On Coliva's Judgmental Hinges

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Annalisa Coliva's *Moore and Wittgenstein: Scepticism, Certainty, and Common Sense* does *On Certainty*, and Wittgenstein generally, a great service: it is the first in-depth study of Moore and Wittgenstein that places *On Certainty* within current epistemology. By this I mean, that it discusses its content, reception and repercussions in the technical terms of current epistemology and in the midst of current epistemologists. But it also manages to do this without losing the non-specialist reader to the often bewildering jargon of epistemology, and without viewing hinge certainty as an epistemic certainty. There is much that I agree with in Coliva's reading of *On Certainty*, but her view of hinges as both judgments and norms seems to me to go against the spirit and the letter of *On Certainty*. In what follows, I will be mainly concerned with that view, but will conclude by adding a few words on Coliva's rejection of foundationalism in *On Certainty*.

In her Introduction, Coliva refers to my classification of the main four 'readings' of *On Certainty*: the framework; the transcendental; the epistemic; and the therapeutic readings[1], and situates herself as a framework reader, but with a difference. She agrees that Wittgenstein takes hinge certainties to be rules rather than empirical propositions, and that they are therefore not truth-evaluable (2010, 6-7), but she finds this problematic: to say that 'Here is my hand' is neither true nor false when I'm holding it in front of my eyes in optimal cognitive circumstances sounds 'extremely weird', and some hinges, such as '"Nobody's ever been on the moon" appear false to us' (2010, 7-8). The weirdness felt by Coliva is reminiscent of Moore's discomfort upon hearing Wittgenstein's 'puzzling assertion that 3+3=6 (and *all* rules of deduction, similarly) is neither true nor false' (MWL 73, 80). But Wittgenstein himself warned that this would be 'apt to give an uncomfortable feeling' (MWL 73).

Wittgenstein's point in barring truth-evaluability from grammatical rules, of which mathematical ones[2], is to insist on their normative (as opposed to descriptive or evaluative) status: '"3+3=6" is a rule as to the way we are going to talk ... it is a preparation for a description' (MWL 72). So that grammatical rules (or as Coliva prefers to call them: meaning constitutive rules) can be said to be preparation for, or antecedent to judgment, rather than themselves (expressions/instances of) judgments. However – perhaps because of the 'weirdness' in saying that 'Here is my hand' is not true as I'm holding it in front of my eyes in

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[1] In Moyal-Sharrock and Brenner (2007).

[2] Of course, one can go on speaking of mathematical rules as true, as Wittgenstein often does, not wishing to interfere with the ordinary and mathematical uses of the term; but when he is making a perspicuous examination of the subject, of what the use of 'truth and falsity' entails, he either questions it: 'There must be something wrong in our idea of the truth and falsity of our arithmetical propositions' (RFM p. 90), or as Moore reports, outrightly rejects it (MWL 62, 73). He does this in order to combat the idea that arithmetical propositions correspond to an arithmetical *state of affairs*; for, as is clearly stated in OC: 'The reason why the use of the expression "true or false" has something misleading about it is that it is like saying "it tallies with the facts or it doesn't"' (OC 199).

optimal cognitive circumstances – Coliva believes hinges are *also* judgments[3]. In fact, on Coliva's view, hinges are 'meaning constitutive rules', 'rules of evidential significance', 'epistemic rules', as well as judgments that play a normative role; that is, they are also 'normative proposition[s]' towards which we have a 'propositional attitude of certainty which parallels the kind of attitude we bear to our most well-entrenched, yet fully explicit rules' (2010, 10-11). Now it seems to me that's a lot of tasks for a hinge.

Hinges as norms, and yet judgments

I will however limit my discussion to Coliva's view of hinges as *judgments* that play a *normative role*. This possibility – or a variant thereof – was contemplated by Wittgenstein. In the process of figuring out the nature of our basic certainties – those Moore-type sentences that look like judgements but act like rules – he asks: 'Is it that rule and empirical proposition merge into one another?' (OC 309). His answer to this question, however, is negative: it is not that rule and empirical proposition merge into one another, but that what looks like an empirical proposition is not always one:

> That is, we are interested in the fact that about certain empirical propositions no doubt can exist if making judgments is to be possible at all. Or again: I am inclined to believe that not everything that has the form of an empirical proposition *is* one. (OC 308)[4]

In order for us to *make judgments*, we need to be hinged on some certainties (the second sentence questions that these are *empirical propositions*) that are not open to doubt. Wittgenstein's answer to the possibility of a hybrid proposition-rule is that we are here misled by *form*; these seemingly empirical propositions about which no doubt can exist if making judgments is to be possible are in fact expressions of grammatical rules: they 'form the

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[3] Judgments, but not empirical propositions (2010, 6-7, 154). So that Coliva cannot be said to share Peter Hacker's view of hinges as unfalsifiable empirical propositions (1996, 217) – which, at best, takes us back to the notion of 'necessary propositions' that Wittgenstein took great pain to reform (see, e.g. MWL 61-65) – but she does find, as we shall see, an affinity between hinges and synthetic a priori judgements (2010, 82).

[4] To the questionable suitability of taking OC 308 to be answering OC 309 (as 308 obviously comes first), two replies can be made: a general and a specific one. The general one is that *On Certainty* should not be read as a single, continuous or linear argument, but as consisting of the repeated reformulations of a small number of questions, prompting the contemplation of various answers and the (repeated) adoption of some. This method of philosophizing is such that Wittgenstein does not allow previous answers to be retained or carried over to the next set of questioning; rather the same problems are surveyed again and again, afresh, naively, from different perspectives. This, incidentally, is not only true of the remarks that make up *On Certainty*, but of most of Wittgenstein's post-Tractarian work. In the Preface to *Philosophical Investigations*, he writes: 'The same or almost the same points were always being approached afresh from different directions, and new sketches made' (Preface, v). (On this, which I like to call Wittgenstein's 'perspectival' or 'cubistic' method of philosophising, see Moyal-Sharrock (2007), 3-6; see also Stroll on the 'broken text' (1994), 88-91). And so, the fact that Wittgenstein has answered a question does not stop him from asking it – or rather a reformulation of it – again. My specific reply to the objection is that the answer given by 308, as indeed the question asked at 309, are to be found again later, at OC 319: 'But wouldn't one have to say then, that there is no sharp boundary between propositions of logic and empirical propositions? The lack of sharpness *is* that of the boundary between *rule* and empirical proposition.' (OC 319; italics in the original). We now have two clear instances of Wittgenstein's replying negatively to the question of whether our basic certainties are instances of empirical propositions and rules merging into one another. There are more.

foundation of all operating with thoughts (with language)' (OC 401). But Coliva does not agree that hinges are *only* meaning constitutive rules; they are also judgments – and so, judgments that play a normative role:

> Now the interesting point is that these *are* judgments and yet they have a normative role and are exempt from doubt, just like rules, that can't be called into doubt, but only abandoned or revised. (2010, 80)

> ... 'Here is a hand' in the circumstances of Moore's proof remains a judgement and not the statement of a rule. Yet, that very judgement plays a normative role because it contributes to the determination of the meaning of the word 'hand' and allows us in its turn, to use that very object to give someone an ostensive definition of that term, which, in contrast, *is* an explicit formulation of a rule. (2010, 82)

Coliva takes Moore (in the circumstances of his proof) to be *judging* – indeed to be *rightly* judging – that 'Here is a hand' and, in so doing, agreeing with all English speakers who so judge, thereby contributing to the determination of meaning of 'hand' in English:

> So, 'Here is my/a hand', said in the circumstances of Moore's proof, *is* a judgment; yet that there be agreement in so judging – that is to say, that all of us, who can speak English, judge that there is a hand there – contributes to the determination of the meaning of 'hand' in English. (2010, 81)

> …to judge that here is a hand in circumstances such as Moore's is the right thing to do; it contributes to the determination of the meaning of the word 'hand'; and, finally, fixes what is beyond doubt and enquiry in that context. Hence, while being a judgement, it happens to play a normative role as opposed to a genuinely empirical one. (223n36)

It would seem then, on Coliva's view, that it is because all English speakers 'judge' that there is a hand there that 'hand' has the meaning it does in English. I am not sure what this means: is it because we all *see* the same object that we agree 'it' is there; in which case seeing would be judging? But judging what? That this is (what we call) a hand? But how can we judge that this is (what we call) a hand if we don't first know what a hand is – what it is we call a hand? Any judgment here would have to be made *on the basis of* our awareness of the kinds of object we call hands – that is *on the basis of* a grammatical rule. The judgment cannot at the same time be the enabling grammatical rule[5]. As Wittgenstein makes clear:

> If you measure a table with a yardstick, are you also measuring the yardstick? If you are measuring the yardstick, then you cannot be measuring the table at the same time. (RFM 74, p. 199)

Though of course, the same sentence can have different uses at different times:

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[5] Or – as Coliva would prefer it – a normative proposition that will then allow us to formulate a grammatical rule (2010, 82).

> Yet this is right: the same sentence [*Satz*] may get treated *at one time* as something to test by experience, *at another* as a rule of testing. (OC 98; my emphasis)

Yet Coliva takes hinges to be normative propositions *while also* being judgements:

> ... propositions – like 'This is my hand', 'There are physical objects', 'I am a human being', 'The earth is very old', etc. – *have a normative function, even when they are the content of a judgement* and not the explicit statement of a rule. (2010, 86; my emphasis)

> 'Here is my hand', 'The Earth has existed for a very long time', 'My name is AC' ... *play a normative role, while also being judgements.* (2010, 142; my emphasis)

Now if by 'while also', Coliva doesn't mean *at the same time*, then what we have here are *Doppelganger* – that is, identical sentences that have different uses, and therefore statuses – not hinges that are, *qua* hinges**,** both judgment and rule (or norm). But this is not what she seems to be saying.

Before going on, I want to stress that there is no mistaking the kind of judgment Coliva is talking about here: it is *bona fide* judgment (belief or opinion that results from evaluation), and yet about which, she says, no doubt can be raised because it also happens to play a normative role. This is where Coliva sees an affinity between hinges and Kant's synthetic apriori judgments:

> To judge *thus-and-so*, in certain circumstances, is said, in OC, to be part of 'our *method* of doubt and enquiry'. ... To judge that there is a hand in the circumstances of Moore's proof therefore belongs to the logic of our epistemic practices because it is what must stand fast if we want to test other things... So that *judgement* is itself part of logic and therefore comes to have a normative role, rather than a genuinely empirical one. It is not itself the statement of a rule like ... 'Patience is played alone'. But it nevertheless plays a normative role, rather than a descriptive one. ... it also merits note that that very judgement is, in addition, constitutive of meaning ... . For if it were called into doubt that, in the circumstances of Moore's proof, what is clearly visible to everyone is a hand, it would then be doubtful what we mean by 'hand'. ...So, 'Here is a hand' in the circumstances of Moore's proof remains a judgement and not the statement of a rule. Yet, that very judgement plays a normative role because it contributes to the determination of the meaning of the word 'hand' ...
> Here, we may in fact see how close Wittgenstein gets to Kant's idea of synthetic a priori judgements. That is to say, of judgements, not definitions or statements of rules, which, however, have a normative and therefore a priori status. (2010, 81-2; italics in the original)

This rapprochement between hinges and synthetic a priori judgements, as well as her speaking of hinges as being 'the content of a judgment' (2010, 86) ('to judge *thus-and-so*', as she puts it above), confirm that the kind of 'judgment' Coliva is talking about here is *bona fide* judgment – which includes evaluation and conclusion. This, then, I will now argue, bars it from being the kind of judgment Wittgenstein is talking about when he speaks of 'an agreement in judgments' as essential to the possibility of language.

Wittgenstein's 'agreement in judgments'

Some of the passages quoted above seem to buy into the 'majority view' determination of grammar, whereby Moore's raising his hand and judging it to be a hand would add yet another vote, and thereby contribute, to the existing consensus of calling this⌀ a hand. Certainly, as the private language argument has made clear, publicity is a precondition for language, and so for grammar, but grammar is not the result of judgment – be it personal or collective[6]. This kind of consensus of judgment would not only preclude the autonomy of grammar; it would also be in flagrant contradiction with Wittgenstein's opposition to grammar being a matter of a consensus of *opinion*:

> This has often been said before. And it has often been put in the form of an assertion that the truths of logic are determined by a consensus of opinions. Is this what I am saying? No. There is no *opinion* at all; it is not a question of *opinion*. They are determined by a consensus of *action*: a consensus of doing the same thing, reacting in the same way. (LFM 183-4)

The consensus in question here is a consensus of behaviour and response, not a consensus of opinions, or what can also be called *judgments*. However, elsewhere Wittgenstein does say that the possibility of language is conditional on *agreement in judgments* (as well as on agreement in definitions) (e.g. RFM, 343; PI 242). So either Wittgenstein is contradicting himself or what he means by 'judgements' in the phrase 'agreement in judgments' has nothing to do with opinion or *bona fide* judgment. The following remark shows that the latter is the case: the 'agreement in judgments' that is in question here is described as an *agreement in action*:

> Interpretation comes to an end.
> It is true that *anything* can be somehow justified. But the phenomenon of language is based on regularity, on **agreement in action**. 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 meanings 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 for communication that we agree in a large number of judgments. (RFM pp. 342-3)

The agreement in judgments is an agreement in action – that is, in behaviour and response. Though he uses the word 'judgment', Wittgenstein is describing 'a consensus of *doing* the

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[6] 'A language game: to bring something *else*; to bring the *same*. Now, we can imagine how it is played.—But how can I explain it to anyone? I can give him this training.—But then how does he know what he is to bring next time as 'the same'—with what justice can I say he has brought the right thing or the wrong?—Of course, I know very well that in certain cases people would turn on me with signs of opposition. / And does this mean e.g. that the definition of "same" would be this: same is what all or most human beings **with one voice take for the same**?—Of course not. / For of course **I don't make use of the agreement of human beings to affirm identity**. What criterion do you use, then? None at all. / To use the word **without a justification** does not mean to use it wrongfully.' (RFM VII 40)

same thing, *reacting* in the same way' (LFM 184; my emphasis). Upon seeing a green object, most human beings will *call* its colour 'green':

> There is such a thing as colour-blindness and there are ways of establishing it. There is in general complete agreement in the judgments of colours made by those who have been diagnosed normal. This characterizes the concept of a judgment of colour. (PI, p. 227)

This 'agreement in the judgments of colours' is a natural shared human response, and it is this natural shared human response that conditions our concept of a judgment of colour: 'For the language-game with colours is characterized by what we can do and what we cannot do' (Z 345). This is true of language generally: human beings could not have language did they not share 'regular ways of acting' (CE 397); that is: shared instinctive behaviour (e.g. crying when hurting or sad; jumping when startled), but also shared instinctive responses (e.g. to pain, to pointing) and shared basic discriminations (e.g. of taste, colours, shapes). Indeed, our acquiring concepts, such as pain, requires that we have appropriate (i.e. normal) human reactions: 'If a child looked radiant when it was hurt, and shrieked for no apparent reason, one couldn't teach him to use the word "pain"' (LPP 37). Language, language-games, concepts are dependent on and conditioned by this *shared* behaviour of mankind, such as shared reactions to pointing or to colours[7]. So that when Wittgenstein says that the possibility of language is dependent not only on agreement in definitions, but also on *agreement in judgments*, he means those shared basic discriminations (e.g. of taste, colours, shapes) characteristic of our human form of life. Such 'agreement in judgments' is manifest in our correct applications of ostensive definitions, such as 'This⌀ is red': upon seeing the cross on the Red Cross flag, we all (with some exceptions, such as people who are colour-blind) call its colour 'red':

> "And that's what we *call* 'the same'." If there did not exist an agreement in what we call 'red', etc. etc., language would stop. (RF 196)

It is this agreement – in what we call 'red' – that Wittgenstein calls an agreement in judgment, though it is *not an agreement in what one normally would call a judgment* – that is, in the personal evaluation of evidence resulting in an opinion or belief. Our calling something 'red' does not result from a judgment or from any epistemic consideration and conviction:

> If someone were to look at an English pillar-box and say 'I am sure that it's red', we should have to suppose that he was colour-blind or believe he had no mastery of English and knew the correct name for the colour in some other language.
> If neither was the case we should not quite understand him. (OC 526)

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[7] '[…] you say to someone 'This is red (pointing); then you tell him 'Fetch me a red book' – and he will behave in a particular way. This is an immensely important fact about us human beings. And it goes together will all sorts of other facts of equal importance, like the fact that in all the languages we know, the meanings of words don't change with the days of the week. / Another such fact is that pointing is used and understood in a particular way – that people react to it in a particular way.' (LFM 182)

To say, upon looking at an English pillar-box, that 'I am sure that it's red' implies that a judgment has occurred, where there is in fact no room for judgment:

> We say: if a child has mastered language – and hence its application – It must know the meaning of words. It must, for example, be able to attach the name of its colour to a white, black, red, or blue object *without the occurrence of any doubt*. (OC 522; my emphasis)

> We're used to a particular classification of things. With language, or languages, it has become *second nature* to us. (RPPI II, 678; my emphasis)

What Wittgenstein means by 'agreement in judgments', then, has none of the decisional or ratiocinative flavours of *bona fide* agreement and *bona fide* judgment: it is a *peaceful* agreement in that it does not originate in disagreement; and it is not a concerted or deliberate agreement, but a '*spontaneous* agreement' (RPP II, 699; my emphasis) in our shared practices:

> It is of the greatest importance that a dispute hardly ever arises between people about whether the colour of this object is the same as the colour of that[8]... . This peaceful agreement is the characteristic surrounding of the use of the word 'same'. And one must say something analogous about proceeding according to a rule. No dispute breaks out over the question whether a proceeding was according to the rule or not. It doesn't come to blows, for example. This belongs to the framework, out of which our language works... . (RFM, 322-3)

And it is a 'judgment' that has none of the characteristics of the evaluation of a content: it does not result from thought or consideration, but is rather a common *reaction* manifested in the common *application* of a rule[9]. To agree in judgment here is simply to call something 'red' that all other speakers of English would call 'red', but to do so *nonratiocinatively*; that is, to react *in action* and not, as Coliva suggests, in a *contentful* judgment[10] (2010, 86).

In the same vein, Wittgenstein sometimes speaks of hinges as 'judgments' (OC 124, 126, 140, 419, 517, 519), and so Coliva might appeal to such instances to justify her own consideration of hinges as judgments. This passage, for instance:

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[8] Cases where dispute would arise would be cases where it would not be obvious what the colour was; e.g. black or very dark blue; cases where the conditions of perception would not be optimal; or cases of linguistic incompetence.

[9] 'The word "agreement" and the word "rule" are *related*, they are cousins. The phenomena of agreement and of acting according to a rule hang together.' (RFM 41); 'What are called agreement and disagreement is something laid down as a rule. (AWL 84) … The agreement we want is not experiential at all.' (AWL 85).

[10] To the suggestion, made by one reviewer, that the 'judgment' Coliva has in mind may be 'the expression or tokening of a belief that (in the situation) needs no justification, and can function as a standard for other beliefs', I would reiterate that Coliva's use of 'judgment' is an evaluative one. To speak of a hinge as, *inter alia*, 'the content of a judgment' (2010, 86) is to introduce, willy-nilly, hesitation/pondering/evaluation, reasoning and justification into the picture. Coliva's understanding of 'judgment' as evaluative shows itself also in her repeated acknowledgement of the difficulty in holding that a hinge can be both a norm that is exempt from doubt, **and** a judgment [that, by contrast, is not] (*passim*, but cf. e.g. p. 80); in her finding it weird that 'Here is a hand' in optimal circumstances etc. should not be a true proposition; in taking Moore to be *rightly judging* that 'Here is a hand' (223n36) and so on (see the body of the paper). If, in spite of this textual and strategic evidence, Coliva wanted to maintain that her understanding of 'judgment' is not evaluative, then I would want to know what exactly it is, and what she gains from adding it to the normative status of a hinge.

> We do not learn the practice of making empirical judgments by learning rules[11]: we are taught *judgments* and their connexion with other judgments. *A totality* of judgments is made plausible to us. (OC 140)

But the second use of 'judgments' is here in italics, which flags a contrast with the first use[12]. Wittgenstein is here saying that we do not learn how to judge by learning how to make judgments, but by being *taught* or handed down ready-made 'judgments'[13]. The '*judgments*' we are *taught* in the second instance are those that are not susceptible of truth, falsity or mistake ('There are... certain types of case in which I rightly say I cannot be making a mistake, and Moore has given a few examples of such cases' (OC 674)) – and therefore, they are not contentful, truth-evaluable judgments; they are grammatical rules that we assimilate in order to be able to speak in truth, falsity and error.

But then why does Wittgenstein call them 'judgments' at all? For one, because these non-truth-evaluable sentences look like empirical propositions or judgments, and as Wittgenstein is in the process of elucidating their nature, he is wont to call them 'judgments':

> I want to say: We use judgements as principles of judgment. (OC 124)

> I am not more certain of the meaning of my words than I am of certain judgments. Can I doubt that this colour is called 'blue'? (OC 126)

But also, Wittgenstein employs terms used by Moore and by the tradition – and indeed by himself – when he is either mentioning, ruminating, rehashing, or questioning those very terms. This is the case of words like 'know', 'true', and 'judgment' in *On Certainty*. Take, for example, this passage:

> I know, not just that the earth existed long before my birth, but also that it is a large body, that this has been established, that I and the rest of mankind have forebears, that there are books about all this, that such books don't lie, etc. etc. etc. And I know all this? I believe it. This body of knowledge has been handed on to me and I have no grounds for doubting it, but on the contrary, all sorts of confirmation.
>   And why shouldn't I say that I know all this? Isn't that what one does say? (OC 288)

Although Wittgenstein refers to these hinges as 'a body of knowledge' that has been handed down to him, he is questioning their being objects of knowledge in the very same passage,

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[11] Here, Wittgenstein means that we do not learn how to make empirical judgments by following rules such as 'what has happened will happen again' (cf. OC 135).

[12] This is not to say that this use is always flagged, but that Wittgenstein's use of italics is significant.

[13] 'From a child up I learnt to judge like this. *This is* judging.' (OC 128); 'This is how I learned to judge; *this* I got to know as *judgment*.' (OC 129); 'No one ever taught me that my hands don't disappear when I am not paying attention to them. Nor can I be said to presuppose the truth of this proposition in my assertions etc., (as if they rested on it) while it only gets its sense from the rest of our procedure of asserting.' (OC 153)

and indeed comes to see in *On Certainty* that Moore and the philosophical tradition – were wrong to call these basic certainties knowledge[14].

But one must go beyond these confused, referential, deliberative or heuristic uses of the terms in question to see where Wittgenstein *ends up* – that is, what he really thinks about using such terms or concepts to describe the kind of certainty in question here. Certainly, some passages formulate his resulting insights clearly enough; for example, as regards 'know':

> 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)

As for his tentative or heuristic uses of 'judgment', they should not be conflated with the perspicuous presentation of hinges as not themselves *bona fide* judgments but enabling them:

> ... we are interested in the fact that about certain empirical propositions no doubt can exist if **making judgments** is to be possible at all. Or again: I am inclined to believe that not everything that has the form of an empirical proposition *is* one[15]. (OC 308)

But beyond such key passages themselves – because of the interpretive difficulties caused by Wittgenstein's referential and deliberative uses as well as his nonlinear or perspectival method of philosophizing[16] and, therefore, because it will be asked why one should consider some passages as insightful and others as merely heuristic – it is to how they *cohere* with Wittgenstein's account of hinge certainty as a whole that one must go for justification.

The gist of *On Certainty* lies precisely in its countering the idea put forth by Coliva that '"Here is my/a hand", said in the circumstances of Moore's proof, *is* a judgment' (2010, 81). To call Moore's saying 'Here is a hand' a judgment would be to suggest that Moore is not sure that what he is raising is a hand; that he is venturing the opinion: 'Here is a hand'. But this is precisely what Wittgenstein is denying; there is no room for judgment, opinion, hesitation or doubt in Moore-type sentences:

> Somewhere I must begin with not-doubting; and that is not, so to speak, hasty but excusable: it is part of judging. (OC 150)

Hinges are part of judging in that they underpin judgment – being themselves neither expressions of judgment, nor objects of judgment. Wittgenstein clearly excludes the possibility that Moore's 'Here is a hand' is a judgment in the proper sense of the term. There is no room for genuine judgment here, for (1) Moore cannot pronounce the opposite of those propositions which he declares certain – and this, not because he wouldn't then be contributing to the grammatical pool, but because he cannot *logically* doubt such

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[14] See e.g. OC 91, 151, 401, 403, 406-7.

[15] As previously noted, this sentence questions the suggestion in the first sentence that these are indeed *empirical propositions* at all.

[16] I discuss this further in Moyal-Sharrock 2007a, 3-6.

propositions; that is, he cannot doubt them 'without giving up all judgment' (OC 494); such propositions 'underlie all questions and all thinking' (OC 415):

> If Moore were to pronounce the opposite of those propositions which he declares certain, we should not just share his opinion: we should regard him as demented. (OC 155)

(2) Nor, as we saw, can Moore be making a mistake (OC 674); and (3) nor can the certainties he is pronouncing be a result of evaluation or consideration; they are not arrived at 'from pursuing a line of thought' (OC 84):

> And now if I were to say "It is my unshakeable conviction that etc.", this means in the present case too that I have not consciously arrived at the conviction by following a particular line of thought, but that it is anchored in all my *questions and answers*, so anchored that I cannot touch it. (OC 103)

How, then, can it be a judgment – a genuine judgment – if I cannot touch it? Indeed, so unpondered and unreasoned is our basic certainty that Wittgenstein likens it to a reflex action: 'It is just like directly taking hold of something, as I take hold of my towel without having doubts' (OC 510).

The genius of On Certainty

If, as I suggest, a decisive test for ratifying the overriding perspicuity of some passages is their internal coherence – their consistent and meaningful contribution to Wittgenstein's account of hinge certainty – it seems that, terminological red herrings notwithstanding, we can see that everything 'speaks for' Wittgenstein's excluding hinge certainty from being a judgment. But now, it may also be asked, why should one interpretation of *On Certainty* – however coherent – be held as a/the correct interpretation? A reply might be: it would be difficult to maintain that such coherence is *contrived*, if the coherence is buttressed by the text. But the real test, I believe, would be to see whether the interpretation shows *On Certainty* to have achieved something unprecedented and valuable; something that the interpreter could not, lest s/he be credited with the genius of the achievement, have conceived.

On Certainty shows Wittgenstein to have solved the problem he set out to solve – the problem that occupied Moore and plagued epistemology – that of the foundation of our knowledge. Wittgenstein's revolutionary insight in *On Certainty* is that what philosophers have traditionally called 'basic beliefs' – those beliefs that all knowledge must ultimately be based on – cannot, on pain of infinite regress, themselves be based on further propositional beliefs. He comes to see that such certainties are really animal or unreflective ways of acting which, once formulated (e.g. by philosophers), look like (empirical) propositions. It is this misleading appearance that leads philosophers to believe that at the foundation of thought is yet more thought. But though they may often *look like* empirical conclusions, our basic certainties constitute the ungrounded, nonpropositional underpinning of knowledge, not its object. In thus situating the root of knowledge in nonreflective certainties that manifest

themselves as ways of acting, Wittgenstein has found the place where justification comes to an end, and solved the regress problem of basic beliefs – and, in passing, shown the irrelevance of philosophical scepticism. But in thus introducing the animal in epistemology (having already put it back in language[17]), Wittgenstein has done much more than this.

The genius of *On Certainty* is to have resisted the temptation to underpin knowledge with yet more knowledge, with propositions, judgments and inferences. In doing this, Wittgenstein makes clear (and not only for epistemology) that thought is prefaced by thoughtlessness that has been interpreted as thought; by spontaneity, automatism, rule, reflex and instinct. He shows, more clearly and radically than he had done before, that we do not start with judgments or propositions, but with animal actions and reactions that evolve into content-laden thought and action. We do not go from proposition to deed, but vice-versa: from a natural, nonreflective grasp to a sophisticated, reflective, hesitating pondering; from doing to judging and thinking. Wittgenstein's conception of *hinge certainty* enables us to rid ourselves of what Britt Harrison has dubbed 'the propositional presumption' (2012): the misguided belief that propositions are indispensable to our grasp of the world. It seems to me, then, that to maintain despite all this that hinge certainties are judgments and propositions is to revert back to that presumption, and with it to the traditional view of basic beliefs that would deprive us of Wittgenstein's solution to the problem of their regress.

Not foundational?

Despite the abundance of foundational images and concepts, many commentators deny the presence of foundationalism in *On Certainty*[18]. Coliva is one of them; she agrees with Michael Williams that certain conditions must be met for foundationalism to be held, and that these conditions are not met by hinge certainties; Wittgenstein's 'foundationalism' does not amount to a *theory* of knowledge in anything like the traditional sense (2010, 169).

But – though I don't believe that meeting Williams' conditions for foundationalism makes it or breaks it for entry to the Foundationalist Club – I suggest that hinge certainties *can* be shown to meet them, and *can* be seen to amount to a theory of knowledge. According to Williams, there are four characteristics of traditional foundations: *universality, specifiability, independence* and *adequacy* (2005, 51, 57). As I have argued elsewhere: some hinges are universal[19] – hence the *universality* condition is met; there are features that constitute the criteria which allow us to distinguish basic beliefs from other beliefs[20] – hence the *specifiability* condition is met; thirdly, the grammatical or logical nature of hinges gives

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[17] As Cavell aptly puts it: 'Wittgenstein's motive … is to put the human animal back into language and therewith back into philosophy' (1979, 207).

[18] See for example: Rorty (1980, 5-6), Wright (1985, 469), Levi (1999, 182), Phillips (1988, xv, 40, 54, 89; 2001, 182). For pro-foundationalist positions on OC, see Stroll (1994), Conway (1989), Mounce (2005).

[19] In Moyal-Sharrock (2007a), I classify hinges – based on examples given by Wittgenstein in *On Certainty* as: linguistic, personal, local, and universal. Examples of universal hinges are: *'The earth exists', 'There are physical objects', 'Things don't systematically disappear when we're not looking', 'If someone's head is cut off, the person will be dead and not live again', 'Trees do not gradually change into men and men into trees', 'I have a brain', 'I am a human being', 'I have forbears'* (OC 209, 35-6, 234, 274, 513,159, 4. 234).

[20] These features of hinges are more amply discussed in Moyal-Sharrock (2007a), thereby better showing how they would meet all four of Williams' conditions.

them their *independence* or autonomy (remember, that for Wittgenstein grammar is autonomous) as well as, fourthly: their logical, if not rational, *adequacy*. Of course a more adequate refutation of Williams' position would be needed, but this is not the place for it.

What I would like to address is Coliva's view that:

> Wittgenstein's hinges are such that we bear no epistemic relation to them and without that much, it seems to me there really is no room for foundationalism. (2010, 11)

> ... being extraneous to traditional epistemological projects, Wittgenstein proposed neither a novel form of foundationalism, nor a new kind of coherentism. Rather, he endeavoured to clarify the notion of certainty taken to be other than epistemic in nature. (2010, 168)

But being outside *traditional* epistemological projects does not mean that Wittgenstein is outside epistemological projects altogether – in fact, Coliva calls him an '*anti*-foundationalist' (2010, 202; my emphasis), and that is certainly an epistemic position.

To be doing epistemology, one needn't have to conform to all its tenets. Wittgenstein is within epistemological projects in that he is *correcting* epistemology – even *revolutionizing* epistemology – and so it may be said that he is a *non-traditional* epistemologist, but not that he is outside epistemology altogether. The revolutionary nature of Wittgenstein's depiction of our basic beliefs is precisely their *differing* from the rest of our beliefs – the foundations differ from what they support (actually, that's a much more plausible image than foundations being of the same material as what they support) – and they differ in being nonepistemic and nonpropositional, and therefore also indubitable. Wittgenstein's foundationalism differs from traditional foundationalism in that it construes the nature of our basic beliefs differently; but this – I would think – is an innovation, not a digression.

As to the objection that *On Certainty* could not be deploying a foundationalist theory because of Wittgenstein's anti-theoretical stance, it may be retorted that, Wittgenstein notwithstanding, there *are* elements of a theory in *On Certainty*. In fact, the dialectical and argumentative[21] nature of Wittgenstein's elucidation of basic certainties, as well as its coherence, would, I believe, go some way towards giving his perspicuous presentation the shape of a theory.

A great virtue of Annalisa Coliva's book is the clarity of its message about Wittgenstein's hinge certainty not being a *knowing*. As she succinctly puts it:

> ... it should be clear that, for Wittgenstein, when proper propositional knowledge is at stake, it is always dependent on reasons and justifications and on the ability (at least in principle) to offer them as one's grounds for one's claim. Hence ... Wittgenstein's conception of knowledge is internalist through and through. Thus, not only does it make no sense, in his view, to *claim* knowledge of hinges, as Williams would have it; but it is altogether false that we nevertheless bear an epistemic relation to them. For we can't logically produce grounds in their favour. To miss that much, amounts to conflating Wittgenstein's position with Moore's. (2010, 143)

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[21] For, Wittgenstein's 'perspectival' method does not exclude argument.

If, as I trust it will, this clarity helps prompt epistemologists to wonder whether they may not be prey, as Moore was, to what we might call 'the knowledge presumption', then it will have done Wittgenstein justice, and philosophy an immense service.

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