agreeing in because, as Lear puts it, of our common inclinations, interests, and sensibilities.[37] This is our form of life, not just arbitrary points we decided to agree in. The judgements that are governed by fundamental rules are ones embedded in our environment and within that environment certain choices are not open to us. We agree on certain things, some judgements, and these make up the certainties of our world picture (and a careful description of our practices will show what these are): if I let go of my glass it will fall to the ground, if I put my hand on the fire I will get burned and this is where reasons end.

So mathematics is a normative system, Wittgenstein tells us, but it is one made for the needs of our form of life. It is a superficial objection to say that Wittgenstein has not *proved* that, say, arithmetical statements are the result of the application of fundamental rules of linguistic usage. Wittgenstein would himself say that he is not trying to give a detailed alternative theory, but to give a bird's eye view (übersicht) of our use of concepts

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[36] Remember, "To use a word without justification does not mean to use it without right." (*PI*, 289)

[37] Lear (1982), p.387ff. he also says because we are "like minded".

that suggests an alternative picture.[38] So whether he has succeeded depends on whether he sheds light on our use of mathematics and helps to clear up some philosophical problem.

We developed mathematics to handle our environment. It supplied us with the forms through which we could make accurate observations and predictions.[39] It allowed us to make exact measurements (e.g. of time, or temperature—by fixing units of measurement and relations between them) and with the progress of mathematics we got involved in things that once were inconceivable.[40] So propositions of mathematics are a language to describe reality. That this is what elementary mathematics was initially used for is a good explanation of its applicability: since it was made up for practical purposes the fact that it has practical applications should not need further explanation. The fundamental rules that govern this language-game are constrained by empirical conditions.[41] The basic principles of arithmetic are suggested to us by the world around us, Wittgenstein says, and are partly determined by our physical constitution and abilities

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[38] The question of whether Wittgenstein is putting forward a theory or not is tricky because the distinction between an alternative picture and a theory (which is itself a fuzzy concept) is not clear. I think when Wittgenstein denies putting forward a theory we should understand "theory" in the weak, everyday sense of "theory": as a position that not only makes explicit internal connections and has more details than what Wittgenstein supplies, but also that gives us a tool to make predictions. A theory in this sense is usually also understood as something that gives us more than is obvious in the sense that it goes beyond the surface of how things are and deals with the hidden, with what is invisible to the (naked) eye.

[39] *RFM*,. I-116, III-14, IV-33, V-8. The word "γεωμετρία" (geometry) in Greek means "measuring of the earth".

[40] "'If calculation is to be practical, then it must uncover facts. And only experiments can do that.' But what things are 'facts'? Do you believe that you can shew what fact is meant by, e.g., pointing to it with your finger? Does that of itself clarify the part played by 'establishing' a fact?--Suppose it takes mathematics to define the *character* of what you are calling a 'fact'!
'It is interesting to know *how many* vibrations this note has! But it took arithmetic to teach you this question. It taught you to see this kind of fact." *Ibid.* VII-18

[41] "There correspond to our laws of logic very general facts of daily experience".

and the gentle collaboration of nature. Think of the role of mathematics in our lives.[42] If our needs as a species and our practices did not go hand in hand we would soon pay the consequences in our survival. If nature changed drastically, not showing the stability we are used to, our mathematics would have to change too or we would face serious difficulties in handling our environment, because even though mathematics doesn't state empirical facts its usefulness and importance rests on empirical regularities.

The regularity, the constancy, of nature is not an explanation of our concepts, it is not what grounds them. That is, nature doesn't force our concepts[43] on us but if there weren't the kind of regularity we observe, it would be impossible for us to apply our concepts and we would either have to modify them or abandon them altogether. In this sense our concepts resemble laws which rest for their applicability on certain normality conditions but are not justified by them.[44] If we see mathematics as a method of measuring this can become more clear. Mathematics is the method and mathematical judgements we make are the result of using that method of measurement. But in order to use this method we need constancy in results. So we need constancy in the thing measured (nature) as well as in our judgements.[45] Similarly, if there were no constancy and agreement in the judgements we make in applying words, the linguistic method (language) wouldn't exist.

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[42] *RFM*. I-4.
[43] *OC*, 130-131.
[44] *Zettel*, 350. This is a paraphrase of Hacker's "translation" of this Wittgensteinian remark. McGinn (1984) makes the same point (p.57)
[45] Not that disagreements can't exist; of course two people can agree on the definition but disagree in their judgements. There is space in our language-games for that. But there is no space, and our language-games probably wouldn't exist, if we didn't generally agree or if we disagreed on every application. For Wittgenstein, a mistake is necessarily local.

It must be emphasized that it will not do to ask for too much precision from the idea that our form of life constrains our concepts. Wittgenstein isn't a reductionist and he labors to distinguish his position from a reductionist claim of type 2. His aim is to reorient our way of looking at things and this is why it is preferable to give examples in Wittgenstein's spirit and not try to squeeze an explanation from an investigation that is not meant to be explanatory.[46] The constancy of physics is a background condition for a game of snooker but it is not part of that game itself and one can be a brilliant snooker player without knowing the first thing about physics.[47] Does this mean that nature puts a boundary to our logic, our mathematics, our concepts? Well, their practical use, the applicability with which they began, implies that the way we form our concepts is connected to the world. Nature steps in when new concepts are formed and when old ones are rejected. Having meaning, making sense, is having a use in our form of life so when the old use does not reflect our needs, or when new needs emerge, we can and do adopt new rules and modify (or even change) our forms of description—so far there is a causal link with nature.

Wittgenstein is not saying that logic is a branch of psychology.[48] Logic doesn't describe thinking. He is saying that you cannot understand logic if you don't understand the kinds of beings that we are. For example, you cannot understand the concept of negation (or disjunction) if you don't take into account that we are beings that are constantly faced with exclusive alternatives and have to make choices. We cannot justify

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[46] *OC*, 34, 189.

[47] Hacker has a similar example from which mine was prompted, but I cannot, at this point, find the exact reference. The concluding lines of this paragraph were also prompted by his remarks on that example.

[48] This is an idea that professor Landesman suggested to me: that just as Quine turns to psychology, Wittgenstein turns to armchair psychology but just calls it "logic".

(and cannot falsify) our logic by reference to reality because it is not itself a description of reality. It is what provides us with means for describing of reality. So it is with our mathematical statements: nothing corresponds to them apart from the fact that they are the concepts we use in this system of representing reality. As to the question of truth Wittgenstein tells us that to say that e.g. "'2+2=4' is true" is nothing more than to say that "2+2=4".[49] That is, saying "x is true" is redundant since all we are really saying is "x"; in this case this amounts to stressing that this has a special role and so a doubt is inappropriate.[50] Of course we do call mathematical statements true and there is nothing wrong with that, as long as we avoid falling in the abyss of Platonism. I think Wittgenstein's point is that the discussion here should not focus on whether the system of mathematics is one made up of propositions or not. As Wittgenstein says, we could do mathematics without dealing with propositions at all.[51] Against the Platonist, Wittgenstein would stress that the concept of a proposition is a family resemblance concept-- so we can say mathematics is a system of propositions as long as we are clear that different kinds of propositions have different uses and that propositions of the world picture have a special status.

Wittgensteinian certainty is different from Cartesian certainty because for Wittgenstein it is logically possible that some of our certainties may change. This doesn't mean that we are willing to accept any different view. If Dostoyevsky's underground man were to come and tell us that 2+2=5 we would not accept it just like that. It is not a matter of whim, it is not something for each to decide on his own. Nor is Wittgenstein a conventionalist. According to the standard conventionalist view, rules are

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[49] *RFM*, I-4
[50] *Ibid.* I-5.
[51] *Ibid.* I-147, III-6.

the product of linguistic convention; we choose a rule and the rest follows analytically from stipulations. Any divergence from what the rule prescribes will therefore lead to a logical contradiction. For example, in the sequence 1000, 1002, 1004 where the rule is "add 2" we are not free to correctly say 1008, 1012 etc. Wittgenstein would agree that in following a rule one step must follow the previous one in accordance with the rules but he would deny that rules are a result of stipulation (à la Carnap).[52] The feeling we have that it couldn't be otherwise, that one step follows the other with necessity, occurs within a broader context of a much deeper agreement. The necessity of mathematics is one enclosed within a technique that is partially constituted by basic mathematical propositions.[53] And though the undoubted acceptance of the propositions is not the result of an (arbitrary) choice, Wittgenstein steers clear of Platonism because there is nothing inherently necessary in the rules that govern basic mathematical propositions.[54]

In empirical investigations a number of different results are possible, but not in mathematics and logic. Mathematics compels us. Not because of some metaphysical mathematical reality, no, in this sense Dummett is right, this kind of metaphysical compulsion is rejected by Wittgenstein. Mathematics is objective in the only way that objectivity can exist according to Wittgenstein; in the sense that given our form of life

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[52] *RFM,* VI-49.

[53] *Ibid.* I-116, III-16, VII-67.

[54] In *On Certainty* everything Wittgenstein has to say about mathematics is about arithmetics—and what he says about them seems to work. Many of the things he says, though, cease to be as plausible when it comes to more advanced mathematics. For example, the necessity of a step following the next seems to work in arithmetic but at a certain higher level of mathematical abstraction decision and choices have to be made. Also, there are questions such as why it is necessary that the square root of 2 is an irrational number—sometimes one feels that the Platonism that Wittgenstein is at pains to avoid has not gotten rid of completely. I think the distinction to be kept in mind is between the necessity of adopting a system and the necessity within a system. Ultimately, the practice, as formed by us (including decisions we might make beyond a certain level of complexity) requires us to make certain moves—this is what we call "mathematics", what mathematics is. In this sense the practice comes first, and though this might not rid Wittgenstein of all echoes of Platonism, it keeps him far enough.

and our training in the practice, if we follow the rules there is no decision to be made and we will all agree in the results.[55] The criterion of correctness is given within the practice. This is not simply to say that what is correct is what the majority says, it is not a remarkable coincidence that we all agree. This agreement is not the result of a decision, but it is the background that allowed us to develop our mathematical system in the first place. Not any mathematical system would do. Maybe our system is not the only one possible (other systems of measurement could exist though they would not be mathematics), but our having it is neither optional nor arbitrary. So why do we all agree? I think the (non-reductionist) answer Wittgenstein would give is: because we are human.[56]

A form of life is not a convention, we do not choose it. It is what makes conventions themselves possible. So Wittgenstein wouldn't accept that 2+2 is equal to anything at all as long as we all agree to it or that we can choose alternative ways of following rules, as Dummett claims.[57] This relates to the problem of an addition that has never been made before. Using a wonderful metaphor Wittgenstein tells us that it would be "Bolshevism in mathematics"[58] to say that because it has never been done before any result would be as good as any other. In mathematics new rules can be formulated but there is an accepted way of forming new rules and an agreement in results is an essential part of the process. This doesn't mean that we can randomly introduce new rules. Given

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[55] *Ibid.* I-22. "What we call 'measuring' is partly determined by a certain constancy in results of measurement" (*PI*, 242). This can be seen in the statements that I think I can safely claim that almost all of us have said or heard: "I must have miscounted". *(RFM*, III-90).

[56] *Ibid.* VI-49. Wittgenstein would insist that the necessity within the system of mathematics is not explained by anything, and more than this, it does not need to be explained.(*RFM.* VI-33 see also III-78, 81).

[57] Dummett, 1959.

[58] *LFM*, 67. For this paragraph I relied heavily, often paraphrasing, Hacker's treatment (p.259-261), though he might well disagree with my comments on objectivity.

the theory (the calculus) the proof will bind the new proposition into the system. So new rules are introduced into the system through proofs that ultimately are concatenations of old rules that connect concepts that were not previously connected (or that bring new concepts into the system).[59] For example, the result of a calculation can be incorporated as a rule if it is arrived at by a certain technique (or a proof). 12×12=157 is not acceptable because it is *not* part of the method we call multiplying. So there are constraints on concatenations, but to ask here whether the way rules are concatenated is something objective or a reflection of our form of life is the wrong question, according to Wittgenstein. The only sense in which mathematics is not objective is in a sense of "objective" that he would deny, that is, one that implies metaphysical realism. Wittgenstein would insist that, as discussed in chapter 5, the notion of objectivity makes sense only within a form of life. As Hacker puts it, if there is no established proof system then the most that can be a sign that something is wrong is disagreement in results. However, once a technique is established (for example a technique of counting) there is a criterion (internal to the practice) of establishing whether a calculation has been performed correctly or not. This is why Wittgenstein is not a conventionalist of the sort Dummett takes him to be (attributing to him the position that mathematics is merely the result of a linguistic convention which allows us to decide each step of the way what is true or false).

Viewing mathematics in this way turns what was thought to be propositional knowledge into a practical know-how. To "know" mathematics it is necessary to have mastered the practical ability of applying mathematical rules but it is not necessary to

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[59] Hacker (1996), p.260ff.

have stored the relevant set of propositions (though you need to if you are going to make meta-statements). The other great advantage of this position is that rules (and their application) are not true or false, you either follow them correctly or you don't, so there is no mystery to what mathematical knowledge consists in--in the sense of what makes the propositions true. Yes, we learn mathematics by being taught propositions, but knowing them is not essential to knowing mathematics; what is essential, the criterion of correctness, is being able to *do* mathematics.[60] And though we might not always even be conscious that we are following rules, we are definitely not free to choose to ignore them. Also, as direct applications of rules, the question of whether they are beliefs doesn't really matter—of course we can say we believe them, but again that is not essential. The important thing is the ability to carry out an activity, not belief.

While retaining some of Wittgenstein's earlier ideas, seeing basic mathematical propositions not as rules but as direct applications of fundamental rules, we can also explain the different explanatory and epistemological status that Wittgenstein insists in *On Certainty* that propositions of the world picture have. Basic propositions like "2+2=4" cannot be explained further nor can they be said to be strictly speaking known. As he says, when we are taught that "a+b=b+a" in school our teacher doesn't teach it to us by insisting that he knows it.[61] We learn to take it as a given and if we don't we can't continue. More complicated propositions, on the other hand, that are subject to rules derived from fundamental rules can be explained further, or justified in a sense if you

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[60]OC, 44. Here we see a continuation with the *Remarks*, I-144: "If someone calculates like this must he utter any "arithmetical *proposition*"? Of course, we teach children the multiplication tables in the form of little *sentences*, but is that essential? Why shouldn't they simply: *learn to calculate*? And when they can do that haven't they learned arithmetic?"

[61] *OC*, 113.

will, by proofs that connect them to fundamental rules and/or other derived rules.[62] In this sense at a certain level of mathematical complexity it wouldn't be strictly speaking wrong to say you know a proposition of mathematics, even it would need some qualification to avoid Platonism and though it would still not be essential to being able to do mathematics.

C. A Sociological View?

I have suggested that Wittgenstein is not a conventionalist. I started the discussion with Kripke but a sociological reading of Wittgenstein is not his alone. David Bloor in *Wittgenstein: A Social Theory of Knowledge* tells us that Wittgenstein gives us a "social explanation" of knowledge, that "[Wittgenstein] treated cognition as something that is social in its very essence" and that "objectivity and rationality must be things that we *forge* for ourselves as we *construct* a form of collective life" (italics mine).[63] He also attributes to Wittgenstein the belief that "logical necessity is a social relation"[64] and identifies what Wittgenstein calls "needs" with interests related to our social location.[65]

I have tried to show that Wittgenstein was not trying to give a social explanation of knowledge. We find ourselves agreeing in many things, we share inclinations, interests and our (rule-governed) practices rest on this agreement. This agreement, I argued, is not the cause of our language-games but in order to understand our practices we have to take into account the kinds of beings that we are and the kind of world we live

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[62] *Ibid.* 563. And Wittgenstein would add: though we can say that fundamental rules, in a sense, justify our non-fundamental ones, there is no further reason, except from the fact that we find ourselves agreeing in them, for seeing fundamental rules as grounds.
[63] Bloor, pp.2-3.
[64] *Ibid.* p.121, see also pp.57ff.
[65] *Ibid.* p.182.

in. The contingency of our practices may help explain the tendency to call a form of life conventional, but this doesn't mean that we choose our form of life or that we could have a different one. Wittgenstein's point is that we agree in the way we do certain things (e.g. being inclined to make certain judgements) but we didn't *decide*, we didn't *make an agreement* to do them that way. He is not saying that looking at the workings of society will explain and justify our language-games. His aim is to help us understand how the kinds of beings we are is reflected in our practices and our conceptual framework. For instance, to clear up misunderstandings concerning the concept of a rule we have to look at the way we follow and understand rules, and judge accord and discord. But this does not mean that rules boil down to a social construction and convention. For following rules is part of a form of life which is not only social, not chosen and it is not justificatory.

In trying to "develop [Wittgenstein's thoughts] into a systematic theory of language-games", Bloor goes beyond not only what Wittgenstein did (as Bloor himself acknowledges),[66] but also against what Wittgenstein was trying to convey about language-games. To Bloor it looks as if Wittgenstein goes only so far in his discussion of how our needs and interests connect to our world picture and then drops the issue. But that is a mistake. Wittgenstein is trying to give us an alternative picture of our cognitive lives, not a (reductionist) theory. If, like Bloor, we want to "go beyond what Wittgenstein was willing to do with the concept of a language-game", that's fine. But then our book should not be called "*Wittgenstein*: A Social Theory of Knowledge".

There is one more thing to say. We cannot step out of our form of life and so whatever we say (including what we say about our form of life) will be said within it.

[66] *Ibid.* p.5.

We can at best contemplate one aspect of our form of life by isolating it from another but any comparison is made from within a form of life.[67] So it is not surprising that little can be said about our form of life as a whole, or that Wittgenstein doesn't say more about how our form of life constrains our concepts. So it is unavoidable that talk of it flirts with the limits of conceivability. Yet, because the limits are not clear-cut and eternal, we can play around them and even succeed in saying that they exist and constrain.

Peter Winch also opts for a sociological interpretation of Wittgenstein's views (not focusing on *On Certainty*) in *The Idea of a Social Science.*[68] He writes, "Wittgenstein's argument is that it is not those practices considered on their own which justify the application of categories like language and meaning, but the social *context* in which those practices are performed."[69] Winch, like Bloor, seems to think that for Wittgenstein community agreement grounds, explains or justifies our practices. But Wittgenstein's whole point is that nothing does, because these concepts do not apply at this level. As Colin McGinn has pointed out[70] this general attempt to ground our practices in community agreement disregards one of Wittgenstein's most essential points: that what is a correct or an incorrect use of language (or of rule-governed behaviour in general) is not based on reasons. So the question of what justifies them cannot sensibly

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[67] Somewhat different frameworks that belong to the same form of life might be partially explained by which aspects of our form of life we give priority to. I think Wittgenstein's point is that to think about alternative forms of life (say, talk of mathematics in which the principle of non-contradiction doesn't exist) is not like thinking of different hypotheses. Hence, he insists that he is not saying that " if such-and-such facts of nature were different people would have different concepts (in the sense of a hypothesis)" (*PI*,II, p.230.) Though we can say that if our biology were different then maybe what we find natural to do would be different, it is not clear at all what this "different" would be or be remotely like. One gets the feeling in reading *Insight and Illusion* that Hacker also doesn't do justice to this Wittgensteinian intuition.

[68] pp. 24-39

[69] *Ibid.*p.35.

[70] (*1984*), p.87.

be raised, for that would be to erroneously assume (as sociological and pragmatic interpretations do) that it is something external to our practices that justifies our rules.

D. Different Frameworks and Alternative Forms of Life

Wittgenstein holds that mathematics, even though it is "officially" "fossilized" (as opposed to other framework judgements) is not a matter of arbitrary linguistic convention. It satisfies our inclinations and our feelings of naturalness and importance. Indeed, there is no real-life alternative to arithmetic.

If someone says "12×12=157" using "12", "×", "=" the way we do we would say he is making a mistake. If we showed him examples of multiplication works, the multiplication table etc. and he insisted that he understands all of that and means it the same way we do, then what he is saying is nonsense. He is using what seem to be our words but he is not. For the meaning of these concepts is (partially) given by the calculations we make and accept as correct given the rules.[71] If you are otherwise working within our system and use "×", "12", "=" and you don't say that "12×12=144" then you don't understand what they mean. If, however, an alien tribe came and said something that sounds (looks) like "12×12=157" there are two possibilities. If, like the man above, they are denying a necessary truth, they would be talking nonsense. If they just had different notations for concepts that could be mapped on to ours then we could translate them eventually and they would turn out to agree with us. But that is not of great (philosophical) interest—no more than translating the metric system to the British Imperial system of measurement.

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[71] *RFM*, IV-30, VI-8.

What interests Wittgenstein is what we would say if they used concepts other than ours.[72] In this case we wouldn't be disagreeing, for we can only disagree by using the same concepts to get different results. But if they used different concepts and did something that looked like calculating there are no different results; they are not calculating.[73] (Similarly, if someone in a Moore-like situation were to lift his hand and say "This is not a hand" he is either talking nonsense or he is using the term "hand" to mean something different from us). We can't tell what it would be like to have different concepts because our concepts are the ones we use. The only way we could try to explore what it would be like to have different concepts is by asking (using our concepts) what it makes sense to say and what is self defeating.

It might seem that Wittgenstein is expounding relativism when he gives all sorts of examples of people doing things differently than we do. For instance when he says,

> "But you surely can't suddenly make a different application of the law now!"—If my reply is: "Oh yes of course, *that* is how I was applying it!" or: "Oh! *That's* how I ought to have applied it-!"; then I am playing your game. But if I simply reply: "Different?--But this surely *isn't* different!"—what will you do? That is: somebody may reply like a rational person and yet not be playing our game"

But he is not, surely enough he then continues:

> "Then according to you everybody could continue the series as he likes; and so infer *any*how!" In this case we shan't call it "continuing the series" and also presumably "inference". And thinking and inferring (like counting) is of course bounded for us, not by an arbitrary definition, but by natural limits corresponding to the body of what can be called the role of thinking and inferring in our life."[74]

As is often pointed out, Wittgenstein uses imaginary examples not so much to show us what a different system would be like (after all he himself doesn't go very far with them) but as a heuristic tool to stress the contingency of our form of life and the limits beyond

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[72] *Ibid.* I-5.
[73] *Ibid.* I-4.
[74] *Ibid.* I-115, 116.

which we cannot (meaningfully) go.[75] Indeed, when he wants to talk of an alien form of life he doesn't talk of different, exotic cultures but makes up fictitious ones. In the *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics* (VII-22) Wittgenstein writes, "The limits of empiricism are not assumptions unguaranteed, or intuitively known to be correct: they are ways in which we make comparisons and in which we act". A good example of this is the one of a tribe that sells wood at a price proportionate to the area that the wood would cover if stacked.[76] Wittgenstein asks whether it is correct to sell wood that way and how we would go about convincing these people that our way is better. As Barry Stroud discusses at length, this example seems intelligible in the beginning, looking like an invitation to conventionalism.[77] But, in fact, if we try to really imagine such a method of

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[75] For example by Jonathan Lear and Lynn Baker. In page 230 of the *Philosophical Investigations*, he writes:

"If the formation of concepts can be explained by facts of nature, should we not be interested, not in grammar, but rather in that in nature which is the basis of grammar?—Our interest certainly includes the correspondence between concepts and very general facts of nature. (Such facts as mostly do not strike us because of their generality). But our interest does not fall back upon these possible causes of the formation of concepts; we are not doing natural science; nor yet natural history—since we can also invent fictitious natural history for our purposes.

I am not saying: if such-and-such facts of nature were different people would have different concepts (in the sense of a hypothesis). But: if anyone believes that certain concepts are absolutely the correct ones, and that having different ones would mean not realizing something that we realize—then let him imagine certain very general facts of nature to be different from what we are used to, and the formation of concepts different from the usual ones will become intelligible to him.

Compare a concept with a style of painting. For is even our style of painting arbitrary? Can we choose one at pleasure? (The Egyptian, for instance.) Is it a mere question of pleasing and ugly?" (italics mine).

[76] *Ibid.* I-143-149

[77] Stroud, (1965). Stroud's comments in this example are not an objection to Wittgenstein as Adler seems to think (pp.113-114, 121, 130), but an (explicit) analysis of Wittgenstein's own often cryptic thoughts.(*RFM*, III-24, *PI*, 497, *OC*, 619, *PI*, II, p.230) Oswald Hanfling (1989) also seems to think that this example is put forward as a real alternative for us. (p.131) I think it is clear that Wittgenstein doesn't put forward these thought experiments as real possibilities. The inexplicitness in his examples is not meant to make them more believable as Adler thinks. Its aim is twofold: 1) to point to the fact that though we think we can imagine certain situations at first glance, that doesn't mean that we can really imagine them. (see *Zettel*, 250) And 2) that it is possible that there are some practices we can't make sense of and some possibilities we are

selling wood we get more questions than answers. Stroud tries to explore what this tribe would have to be like and points out that these people would have to believe that the quantity and the size of an object changes if its position changes, they would have to have a conception of the relation between quantity and weight very different from ours and the meaning of the words (as well as the concepts) "more" and "less" must be very different for them than they are for us. And the list of questions can go on. So it seems that in trying to really imagine what such a scenario would be like we "leave more and more of our familiar world" behind.

Even if we can assert "I imagine a tribe that sells wood..." we can't truly understand how that is possible. Their whole conceptual framework must be different. To use Wittgenstein's language, if the part of the nest is so radically different, the whole must be knitted in a very different way. And if it is, we are unable to completely imagine what such a conceptual framework would be like, although we can perhaps extrapolate parts of it. Wittgenstein is not a conventionalist, though, because he doesn't see the possibility of selling wood this way or of saying that "12×12=157" as empirically open to us.[78] Yet it is a contingent fact that we share the inclinations, sensibilities and responses that we do, so have the practices we do. Of course, the only language we have for describing hypothetical alternatives is ours. So if it is strange to talk of nonsensical situations with words that we all understand, forgive me, for I am feeding the illusion that we are conceptually closer to them than we are. In distinguishing our form of life from others I unavoidably use our concepts and notations, but this doesn't communicate concepts radically different from ours. So I constantly arrive close to absurdity, for as

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unaware of. But, even more than that, that not everything that we can describe without contradiction is possible for us.

[78] *PI*, II, p.230.

Wittgenstein points out, since we cannot even glimpse what is beyond, we cannot say that it will be different from what we have. As far as we can understand a form of life, it is not different. There are no alternatives but nonsense beyond our norms of description. Other conceptual frameworks can exist but their concepts would be unintelligible to us: what our grammatical rules exclude as impermissible is delineated by a conceptual limitation, not an empirical one. As Bernard Williams says, "The imagined alternatives are not alternatives *to* us; they are alternatives *for* us, markers of how far we might go and still remain within our world—a world leaving which would not mean that we saw something different, but just that we ceased to see."[79]

Jonathan Lear gives us an example of what he takes to be a people with a deviant arithmetic.[80] The tribe in his example doesn't accept (though to some extent they claim to grasp) transfinite arithmetic. The chief of the tribe is arguing with Lear's interlocutor about how two lives that have extended infinitely in the past differ in time lived when one life ends today and the other eighty years from now. The Cantorian here will claim that the amount of time lived is infinite in both cases and so equal. But the chief insists that if you live eighty years longer your life span is longer than someone who dies today. However, I don't think that this is an example of what Lear means it to be. Because what he is really describing is not a tribe that has an alternative arithmetic, but one that has part of our arithmetic but not all. It seems that they share with us ordinary finite arithmetic but do not share our intuitions (or Cantor's intuitions) about the properties of transfinite numbers. And this example is an easy one to come up with because transfinite mathematics violates our ordinary intuitions. After all, the reaction of the chief of Lear's

[79] (1981), p.160.
[80] (1983), pp.49-55.

tribe is a usual reaction of people who first become acquainted with transfinite arithmetic: namely, that if we add a finite number to an infinite number then surely we *must* get a bigger number than the initial infinite number! But we still don't have an example of an alternative arithmetic, which would be what is needed against Wittgenstein 's position. What we have is still something we understand and, as such, something which is not really different, just, at most, more limited than what we have (as is the case with Euclidean geometry[81] or as Newtonian physics turned out to be a limiting case incorporated in Einstein's physics).

Our other certainties function like basic mathematical propositions. Judgements like "this is a hand" in a Moore-like setting are not like empirical judgements. If you doubt that you have a hand in demonstrative contexts, referring to your own hand and when no evidence against it is present you haven't mastered our language. Similarly, saying you doubt "2+2=4" is a sign that you haven't mastered a technique. The difference in the two cases is that the "official stamp of incontestability" which characterizes mathematical propositions is not shared so obviously with judgements about one's hands.[82]

It is in this sense that Wittgenstein says that framework judgements and mathematical propositions resemble each other. There is nothing inherently necessary about them. They are direct applications of fundamental rules but there are no rules that are necessary per se. They carry the only necessity possible in these cases; that given what we feel to be natural, appropriate, similar and so forth, there is no other way for us

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[81] Euclidean geometry was formed for a particular sort of application in terms of familiar spatial relations in our everyday world, it is a "flat geometry". Non-Euclidean geometry on the other hand, is connected to curved space. (see Greene, pp.64-65)

[82] *OC*, 657. This is possibly the case because we are taught mathematics in school "officially" so to speak, but we are not taught the same way that "this is a hand".

to conceive of them. Our norms of description are based on our form of life and practices, and these are contingent. But our norms of description are intimately connected to it. As Stroud writes: "...we do not decide to accept [forms of life] or reject them at all, any more than we decide to be human as opposed to trees. To ask whether our human practices or forms of life are 'correct' or 'justified' is to ask whether we are 'correct' or 'justified' in being the sort of things we are."[83]

E. Truth and Relativism (again)

So where does all this leave us with other cultures that differ in fundamental beliefs about the world? Are there better and worst language-games?

If a language game within our form of life is similar enough to ours we can understand it and fruitfully interact with it. Given that we belong to the same species there will always be some common ground and we will not find ourselves in the situation that we would be in if we came across a talking lion.[84] There Wittgenstein tells us we wouldn't understand because we don't share a form of life with it. With another human being though some kind of communication can be established. "The common behaviour of mankind is the system of reference by means of which we interpret an unknown language".[85] The common behaviour, an expression of a shared form of life, allows us to make comparisons where appropriate.[86]

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[83] Stroud (1965), p.495.
[84] *PI*,223 and similar to it *OC*. 540. It would have been a better example if Wittgenstein had chosen a mollusk or a virus that are different from us in radical ways to make his point. With the lion there are quite a few points of contact (and vast dissimilarities): we are both mammals, carnivores, predators, we both walk on legs, use a mouth with teeth to eat, our eyes are positioned in a similar way etc.
[85] *PI*, 206.
[86] *OC*, 286.

It must be stressed again that even though certainty presupposes a community, this doesn't mean that certainty is merely a matter of community agreement. First, we are hemmed in by nature and science.[87] If certain concepts create problems in our practices we will eventually change them. If we were to find out that cats were artifacts designed by Martians, the criteria for "cat" would change, thus (partially) changing the meaning of the word "cat" too. So though we can only describe the world using our grammar, our grammar can (and does) change.[88] Wittgenstein is not putting forward a form of (linguistic) idealism.[89] He insists that nature constrains our language-games. "Indeed, doesn't it seem obvious that the possibility of a language-game is conditioned by certain facts?"[90] The fact that the kinds of beings we are and thus that our form of life to a very large extent constrains our relationship to the world doesn't mean that the world is a representation of our imposed thought. Empirical propositions are verified or falsified by the way things are independently of how we say they are. Our linguistic practice doesn't determine what is true or false, but only what empirical statements we can meaningfully make.[91] So though the only standards available to us for interpreting reality are ours, and though we can only relate to the world through our form of life, this doesn't in any way imply that reality, the world, is somehow dependent on us.[92] Yes, in

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[87] *Ibid.* 298,608.

[88] To try to establish the accuracy of the framework we would have to compare it to itself, which is blatantly circular. This dynamic of language-game and world picture changes (which is how nature "makes herself audible") is all there is to the accuracy of norms of description. Asking what is beyond this Wittgenstein tells us, is asking for nothing at all. (*OC*, 298,608)

[89] We see Bernard Williams(1981) attributing to Wittgenstein a mild idealism, pp.160 ff.

[90] *OC*, 617.

[91] See *PI*, 241 quoted above. Wittgenstein is concerned with the conditions that make our utterances meaningful. The agreement he is exploring is about what sentences mean, not about what makes them true—that is up to the world.

[92] Heidegger, making the same point, says "World is essentially disclosed *with the being* of Da-sein".(*Being and Time*, p.188) Note that he says it is "disclosed", not "constructed" by us, and we

order to use concepts of objects existing independently of us, we need a practice that governs their meaningful use. But that doesn't mean that the objects of which we have concepts depend on our practice at all. Nowhere do we see in Wittgenstein the idea that chairs, tables and cars are dependent on us and our concepts—indeed, it is part of our language-games themselves that to deny this is wrong, it is part of our form of life that the world and its objects exist independently from us.[93]

Wittgenstein writes: "Well, if everything speaks for an hypothesis and nothing against it—is it then certainly true? One may designate it as such.—But does it agree with reality, with the facts? With this question you are already going around in a circle."[94] We can say that something is true in virtue of its according with the facts. We can say, for instance, that "the library is open today" because it is a fact that the library *is* open today. But that is just a rule we have for empirical propositions: we call a proposition true if we also call it a fact—calling something a fact is a fancy way of calling it true.[95] We should be cautious about saying the same thing about certainties, though. You cannot say that "2+2=4" in virtue of the fact that 2+2=4 without opening the door to philosophical confusion. For what is the fact to which 2+2=4 corresponds? Isn't the answer to this some kind of Platonism? I think Wittgenstein would say that there is no theory that will reduce truth to some two-place predicate or convenient motto

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see the same thought in Gadamer (1976): "The agreement about things that takes place in language means neither a priority of things nor a priority of the human mind."(p.78)

[93]The fact that this is part of our form of life and thus our language-games is shown in what is a meaningful use of language and what is not. Lynn Baker(1984) discusses this point and Hacker agrees, (1976) p.177.

[94]*OC*, 191.

[95] This is Hacker's point—the connection between rules and truth is made very clearly by Hacker and I rely on his discussion here. However, according to Hacker to call something true is to affirm it like we would affirm rules in a game. I disagree—to call something true is to accept it similarly to the way we would accept a move in the game that is in accordance with its rules.

connecting judgements to facts. The only generalization we can make is that to call something true is to be willing to assert it, but assertion has many different functions. His big point is that the notion of truth can't be used to clarify philosophical problems or sort assertions into different categories. For anything we are willing to assert, whatever its category, we will be willing to call true. He is denying the metaphysical realist any metatheoretical standpoint from which he can argue that adding "is true" after a proposition is something to base a metaphysical thesis on. This doesn't mean that the difference between truth and falsity is abolished. He is not denying that when we assert a proposition its truth or falsity depends on a reality independent of us. We can say what circumstances justify an assertion: you are justified in asserting p if and only if p. But this translates differently for different assertions. What he is urging us is not to see "agreeing with reality" as a relationship of a proposition to something that makes it true. It can't establish the status of a proposition, because a fact is not something in the world by which our propositions are made true. As he says, we can point out a fact but we cannot point to a fact as we would to an object.[96]

A normal empirical proposition can be true or false. We can ascribe truth or falsity to "the library is open today" for there is space within our language-games for us to decide for or against it.[97] On the other hand, the certainties we are discussing are an intrinsic part of the method of our practices. Wittgenstein doesn't want to call them true, but they can be called true in a special sense, "only inasmuch as [they are] an unmoving

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[96]See *Philosophical Remarks*, 4 ff. This is not to say that "p is true" is the same as "p is assertible". As Williams (1986) points out, since saying "p is true" is just like saying "p", only if p says "p is assertible" would "p is true" mean "p is assertible".

[97] *OC*, 200

foundation of language-games."[98] To say they are true is to be willing to affirm them and accept them as we would accept a rule-governed move in a game.[99] This is why Wittgenstein says "The *truth* of my statements is the test of my *understanding* of those statements".[100] He is not denying that "2+2=4" or "this is a hand" is true. He is telling us is not to see "p is true" as a metaphysical claim or the notion of truth as a metaphysical notion. Yet, though "true" is content redundant the concept of truth is not redundant. For even though "x is true" very often can be replaced by asserting "x", sometimes this is not possible (e.g. "Every word written in the Bible is true"). What is important is not to confuse the usefulness and importance of the concept of truth with its having a specific content.[101]

Are then certainties "true by definition"? Well, if a definition is a rule, the rule did not come prior to our agreement in judgements and it is not the *reason* we agree (or the reason the rule is "true"). No, the rule could be formulated (and applied) because we agree in our form of life, because "this is simply what we do." So if by "by definition" we mean "prior convention" the answer is no. For, as Hacker points out, in order for something to be true because of a convention it must be made true by the fact that "there is a convention that p is true".[102] But if by saying that it is true by definition we are pointing to the contingency of our framework judgements (as opposed to some metaphysical necessity) there is no harm in that. It is a contingent fact that our concepts are the ones they are, but this doesn't mean that *we* have a choice.

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[98] *Ibid.* 403. See also 83.
[99] *PI*, 136.
[100] *OC*, 80, see also 81.
[101] *Ibid.* 191, 199, 215.
[102] See Hacker (1996) p.262. The other way a proposition can be true by convention is in virtue of the meaning of its constituent parts, which, as I argued in chapter 2, does not apply to certainties.

To avoid confusion we should remember that framework judgements look like empirical judgements because: 1) we call them true. Yes, Wittgenstein says, they are on the side of truth, but that tells us little. For truth in these cases is used in the way in which we affirm that a move is in accordance with the rules of a game, e.g. it is true that the king in chess can move only one square at a time in any direction. The concept of truth does not distinguish rule-truths from ordinary empirical ones. "The king can move only one square" is true iff the king can move only one square. In form this is just like "'The library is open today' is true iff the library is open today". But if there is any reason to call certainties true, it is to stress that we don't question them. After all, it would be contrary to Wittgenstein's non-revisionism to insist that we cannot call certainties true.

And 2) initially it seems that we can imagine situations where they could have been false, just as we can imagine falsity for an empirical proposition (for example in the med. school, if there was a monkey's foot next to the hand and the student picked that up). But if "this" turned out not to be a "hand" either the regularities of the world would have to have changed or we mean something different by "hand" than we usually do. When an empirical proposition turns out to be false nothing like this happens, whereas core propositions of the world picture cannot just turn out to be false. When we try to describe a supposed alternative conceptual framework we reach a conceptual barrier, and we confuse this sort of unalterability with the unalterability of ordinary facts (for instance when we say that it is a fact that days are shorter in winter and there is nothing anyone can do about that).

Yet, I said that Wittgenstein's isn't a relativist because even though he is a pluralist in the sense that there is no one "True" way of describing things, he is not saying that anything goes.

> "If you say there are various systems of ethics you are not saying they are equally right. That means nothing. Just as it would have no meaning to say that each was right from his own standpoint. That could only mean that each judges as he does." (*Discussions*, 101)

Given his redundancy account of truth,[103] he denies any metaphysical significance in saying that "p is true"—this is nothing more than saying that "p". This is where Wittgenstein separates himself from a relativist. The relativist says that all opinions and points of view have an equal status. [104] Wittgenstein denies this. To say that something is true in this language-game but false in another is to make the skeptic's mistake of presuming to take a stance cut off from any context. To say that a form of life is conventional implies that we can step out of it, something that Wittgenstein denies. There are no two positions, one from which we judge that p and another one from which we "see" that the judgement p corresponds to the fact that p- to point to the fact that p is already to judge that p.

Oswald Hanfling[105] as well as Thomas Morawetz misinterpret remark 286 of *On Certainty*: "...We say: these people do not know a lot that we know. And, let them be never so sure of their belief-they are wrong and we know it. If we compare our system of knowledge with theirs then theirs is evidently the poorer one by far." They attribute to Wittgenstein the view that the conceptual framework of primitive people was wrong and poorer than ours. Morawetz writes, (and Hanfling quotes him approvingly):

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[103] I use the term "minimalist" in the sense that Wittgenstein minimizes the philosophical/ metaphysical weight.
[104] *OC*, 2, 323.
[105] (1989), pp. 171-174. Hanfling refers to Morawetz when discussing this.

> "I call him primitive because I have resources that are unfamiliar to him and because, let us suppose, he has no resources that are unfamiliar to me....we can represent their beliefs and procedures to ourselves, but they cannot apprehend our own."[106]

Hanfling goes as far as to say that according to Wittgenstein a modern scientist can understand older systems and judge them to be wrong, but a scientist belonging to an older framework could not judge ours.[107] What Wittgenstein is saying here is that we make value judgements and we do say that other frameworks are wrong or that primitive people didn't know. He doesn't object to this. But to the extent that we do understand a different language-game our preference for our own cannot be rationally justified by criteria external to both those language-games.[108] Yet he doesn't want to call different language-games stupid, absurd or superstitious—after all, if there is one thing that we learn from *On Certainty* it is that we can be justified in holding beliefs that we are unable to justify.

In paragraph 612 of *On Certainty* he writes, "I said I would 'combat' the other man,--but wouldn't I give him *reasons*? Certainly; but how far do they go? At the end of reasons comes *persuasion.* (Think what happens when missionaries convert natives.)"[109] He uses the word "combat" another language-game and in paragraph 605 he says that it is absurd to rely on ordeal by fire to reach a verdict.[110] We can tell the native who denies the importance and truth of medicine that he is wrong but if he insists that if he uses

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[106](1988), p.128, 131. See generally pp. 123ff. See also Rorty (1979) p.367 for a similar view.
[107] Hanfling, p.174.
[108]This is very different from encountering a different form of life where the very possibility of communication could very well be impossible. The usual connection of the rationality of holding a judgement with its epistemological justification does not hold here, for prior to the fixing of concepts and the holding fast of certain judgements, epistemic considerations such as justification do not apply. Just as a method of measurement comes prior to statements about how much something measures, so grammar comes prior to the describing of reality by means of grammar.
[109] Note here that he says "At the end of *reasons* comes persuasion" (italics mine) and not "At the end of reason comes persuasion".
[110] See also *OC*, 286.

medicine he will be compromising valuable principles of his, what can we say?[111] How can we prove that his values are inferior to ours? We can show him that he cannot have certain results, but if he doesn't want them, what can we do? At some point, reasons come to an end and all we are left with is persuasion. Wittgenstein is not denying comparison between language-games. We can always compare things but the point is that *we* provide the framework of comparison.[112] Language-games do not bear on themselves the marks that make them similar. One is a relativist when one says that both western medicine and voodoo are good. The question here is: good as regards what? Just like the skeptic, the relativist implies that we can step back from our practices and compare them given an absolute, disconnected point if view. In this case the burden is on the relativist to show what a disconnected standpoint is or on the skeptic to show what an objective value is.

This line of thinking, though, doesn't necessarily lead to relativism. We get relativism when we aspire to a Cartesian standard of rationality.[113] The Cartesian standard of certainty and knowledge, though, is itself part of a picture—the rationalist one which rests on certain presuppositions (on the nature of doubt, certainty, knowledge, truth) and in this sense, I suppose, it is relative but not relativistic. As I said, the idea that Wittgenstein is trying to undercut is that either we have absolute standards and foundations (linguistic or non-linguistic) or we are left with nothing but irrationality. In other words, just because justification doesn't conform to the rationalist standards, doesn't mean that we are left with no epistemic authority. We are only lead to this if we

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[111] This line of thinking is the result of countless email-discussions with professor Kindi.
[112] *CO.* 609.
[113] It seems that the Cartesian/ foundationalist picture imposes on us presuppositions that not only, as I argued in chapter 4, unavoidably lead to skepticism but it also imposes on us the burden of epistemic guilt if we try to go another way!

see lack of reasons and doubt going hand in hand. But Wittgenstein denies this. In certain cases, when there are no reasons doubt is removed by our form of life.

Ultimately, the fact that we can give no explanation of our form of life apart from "this is how we do it" does not mean that it is illegitimate or optional in any way. Our inability to justify our form of life is a logical fact: we cannot justify it because it is what allows to us make comparisons and give justification in the first place. So if we realize that a Cartesian standard is untenable, then relativism loses its bite. Wittgenstein is not doing away with normativity, he is only trying to give us a sense of how far normativity (and our judgments) can go. A form of life is not explanatory, it is what makes explanations possible and no language-game or conceptual framework has the exclusive right to be called True, or the Right one, or Rational.

Rorty in *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* attributes to Wittgenstein a form of pragmatism that he supposedly shares with Dewey and James. Wittgenstein is held to maintain that,

> "...even when we have justified true belief about everything we want to know, we may have no more than conformity to the norms of the day..."

and that he retains

> "...the relativist sense that the latest vocabulary, borrowed from the latest scientific achievement, may not express privileged representations of essences, but be just another of the potential infinity of vocabularies in which the world can be described."[114]

Rorty is right that for Wittgenstein there is no privileged representation of essences. But he is wrong in suggesting that according to Wittgenstein vocabularies (and thus

[114] Rorty (1979), p.367. Also (1989), pp.21, 24. Tsinorema (in Nicolacopoulos, 1990) points out this passage and her concern with it—my discussion takes off from hers. In fact, the "solidarity" that Rorty talks about as "the shared beliefs of a particular collection of human beings" is what Wittgenstein calls "agreement in opinions" which is clearly distinguished form "agreement in form of life". This agreement in opinions is only possible, according to Wittgenstein, because we share a form of life, because we find ourselves agreeing in many judgements. (for more on Rorty's discussion see Hill (1997))

conceptual frameworks) are optional and chosen because of convenience. Nowhere in Wittgenstein do I see the idea that we can come up with different vocabularies to describe the world. Indeed he insists the opposite: language arises and develops from "primitive reactions" not from thinking.[115] Our language-games, and thus our vocabularies are constrained by our form of life and Wittgenstein goes to great pains to show that we cannot imagine forms of life (and consequently conceptual frameworks) radically different from ours. The fact that he does this shows that he didn't think about forms of life relativistically and that the vocabularies that we can use to describe the world are limited. Even though Wittgenstein speaks of forms of life in the plural once in *PI*, 226 I think that at bottom he takes the human community at large to share a form of life and a core conceptual framework.[116] In fact Rorty's idea that vocabularies are chosen for convenience should warn us against a misunderstanding that Wittgenstein explicitly points out: that experience is the ground for our judging the way we do. Experience is interpreted through our norms of description, so it cannot be an independent standard by which to judge our norms.[117] I don't think Wittgenstein is denying the platitude that I have two hands is something I learned empirically. He is saying that it is not experience that has taught us to accept certain judgements without grounds. No, it is part of grammar that certain procedures are enough to establish certain claims. Success in judging is determined within a method of judgement and the standards it sets so it cannot

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[115] *Zettel*, 541 (and 543).

[116] See *PI*, 25, 185, 284, part II p.174 and *Zettel*, 320.

[117] Though we could compare them in respects other than their correctness, for instance in terms of their simplicity or success given a commonly accepted goal. This also applies to the native above who denies the importance of medicine—exactly because we share a form of life, we will find other things based on which to compare our methods.

be the reason for which we adopt a method of judging.[118] The deeper point is that certain utterances which look like empirical judgements are really the setting up of conceptual antecedents.

Rorty is also wrong in suggesting that for Wittgenstein one way of talking is as good as any other, depending on the function we use it to perform. True enough, Wittgenstein is trying to abolish the stark contrast between judging and acting but not in order to reduce truth and knowledge to dependence on instrumental ends.[119] He appeals to praxis to show that the problem of infinite regress in justification is unreal and certainly not to say that we choose our form of life, or to advocate any form of relativism. Yes, he says that "what people accept as justification—is shewn by how they think and live"[120] but he doesn't say that it is *defined* that way. Action does not define reason but performing well is a sign of rationality. This way, justification and rationality are not reduced to what people customarily do. What is *shown* by the way people think and live

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[118] *OC*, 130-131. See Hacker (1972), p.169.

[119] Rorty, (1979) p.11. *RFM*, I-4. Wittgenstein mentions pragmatism five times in his work. In *On Certainty* it pops up when he talks of Moore's propositions and he says: "So I am trying to say something that sounds like pragmatism. Here I am being thwarted by a kind of *Weltanschauung*." (422) However he is not putting forward a Jamesian theory of truth. I think he wouldn't object to the part of James' idea that says that if something is true then it is useful. In an unpublished notebook of 1929 (quoted in Bogen, pp.137-138—maybe manuscript 106 or 107) he writes, "If I say 'there is a chair', this propositions gives rise to a series of expectations. I believe that if I went up to it I could feel it, and that I could sit on the chair. I believe it is made out of wood, and expect it to have a certain hardness, inertia, etc. When certain of these expectations turn out to be mistaken, I take this as proof that there is no chair there. Here one sees what leads to the pragmatic account of truth and falsity. The proposition is true so long as it proves useful to me." Here Wittgenstein notes the connection between the usefulness of what we can infer from a proposition and its truth value. However, when it comes to the part of James' idea that if something is useful then it is true, then Wittgenstein parts company with him. Something can be useful but false. If I win the Nobel prize for a false theory, the theory might be useful to me but it remains false nonetheless. (See *AWL*, 142 and *RPP*, I.266) He holds the same for mathematics. Mathematics is very useful but that is not why we call it true. A mathematical proposition is called true if it is part of a practice—if it is arrived at through a proof or is a basic ungrounded proposition.

[120] *PI*, 325.

is that there is a normativity in the way we think and live, in our practices. This normativity shows that what we accept as justification does not depend solely on what we happen to do.[121]

Let's look at the notion of a conceptual scheme. When we talk of a conceptual scheme we are usually making the distinction between a framework of description and the particular descriptions that we make using that framework. There are different frameworks that provide us with an apparatus for making judgements that are different from the actual judgements we make using that apparatus: the xyz coordinate system, the metric system of measurement, the geometrical coordinate system etc. One (popular) way of describing such a framework is saying that it is a system of predicates (red, blue, solid, round, close to, etc.) accompanied by a domain of physical objects that can be so described ("the soccer ball is round", "the bottle of sparkling water is solid", "roses are red") and that is independent of the framework in the sense that adopting a framework/working with a system of predicates doesn't commit us to saying that the world must be in one way or another.[122] A point often brought up in discussion about conceptual frameworks is that there can be different systems of predicates we can choose from (and some will go as far as to say that choice of conceptual frameworks is arbitrary). The relativist will say here that different frameworks that cannot be mapped on to ours are real possibilities and equally good.

In order to avoid misunderstandings it is well to address here Davidson's article "On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme", which aims to show that relativism of

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[121] This point made and elaborated extensively by Tsinorema pp. 409-410.

[122] If you deny this scheme/content distinction, that is, if you deny that the world is waiting, so to speak, to organize our experiences, you must see the world as providing the content of your thoughts (as Davidson does) or as constraining it in some way (as Wittgenstein does).

conceptual schemes is incoherent. Though Davidson shares with Wittgenstein the idea that genuine alternative conceptual schemes are unthinkable, I don't think that his criticism of the notion of a conceptual scheme (that is that talk of conceptual schemes is incoherent and contradictory) can be applied to the notion of a form of life.

Davidson associates conceptual schemes with sets of intertranslatable languages and so different conceptual schemes are languages that are not intertranslatable.[123] He argues that it is very difficult (if not impossible) to make sense of languages that are not intertranslatable since we aren't able to judge that they are languages or that the person using them has beliefs or concepts. So the very idea of a conceptual scheme is trivial, and of variation of schemes is contradictory because we are not even in the position of being able to see a conceptual scheme different than ours. Now we said that a form of life can be seen as the shared patterns of action (and reaction) that we find ourselves agreeing in which are reflected in the unmoving, core certainties of our world picture. So given what Davidson takes conceptual schemes to be, I think we can say that the pragmatic twin of conceptual relativism is form-of-life relativism (since within the same form of life there will always the "common behaviour of mankind" to go with). As we

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[123] Davidson, p.131. "We may identify conceptual schemes with languages, then, or better...sets of intertranslatable languages." Note that Quine identifies translating with understanding. For Wittgenstein, understanding is different from translating—the former is an ability that allows us to carry out activities like translating.(see *PG*, 47, *PI*, 198) Quine tells us that the indeterminacy of translation from one language to another (and also in the same language) is a fact we have to live with, for there is no one-to-one correspondence between words and objects. Wittgenstein would agree that there is no one-to-one correspondence. Hence, what he says about being possible only against the background of a language-game, since what is ostended can be multiply interpreted. But that is as far as he would go. Because in translation, Wittgenstein would remind us, we don't just have the concepts of the native to go on (as Quine seems to assume: those of negation, assent, questions and answers, pointing etc.) but also the common behaviour of mankind that is an invaluable tool to any understanding and translating. After all, you can say what you want but your actions can serve as answers to our questions as well. Also, Wittgenstein did not say that "we can not translate it" *means* "it is not language". What he says is that if we cannot translate it we wouldn't *call* it a language but this should not be understood as just a point about words.

saw Rorty accuses Wittgenstein of being a relativist and if Davidson (and Rorty) is right that would mean Wittgenstein is incoherent.[124]

I have argued two things: 1) that what we can say about other forms of life is limited by our inability to imagine what such a thing would be like. Our form of life is not chosen and cannot be superseded. And 2) that consequently Wittgenstein did not think relativistically about forms of life or subscribe to the Davidsonian or Rortian notion of conceptual relativism.

Davidson makes two further points against the intelligibility of the idea of a conceptual scheme.[125] The first point is that in order to have different conceptual schemes we need the notion of an "uninterpreted content",[126] of a reality independent of us and our attributions. Since we can't make sense of that, the idea of a conceptual scheme is incoherent. I don't think this argument is effective against the notion of a form of life, for in order to apply any concept (including that of an "uninterpreted content") there must first be a form of life (not the other way around) in the background of which our words and concepts get their meaning.

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[124] This point and the structure of this argument are taken from lecture notes from Lynn Baker's seminar on Wittgenstein's philosophy of language at UMASS Amherst in the fall'96—I follow her line of thought directly (see also Baker (1994)). The seminar introduced me to the form of life in Wittgenstein's later work.

[125] Davidson refers to Kuhn when discussing the difficulties of the notion of a conceptual scheme. I am not in a position to evaluate Kuhn's position, but Kuhn tells us that different paradigms are incommensurable. What amazes me is that he seems to be pretty good in going back and forth in the description of different frameworks and, while doing this, displays an admirable knowledge of the very frameworks that he tells us are incommensurable to ours! Also referring back to the hierarchy of certainties discussed in chapter 2 we see that identifying a world picture with Kuhnian paradigms is misleading. Because, as I discussed in relation to Quine also, though there are certainties that we hold fast that can change (and even this is not really a clear case of disconfirmation à la Kuhn), not all certainties can be changed to be replaced by another "paradigm."

[126] Davidson, p.133.

Davidson's second point is that if there aren't different conceptual schemes then the very idea of a conceptual scheme itself doesn't make sense. That is, if we can't detect any difference between conceptual schemes, there is no reason for saying or believing that different conceptual schemes exist in the first place.[127] Note that Davidson says there is an incoherence in the idea of a conceptual scheme because there is no position from which to judge similarity or difference, "so there is no chance that someone can take up a vantage point for comparing conceptual schemes by temporarily shedding his own."[128] Wittgenstein also excludes such a move (for there is no choice in forms of life). But while Davidson's conceptual schemes lead to incoherence no such plight need befall Wittgenstein. For the reason that the idea of a conceptual scheme encounters the problems Davidson spells out is that it relies on the distinction between scheme and content. But the notion of a form of life does not depend on this distinction. Wittgenstein, like Davidson after him, questions the pristine distinctness of scheme and content by questioning (among other things) whether the judgements we (ought to) attribute to someone are independent of the predicates we say he uses to make them. For example, I say: "When X says 'bodo' he means 'building' and when he says 'Bow-wow' he means 'dog'", and then X says "Bodo is bow-wow". Will I then say with no hesitation "Ah, so X believes buildings are dogs"? It seems that the sensible thing would be to reconsider what predicates he may be using. For depending on the predicates I take him to be using the beliefs I will attribute to him will vary. And because of our common form of life (and charity of course!) there are certain judgements that I will (strongly)

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[127] "...we have found no intelligible basis on which it can be said that schemes are different...if we cannot intelligibly say that schemes are different, neither can we intelligibly say that they are one" (*Ibid.* p.143)

[128] *Ibid.*p.131.

resist attributing to him. Our form of life constrains not only the means by which we describe the world, but also the bounds of sense within which our descriptions can be made. And this puts Wittgenstein in the enviable position of having his cake and eating it too: the notion of an uninterpreted content and form of life relativism may be incoherent (so much so that Wittgenstein, unlike Davidson, resists talking about something that is conceptually incoherent) but the notion of a form of life need not be.

So Wittgenstein is not denying the possibility of comparison or criticism within the same form of life. He is denying that every comparison is valid (or possible) and that all criticism is appropriate.[129] He is not denying normativity, he is just trying to give us a feeling of its appropriate scope. What Wittgenstein would deny is that we could have a fundamentally different *core* world picture. This case is inconceivable and the purported conceptual framework it refers (and thus the form of life it arises from) to is beyond our understanding. Something would be conceivable in this sense if we could imagine it if we stretched our concepts as far as we could without changing their content—a favourite pastime of science fiction writers. As long as we can do this, Wittgenstein tells us, the form of life imagined is still ours. To the extent that the differences encountered are differences in opinions within the background of a common form of life, interests and sensibilities nothing prevents us from criticizing them, comparing them to ours (seeing our shortcomings), or even "combating" them—after all, think of how critical Wittgenstein himself was of the language-game of philosophy! The fear in the relativist picture is that if we leave our judgements ungrounded then they are irrational and we have no good reason to hold them. But this is exactly what Wittgenstein was arguing against: the fact that our certainties are ungrounded doesn't mean they are irrational—for

[129] *OC*, 611.

talk of rationality and irrationality can take place only after a (our) world picture is in place.

F. Has Wittgenstein Succeeded?

Does Wittgenstein succeed in what he aims to do? I think the answer is yes, for he is trying to give us an overview of the way our cognitive lives are structured. Through this he wants to show that Moore's reply to the skeptic fails just as the skeptic fails in trying to challenge the validity of our epistemic lives. Both Moore's and the skeptic's positions rely on the idea that what grounds knowledge are beliefs in the truth of certain special propositions. Wittgenstein offers us an alternative picture in which this basic assumption is challenged. He stresses the normative limits of doubt, the nature of the language-game of justification and the distinction between framework judgements and empirical ones, and tells us that what forms the basis of our knowledge, what lies in the background and makes possible our knowing things, is a common core of sensibilities and inclinations that form the way we find it natural to (re)act.

This is very different from trying to give us a theory of justification or a definition of knowledge. Wittgenstein never gives us a theory of knowledge. And when he talks of rules of grammar, he is not putting them forward as explanatory theories that will serve as premises for arguments he is going to provide (which he doesn't). As Hacker says he talks of them as the conclusions of his synoptic investigations into the use of concepts. Wittgenstein denies the whole discourse in which the skeptic raises his problematic. We saw his view about the mistakes of traditional epistemology. We saw how the picture of our epistemic lives he draws shows why certain terms are meaningful and why others

aren't and also, why some seem to be meaningful when they are not. In the badly lit room of philosophy, Wittgenstein lights the torch that shows us how the floor and the walls are structured. He has shown us that our undoubted acceptance of certain judgements in our discursive practices is not something we have much of a choice in. And it is not irrational for only within the context of this acceptance do the concepts of rationality and irrationality come into play (in this sense our holding certain judgements is part of our form of life). Not only has Wittgenstein succeeded in drawing an alternative picture of our epistemic lives, but also one that is more plausible and enlightening than the skeptical picture.

I don't think it is difficult to show that a new way of looking at things is needed. The impasses of traditional epistemology were discussed in the first chapter. It is obvious that the world resists the clear-cut distinctions and categories of the mold that philosophy has been trying to put it in. Concepts like "knowledge", "justification" and "doubt" are not as clearly circumscribed as philosophers want and they are none the worst for that. Wittgenstein succeeds in showing us how, if we resist the picture that imposes untenable standards on our concepts and if we actually look at how things work, we will see that our language is fine as it is.

Of course, the shift of perspective that Wittgenstein asks from us can hardly be expected to be greeted with enthusiasm. Many philosophers will react against it. Afraid that if they go along with Wittgenstein they will be compromising their livelihood, they think that they will have nothing to do if they accept what Wittgenstein is saying. But that could not be further from the truth, for there will always be concepts in need of clarification. There will always be philosophical misunderstandings that arise because of

our tendency to simplify the logic of our language leading us to confuse language-games, assume similarity in language-games where the important thing is the differences, believe that all language-games function in the same way and so on. And of course, as we discover new things, as our world changes, new conceptual connections will be made, new ways of doing things will be discovered and we will inevitably get into conceptual loops. We will then call upon the philosopher to clarify the confusion by identifying the problem—this is where the astute philosophical eye and understanding will be needed to show us what we probably just missed because it was always in front of our eyes.

In expounding and defending Wittgenstein I systematized his remarks in a way that he might not have been happy with and a way that might (mistakenly) give the impression that what Wittgenstein is offering is a theory. I hope to have shown that Wittgenstein has shown us why we get into the skeptical trap and what we need to be reminded of in order to steer clear from it. I hope to have added some clarity to Wittgenstein's remarks (unavoidably colouring them with my own paint) in the past six chapters so that now, really, we can go on.

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