LOGIC IN ACTION: WITTGENSTEIN'S *LOGICAL PRAGMATISM* AND THE IMPOTENCE OF SCEPTICISM

DANIÈLE MOYAL-SHARROCK
UNIVERSITY OF GENEVA

1. The Many Faces of Certainty: Wittgenstein's Logical Pragmatism

> So I am trying to say something that sounds like pragmatism. (OC 422)

In his struggle to uncover the nature of our basic beliefs, Wittgenstein depicts them variously in *On Certainty*: he thinks of them in propositional terms, in pictorial terms and in terms of acting. As propositions, they would be of a peculiar sort – a hybrid between a logical and an empirical proposition (OC 136, 309). These are the so-called 'hinge propositions' of *On Certainty* (OC 341*)*. Wittgenstein also thinks of these beliefs as forming a picture, a *World-picture* – or *Weltbild* (OC 167*)*. This is a step in the right (nonpropositional) direction, but not the ultimate step. Wittgenstein's *ultimate* and crucial depiction of our basic beliefs is in terms of a *know-how,* an *attitude,* a *way of acting* (OC 204). Here, he treads on pragmatist ground. But can Wittgenstein be labelled a pragmatist, having himself rejected the affiliation because of its utility implication?

> But you aren't a pragmatist? No. For I am not saying that a proposition is true if it is useful. (RPP I, 266)

Wittgenstein resists affiliation with pragmatism because he does not want *his* use of *use* to be confused with the *utility* use of *use*. For him, it is not that a proposition is true if it is useful, but that use gives the proposition its sense. In fact, Wittgenstein's *use* has no internal connection to truth at all; it is *meaning*, not truth, that is internally linked to use. As to foundational beliefs, truth does not even apply to them (OC 205), but nor does Wittgenstein want to end up saying that a proposition is *certain* if it is useful. To see our foundational beliefs – our *objective certainty*, as he refers to it (OC 194) – on *grounds* of utility and success, would be to miss their logical nature.

In a recent lecture, Robert Brandom drew a distinction between a broad and a narrow conception of pragmatism[1]. Broadly conceived, pragmatism is simply a movement centred on the *primacy of the practical*; only in its narrow conception does it focus on the relation of belief to utility and success[2]. This dichotomy allows me to affiliate Wittgenstein to that family of philosophers who have stressed the primacy of acting, without unduly attaching him to strains in pragmatism from which he is estranged. The later Wittgenstein is a pragmatist in the broad sense. His viewing meaning in terms of *use,* his insistence on the anthropological and logical primacy of the *deed* over the word ("In the beginning was the deed") and his re-evaluation of some of our words *as* deeds[3] largely justify his affiliation to *broad pragmatism*.

Wittgenstein is an unexceptional pragmatist in seeing belief, indeed our basic beliefs, in terms of an enacted know-how, but he adds a new strain to pragmatism: he sees that basic know-how as *logical* – and logical, *on no grounds*[4]. The know-how *is* the ground. Wittgenstein's pragmatism is then a pragmatism *with foundations*, but the enacted nature of these foundations makes them congenial to the spirit of pragmatism.

Moreover, part of the foundation is mutable, which allows for a *pluralism* that pragmatism cannot do without; whilst the *immutable* component of the bedrock – that which is "subject to no alteration" (OC 99) – is nevertheless *not* ideally or transcendentally fixed. The tendency, on the part of Neopragmatists, as well as of Therapeutists[5] to reject foundationalism is due to their equating 'foundations', 'immutable', 'fixed', or 'universal' with 'metaphysical', 'transcendent' or 'absolute'. Wittgenstein is a foundationalist, but this does not make him into a Platonist. And he has, what Therapeutists protest against his having: a *thick* notion of grammar – so thick in fact that it includes, as we shall see, a *universal* grammar – but this does not make him into a Chomskyan. The slide from foundations to metaphysical or generative grammars need not be made. Making it has led to the astounding denial of Wittgenstein's glaring foundationalism[6] and to overlooking the possibility that with *On Certainty* foundationalism sheds its old skin. To say that some of our bounds of sense (or rules of grammar) are universal or immutable is not *ipso facto* to say that they express metaphysical truths, truths independent of the human condition, or known in advance of use. To say that some of our bounds of sense are universal or immutable can also be to say that for any human being to *think*, *speak* or *act*, genuinely, in a way which shows certain of our bounds of sense as not standing fast for her is equal to her having *lost sense*. Our foundations do not make up the sort of "ahistorical metaphysical framework" dreaded by Rorty (1990, 215); they are *anthropo*-logical. I will argue that this keeping the conceptual 'must' close to home, does not make it less 'hard'. We need not give up foundations altogether to acquire pluralism, and acknowledging pluralism need not leave us suspended in a Rortian universe of unrooted conversations and discourses. Wittgenstein's foundationalism is neither ahistorical, nor decontextualised: it is a *human-bound* foundationalism.

Wittgenstein's conclusion in *On Certainty* – and I believe one *can* so qualify the upshot of the nonlinear progression of his thought – is that our basic certainty is logical, logically ineffable, and enacted. I call this a *logical pragmatism. Logical pragmatism* is the view that our basic beliefs are a know-how, and that this know-how is *logical* – that is, that it is *necessary* to our making sense. I give Wittgenstein's stance a name because I believe it is time Wittgenstein's thought received more definition than it has; definition which would allow it to emerge from such nebulosity as has been generated by the refusal to attribute substantial philosophical positions to him.

2. The Extension of Grammar

Before *On Certainty,* Wittgenstein had come to see that sentences which have the form of *metaphysical* or *necessary* truths (e.g. 'A patch cannot be both red and green at the same time') are in fact grammatical rules. In *On Certainty*, he realises that some sentences which have the form of *empirical* or *contingent* truths (e.g. 'I am standing here', 'Here is a hand') also play the role, in our language-games, of grammatical rules – at par with '2+2=4':

> I want to say: The *physical* game is just as certain as the arithmetical. … If one doesn't marvel at the fact that the propositions of arithmetic (e.g. the multiplication tables) are 'absolutely certain', then why should one be astonished that the proposition "This is my hand" is so equally? (OC 447-8 my emphasis)

One should *not* be astonished. Indeed:

> … one might grant that Moore was right, if he is interpreted like this: a proposition saying that here is a physical object may have the same logical status as one saying that here is a red patch. (OC 52)

> 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)

Moore-type propositions, then, have a grammatical status. In a celebrated metaphor, Wittgenstein alludes to them as propositions exempt from doubt that are, as it were, like hinges on which our questions and our doubts turn (OC 341). I have surveyed the so-called 'hinge propositions' mentioned by Wittgenstein in *On Certainty*[7] – hinges, as I will take the liberty of calling them – and suggest they are best classified as follows:

1) *linguistic* **hinges**: e.g. ''*2+2=4'*, *'What the colour of human blood is called'* , *'A is a physical object'* (OC 455, 340, 36).

2) *personal* **hinges**: e.g. *'I come from such and such a city'*, *'I am now sitting in a chair'*, *'I have never been on the moon'*, *'I have just had lunch'* (OC 67, 552-3, 419, 111, 65).

3) *local* **hinges**: e.g. *'It is impossible to get to the moon'* , *'The earth is round'*, *'Trains normally arrive in a railway station'* (OC 106, 291, 339).

4) *universal* **hinges**: e.g. *'The earth exists'*, *'There are physical objects'* , *'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 body'* (OC 209, 35-6, 274, 513, 244)[8].

The first subset of hinges – what I have called *linguistic hinges* – corresponds to what Wittgenstein had been calling grammatical rules before *On Certainty*. They are not themselves an object of analysis in *On Certainty,* but are mentioned as a benchmark against which the emerging grammatical nature of the other three types of hinges is measured[9]. *Personal hinges* make up part of the logical bedrock *of the speaker*, in normal circumstances. That they are idiosyncratic does not preclude their being necessary bounds of sense for an individual[10] for, like all other hinges, *personal* hinges are not empirically or cognitively grounded. *Local hinges* are grammatical rules for a community of people at a given time. *Universal* hinges are hinges on which the belief system of all normal human beings, from a very early age, is poised[11]. We might say that *universal* hinges constitute our 'universal grammar' – but one which, contrary to Chomsky's, is *not* a genetic endowment, *not* in the brain. It is only with this 'universal grammar' – our *universal* certainties – that I am concerned in this paper.

For *universal hinges* to be regarded as grammatical rules, we must beware not to restrict our definition of grammatical rules unduly – they are not only rules for the use of specific words, but less narrowly:

> What belongs to grammar are all the *conditions* (the *method*) necessary for comparing the proposition with reality. That is, all the *conditions* necessary for

the understanding (of the sense). (PG, p. 88; my emphasis)

A grammatical rule needn't be as obvious as: 'The colour of human blood is (called) red'. A grammatical rule may not *look* like one, but it *is* one as long as it "gives our way of looking at things, and our researches, their *form*", as long as it belongs to "the *scaffolding* of our thoughts" (OC 211). And we should remember that Wittgenstein's notion of grammar is broad enough to include material objects, such as colour samples (PI 50).

In *On Certainty,* then, Wittgenstein comes to see that Moore-type certainties, or so-called 'hinge propositions' are expressions of grammatical rules: they "form the foundation of all operating with thoughts" (OC 401). But he warns us against thinking of this grammar as a kind of *seeing*, "it is our *acting* which lies at the bottom of the language-game" (OC 204). Our *objective certainty* is not a *coming-to-see* type of certainty; it is not of the order of knowing, justification, reason or reflection[12], and is therefore immune to mistake, doubt, or falsification – for where no epistemic route was followed, no epistemic fault is possible. It is a nonpropositional, ungrounded certainty which manifests itself ineffably *in* what we say and do. To be certain, here, means to *be unwaveringly and yet thoughtlessly poised* on something which *enables* us to think, speak or act meaningfully. That something is *grammar*. Our basic certainties are grammatical rules, manifesting themselves as a flawless know-how. The rules can be articulated into sentences, as exemplified above, but such articulation is effected only for heuristic purposes, such as philosophical discussion or grammatical instruction. Once verbalised, however, these rules of grammar misleadingly *look like* empirical propositions – conclusions that we come to from experience. This *resemblance* has confused philosophers, and disconcerts Wittgenstein himself throughout *On Certainty.* And yet, he *does* come to the realisation that we have, yet again, been mystified by the *appearance* of language: "I am inclined to believe that not everything that has the form of an empirical proposition *is* one" (OC 308). It is *On Certainty*'s greatest contribution to philosophy to have revealed the nonpropositional, nonempirical, nonepistemic nature of our basic certainties. Uncovering their grammatical status moves us to realise that our mistaking what are in fact rules of grammar for falsifiable propositions constitutes one of the greatest category mistakes of philosophy: that responsible for the apparent indefeasibility of philosophical scepticism[13].

3. The Groundlessness of Belief: grammar and instinct

> I want to regard man here as an animal; as a primitive being to which one grants instinct and ratiocination. As a creature in a primitive state. Any logic good enough for a primitive means of communication needs no apology from us. Language did not emerge from some kind of ratiocination. (OC 475)

Hinges articulate not *objects* of sense, but *bounds* of sense; not descriptions or conclusions we come to from experience or reasoning, but the very starting points of reasoning and empirical description. Their *standing fast* for us – our not doubting them – is not due to verification, to our having empirically or rationally exhausted all avenues of doubt on their behalf, but to our not regarding them as susceptible of doubt in the first place, to our not viewing them as propositions at all. But if we do not acquire them epistemically or empirically, how are we graced with our basic or

hinge or *objective* certainties? In one of two ways: naturally or through *nonepistemic* assimilation.

Some of our *hinges* are "there like our life" (OC 559); they are a *natural*, animal-like or instinctual certainty that is never taught, or even articulated *as such*[14] – e.g. 'I have a body', 'There exist people other than myself', 'Humans cannot vanish into thin air'. Here, *to be certain* does not imply that one can formulate the sentences or even understand the words that compose them. A one-year old child not yet in possession of language shows that she is endowed with such certainties by using her body, interacting with others, running away from a barking dog rather than sitting there waiting to vanish, and so on. Other hinges are *acquired*, but it is crucial to note that where hinges are acquired, they are – like all rules – acquired through some form of training, not propositional learning:

> Children do not *learn that* books exist, that armchairs exist, etc. etc., -- they
> learn to *fetch* books, *sit* in armchairs, etc. etc. (OC 476; my emphasis)

(The association here to *animal* training is not fortuitous.) Acquired hinges can be *explicitly* acquired, through cultural or educational *training* (most of our linguistic hinges are acquired in this way), or *implicitly* assimilated – that is, without any training and often no formulation at all – through something like *repeated exposure* (e.g. 'People sometimes lie').

Whatever their origin – whether they are explicitly acquired as grammatical rules or not – all hinges *function* as grammatical rules: they *condition* our making sense. This highlights the variegated nature of what, with Wittgenstein, we have come to call: *grammar*. Grammar is not always verbalised or explicitly taught, it is often grasped unawares (and of course, used unawares); nor does it only regulate the use of specific *words*, it generally denotes the *conditions of thought*: "the *conditions* necessary for the understanding (of the sense)" (PG p. 88). The hinge: 'There exist people other than myself' is an artificial expression of one of the grammatical *conditions* necessary for the use and understanding of the sense of such descriptive or informative statements as: 'The world's population doubled between 1950 and 1990'. In the same way that our speaking about a rod (e.g. 'Cut this rod in half!') is conditioned by the grammatical rule: 'A rod has a length'. And neither of these rules need ever have been explicitly formulated to be operative.

All hinges – whether natural or acquired – are *grammatical* in nature, but Wittgenstein also refers to them as *animal* in nature (OC 359). Grammatical *and* animal? How are these compatible? By 'animal' he means that hinges are a nonratiocinated certainty, a nonconceptual grasp, a *direct taking-hold* (OC 510). Whether natural or acquired, hinges invariably reflect an unthinking, unhesitating, reflex-like attitude. Grammar and instinct are then indeed compatible. Both evoke unpondered immediacy, absence of hesitation, automatism. In fact, this conceptual *resemblance* points to a conceptual *overlap*. Logic is seen as belonging to the realm of instinct, not reason (see epigraph: OC 475), and this is reinforced by allusions to certainty as a kind of primitive (or primal) *trust*[15]. Without this unflinching trust, there is no making sense: "… a language-game is only possible if one trusts something (I did not say 'can trust something')" (OC 509). Trust, here, is not a possibility, but a logical necessity. The reform of logical necessity from its traditional depiction as an

inexorable *law* to an inexorable *attitude* in the face of what it makes sense to say or think about certain things was undertaken in the *Remarks on the Foundation of Mathematics* – an attitude of inexorable *application* in the *Remarks* (p. 82), this attitude is glossed in *On Certainty* as one of nonratiocinated, immediate *trust*. In Wittgenstein's hands, logical necessity sheds its metaphysical, metahuman features, and becomes an *Einstellung,* an unhesitating attitude, a thoughtless grasp:

> It is just like directly taking hold of something, as I take hold of my towel without having doubts. (OC 510)
> And yet this direct taking-hold corresponds to a *sureness,* not to a knowing. (OC 511)

A sureness which, unlike a knowing, does not originate in doubt or hesitation and which has the characteristics of a reflex action, of an automatism, of an instinct, is altogether foreign to *thought*. And this *thoughtlessness* – that which forms the basis of thought (OC 411), and is therefore itself *not* (a) thought – is also a *wordlessness*, a *going without saying*:

> I believe that I had great-grandparents, that the people who gave themselves out as my parents really were my parents, etc. This belief may never have been expressed; even the thought that it was so, never thought. (OC 159)

4. The Ineffable Nature of Objective Certainty*: it goes without saying*

> Thus it seems to me that I have known something the whole time, and yet there is no meaning in saying so, in uttering this truth. (OC 466)

Wittgenstein says of the sentence: 'There are physical objects' that it is 'nonsense' (OC 35). This is meant to indicate that *all hinges are nonsense*. Indeed, hinges have no sense; they *enable* sense. Nonsense is not a derogatory term for Wittgenstein; it is a technical term applied to strings of words that stand outside the bounds of sense. And strings of words can stand outside the bounds of sense either because (1) they *violate* sense, such as the negations of grammatical rules (e.g. 'Red is lighter than pink'), or in that (2) they *enable* sense, such as grammatical rules themselves (e.g. 'Red is darker than pink')[16]. Grammatical rules stand *outside* our language-games; they make the game possible. They do not, as such, *bear saying* within the *stream* of the language-game but only in heuristic situations: that is, in situations where rules of grammar are transmitted (through drill or training) to a child, a disturbed adult or a foreign speaker; or in philosophical discussion. To articulate grammatical rules *within* the stream of the language-game – that is, in the flow of ordinary discourse – is to articulate bounds of sense as if they were descriptions or informative statements. If I were to say to the cloakroom attendant as I hand him my token: 'This is a token', he would look at me puzzled, nonplussed. Am I joking or slightly deranged? That 'This is a token' is not information for him, so why am I saying it? Nothing justifies my saying it. The information he requires in order to retrieve my coat is not that *this is a token*, but what the number on the token is. That *this is a token* is the ineffable hinge upon which his looking for the number on the token revolves. Our shared certainty that 'this is a token' can only *show* itself in our normal *transaction* with the token; it cannot *qua certainty* be meaningfully *said*. To *say* a hinge in an ordinary context is to suggest that it does not *go without saying*; that it needs support, grounding, context. To say a hinge within the language-game

invariably *arrests* the game, produces a *caesura*, a *hiatus* in the game. Conversely, think of the fluidity of the game poised on its invisible hinges: I hand the attendant my token, he glances at the number on it and fetches my coat. Our foundational certainty is operative only *in action*, not in words.

To stress the ineffability of hinges is not merely to point out the superfluity of saying what (in normal circumstances) is *already certain* and whose articulation would be idle repetition, it is to underline the *logical* unsayability of hinges. A hinge *cannot* be meaningfully articulated other than in a heuristic situation – that is, *as a grammatical rule.* Only in such contexts, is it plainly not offered as a hypothesis, but *pointed at* as a rule, an enabler. It must be noted, however, that sentences identical to hinges but that do not function as hinges – what I have elsewhere called nongrammatical *doppelgänger* of hinges[17] – *can* be meaningfully articulated *within* the stream of the language-game. The *doppelgänger of a hinge* is a sentence made up of the same words as a hinge, but which does not *function* as a hinge. What Wittgenstein means when he contemplates the rare cases where a hinge seems to be sayable is that the same *words* that make up a hinge can *in certain contexts* make up a descriptive statement:

> … the words "I am here" have a meaning only in certain contexts, and not when I say them to someone who is sitting in front of me and sees me clearly…
> (OC 548)

In certain contexts, the words "I am here" *do* make sense, *are* sayable – when I come home and want to make it known to my husband who is another room; or when I want to comfort someone who feels forsaken. These are *descriptive* and *expressive* uses of the words 'I am here'. In other contexts, – as in the passage above, when I say them to someone who is sitting in front of me and sees me clearly and needs no comforting, the same words neither inform nor express – they are useless, and therefore meaningless. *In the stream* of the language-game, only the *descriptive and expressive doppelgänger* of a hinge can be meaningfully said, not the hinge. The hinge is "fixed and … removed from the traffic" (OC 210) – that is, it *enables, but does not belong to* the game. The *hinge*: 'I am here' is an artificial expression of the silent certainty that underpins the sense of such sentences as 'I'll be going now' or 'I'll stay if you want me to' – it does not itself bear saying.

It seems counterintuitive to think of a sentence such as 'I am here' as ineffable (as, that is: *not meaningfully sayable*). The key is to remember that the sentence is not ineffable in all its uses. Identical sentences can have different *uses* and therefore different *statuses*. It is not because a certain combination of words is *sayable* and *falsifiable* in one context or use, that it is *sayable* and *falsifiable* in another. Hinges are grammatical rules and are, in nonheuristic contexts, ineffable[18]; they can only *show* themselves. And *showing*, for the post-Tractarian Wittgenstein, has do to with *acting*:

> Giving grounds, however, justifying the evidence, comes to an end; -- but the end is not certain 'propositions' striking us immediately as true, i.e. it is not a kind of *seeing* on our part; it is our *acting,* which lies at the bottom of the language-game. (OC 204)

The showing/saying distinction of the *Tractatus* is still alive in the later

Wittgenstein, but it has taken on a resolutely *active* dimension. The *showing* component is more decidedly an *acting* component. Wittgenstein sees our fundamental, indeed *logical*, springs of thought and action in terms of *acting*. Logic or grammar is embedded in our practices.

5. *Logic in action: a nonpropositional certainty*

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

Though it is 'propositions' that Wittgenstein speaks of as being exempt from doubt (OC 341), it must be remembered that *On Certainty* is made up of working notes where Wittgenstein is *in the process of* determining the categorial status of our objective certainty, and his calling hinges 'propositions' does not rule out his coming to see that they are *not* propositions, nor does it invalidate his depiction of them as nonpropositional[19]: "the end", he writes, "is not certain 'propositions' striking us immediately as true" (OC 204). Objective certainty is not a matter of propositions or intellection at all, but takes the form of spontaneous *acting in the certainty of...* an innumerable number of things. It is much like an unselfconscious *savoir-faire*, a flawless *know-how*. Although I have never uttered or thought the words 'Chairs are for sitting on' or 'Doors can be opened and closed', what I say about, and do with, chairs and doors shows that I have grasped these conceptual features, but the grasp was a nonconceptual grasp, and it also *manifests* itself nonconceptually:

> *My life shews that I know or am certain* that there is a chair over there, or a door, and so on. – I tell a friend e.g. "Take that chair over there", "Shut the door", etc. etc. (OC 7; my emphasis)

Unlike run-of-the-mill belief, objective certainty is a *nonpropositional attitude*.

To describe the certainty that willy-nilly underlies our thoughts and actions, I would need convey the poised, streaming fluency with which we carry out all our basic transactions in the world. It is an *embodied*, an *enacted* certainty, exhibiting itself in the ongoing smoothness of our normal, *basic* operating in the world. This certainty is *in the showing, not in the saying*: it will come out, not in any affirmation, but "in *the way I act* and in *the way I speak* about the things in question" (OC 395; my emphasis). Moore's *saying* "I know that 'here is a hand'" conveyed no certainty that was not already *visible* in his speaking about his hand, in his ostensibly showing it to his audience, or simply in his unselfconsciously using it. Our objective certainty that 'Tables, chairs, pots and pans don't think' shows itself in our *treating* them as unthinking, inanimate objects. Our objective certainty that 'There are physical objects' shows itself in our *reaching out* to pick a flower, but not a thought. Hinges are grammatical rules, but they are rules *in action*; *logic in action*:

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

Our life, *our deeds,* show that we do not, *cannot* doubt some things if we are to make sense. Certainty here is not an option – it belongs to th*e logic* of our investigations. That is, if we were *in deed* (*in der Tat*) to doubt, it would *not* be a manifestation of

uncertainty, but of nonsense or madness.

6. The delusion of doubt

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

Our *objective certainty* can *only* be enacted. And in the same way that our *adherence* to a rule of thought can only meaningfully manifest itself in our acting, so too, our *nonadherence*. A mere *verbal* rejection of a law of thought is not logically valid; it is an idle mouthing of words. The sentence: 'We cannot doubt everything' articulates a human law of thought; it expresses one of the rules that ineffably underpins our thinking and acting (normally) in the world. Any *merely* spoken or hypothetical rejection of that rule (particularly one based on a *fictional* scenario), such as Descartes', is idle; not only because rejecting it has no *practical* resonance in our life, but because its rejection is *logically* impossible: it is one of those bounds of sense without which we, humans, *necessarily* drift into nonsense. Indeed, of those individuals whose thoughts and actions *are* genuinely consistent with the rejection of our universal bounds of sense, we say they are demented. In a special issue of *Mind and Language,* devoted to: *Pathologies of Belief*, Davies and Coltheart list some delusional beliefs, of which the following three:

1) A person I knew who died is nevertheless in the hospital ward today
2) I am dead
3) Someone else's thoughts are being inserted into my mind (2000,1).

Human beings do not normally think or act in the certainty, or indeed the possibility, that they might be dead or that someone who died is now alive or that thoughts are constantly being inserted into their brains. An *earnest* transgression of such bounds of sense as 'I am alive' is a manifestation, not of uncertainty, but of madness. Indeed, Davies and Coltheart make it clear that such genuine, lived cases of belief in, or acting in accordance with, what can be articulated as violations of our basic, human *bounds* of sense are cases of pathological, *delusional* belief (2000, 4). Officially – in the psychiatric world – the three cases of delusional belief listed above are categorised as, respectively:

1) Reduplicative Paramnesia
2) The Cotard Delusion
3) The Delusion of Thought Insertion (2000, 30-39)

It may be objected that some religious beliefs – for example, belief in resurrection, in ghosts, in some individuals being inhabited by spirits – appear to transgress *universal* bounds of sense, and yet such belief can certainly *not* be viewed as pathological. Indeed, but we must beware that where beliefs *seem* to imply a genuine transgression of *universal hinges*, they transgress nothing at all. Here, *apparently* transgressive hinges are in fact only the expression of *local* hinges[20] and do not express the *bona fide* rejection of a universal hinge. Where they seem to challenge *universal* hinges, *local* hinges do not override, but always *accommodate* universal hinges. One example should suffice to make this clear: the celebrated

anthropologist, Bronislaw Malinowski found that in the Trobriand Islands, some women, called *Yoyova* or flying witches, are believed to have the capacity to fly. It is, however, also (accommodatingly) believed that they either leave their bodies behind when they do this, or have doubles in the form of fire-flies etc. do it for them (Young, 207). The universal hinge: 'Human beings cannot fly unaided' is therefore not transgressed *in der Tat*. Any attempt to ignore or transgress it *in action* – such as a *yoyova* attempting to *actually* fly off a cliff (without 'leaving her body behind') – must be seen as pathological. For all local hinges that seem to contradict universal hinges, such accommodating measures will always be found. There is no *normal* transgression of a universal hinge. To genuinely think or act on the basis of such underlying rules of thought as – 'I can fly unaided' or 'Only I exist' is a pathological problem, not a philosophical option. The *serious* alternative to certainty about 'My thoughts have not been inserted into my mind by some evil genius' is not, as the sceptic would have us believe, uncertainty, but madness[21]. In *Introducing Philosophy: The Challenge of Scepticism,* D.Z. Phillips makes a rapprochement between philosophical and neurotic doubt: both the philosopher and the neurotic individual entertain doubt in the absence of any practical reason for doing so, he notes, but where philosophical doubt differs is in not being accompanied by any correlative *behaviour*; it is "not accompanied by the kind of behaviour which gives practical and neurotic doubt their sense" (1996, 6). Unlike neurotic individuals, sceptics *act without the uncertainty* that they are mouthing.

As she deploys her thought experiments, the sceptic engages not in belief, but only in a form of *belief behaviour* or pretence. And the consequences of her thought experiment must also be regarded as pretence, *not possibility*. There *are* an incalculable number of certainties that stand fast for normal human beings, and these are not assertible or controvertible by words alone. Nor can they be logically disposed of *by imagining scenarios in which they are disposed of.* That is, conceivability is not a sufficient condition for possibility. The sceptical imagination is no threat to a logical certainty that is inextricably – indeed, *internally* – embedded in human practice.

7. The Illusion of Possibility

Wittgenstein's conception of the logical is internally linked to our human form of life[22] – and more specifically to our practices, to our inexorable *attitudes* – and this does not sit well with traditional conceptions of logical necessity. Stanley Cavell points out this apparent shortcoming:

> Wittgenstein's view of necessity is … internal to his view of what philosophy is. His philosophy provides, one might say, an anthropological, or even anthropomorphic, view of necessity: and that can be disappointing; as if it is not really *necessity* which he has given an anthropological view of. As though if the a priori has a history it cannot really be the a priori in question. (1979, 118-9)

On the standard philosophical view, the logical must encompass not only the human world, but *all possible worlds.* And though it may be conceded that the genuine challenge of *universal* hinges must indeed be termed nonsensical or pathological, it will be said that the violation of *human* laws of thought is indicative only of *human* nonsense; worlds can be imagined, it will be added, where human nonsense makes sense. And in the next breath, imagination is put at the service of philosophy:

Cartesian scenarios are evoked where evil geniuses or mad scientists play havoc with our thoughts.

Philosophy's ahistorical conception of the a priori goes hand in hand with a conception of logical possibility that is sufficiently constrained by imaginability or conceivability[23]. Mere conceivability has led some of our greatest philosophers to consider 'possible' what by any commonsensical standard would be deemed fantastical: Descartes thought he had better attend to the 'possibility' that we might all be dreaming our lives; G.E. Moore felt compelled by Kant to put an end to the scandalous fact that philosophy never provided a proof of the existence of external objects (1939, 127), thereby leaving it *open to doubt* whether or not external objects exist; and David Lewis saw "the mere possibility" that a person might switch bodies as real or serious enough to require refutation (1971, 47). The reason philosophers have taken on such 'possibilities' as *real* possibilities*, requiring intelligent, rational refutation, while at the same time categorically rejecting the possibility of round squares is that the latter are *inconceivable* or *unimaginable*, the former are not. I can *imagine* a world where evil geniuses constantly deceive me, I *cannot* imagine a round square or a mountain without a valley.

And indeed: I *can* imagine a world where evil geniuses constantly deceive me. The problem with sceptical scenarios is not that they lack intelligibility – indeed, it is their very intelligibility that gives them the leverage they have – but that this intelligibility is conflated with possibility, with *human* possibility. To imagine circumstances in which human beings are brains in vats *is* to imagine a scenario; it is *not*, however, to imagine a *human* scenario. The clash, most eloquently expressed by Hume (*Treatise* 1.4.7) between the intelligibility and the unliveability of scepticism is clarified when we understand that intelligibility is not internally linked to liveability – fictional discourses are intelligible, this does not make them applicable to our form of life. The confusion is not then between ordinary and philosophical doubt, but between ordinary and *fictional* doubt[24]. What philosophers often take to be *possibilities* are only *figments of the imagination*, and so we must beware of the *illusion of possibility*. A thought that has lost its human-boundedness and runs wild on the uncharted tracks of the imagination is not a 'possibility'; it is a thought.

Descartes, Moore and Lewis believed they could tamper with some of our bounds of sense as though they were questionable or refutable because they failed to differentiate between possibility and imaginability. They failed because to be able to differentiate between the *humanly* possible and the imaginable, our conception of what is humanly possible must be poised on *human-bound* hinges. The formidable, abstract, *all-worldly* laws of thought that have traditionally determined logical necessity for us – such as the law of non-contradiction – must be deemed insufficient. On their own, they have legitimised wild and unbounded speculation about what we can logically rule out or rule in: round squares, we must rule out; brains in vats, material objects not existing, and humans switching bodies, we must rule in. Surely, it is time we realised that this procedure is absurd. Philosophical speculation should not be deemed sufficiently confined by conceivability; it must be constrained by logical parameters specific to our world. *Universal* hinges – rules of thought *conditioned*[25] by how we are and how the world is – must also be used to delimit what it makes sense to say about our human form of life. When the only constraints upon logical necessity are a few logical laws pared of any visibly *human* specification, nothing impedes the

so-called 'possibilities' that: 'There may be no external objects', 'There may exist no one in the world but myself', 'The world may be five minutes old', 'Humans may be constantly deceived by evil geniuses'. To any non-philosopher, these are not even spectacular absurdities, they are mere inanities. That they have all been treated seriously by serious philosophers is a consequence of the philosophical requirement for a *crystalline purity of logic* (PI 107), one which for striving to go beyond the human, loses the human and loses sense:

> The conflict becomes intolerable; the requirement is now in danger of becoming empty. – We have got on to slippery ice where there is no friction and so in a certain sense the conditions are ideal, but also, just because of that, we are unable to walk. We want to walk: so we need *friction*. Back to the rough ground! (PI 107)

Hinges stake out the logical bounds that determine sense *on our ground,* provide the friction which prevents us from falling headlong onto an immaculate but meaningless absolute. They ensure that our conception of what is logically possible does not lead to our having to envisage life-size absurdities as formal possibilities. It is time philosophers stopped allowing the spectre of *all possible worlds* to poison their thinking properly about *our world*. Time we had a better look at logical necessity and saw that, as Cora Diamond puts it, it has a *human* face (1991, 6, 13).

8. Humanising logical necessity

> Logic cannot be *there,* in what we do. Well, … it *can* be, and … it is something like fantasy that stops us looking there.
> Cora Diamond, *The Realistic Spirit*

According to Cavell, two reasons explain traditional philosophy's contempt for *grammar* playing the role of *logic*, or determining *logical necessity*. The first, we have seen, is that *grammar* is only an historical a priori, and this falls short of the philosophical demand for an *absolute* a priori. The second is that it is part of the meaning of the concept of necessity "that the thing called *necessary* [be] *beyond our control*" (1979, 119). Here, then, Cavell echoes the fear, most articulate in Frege, that logic turn out to be nothing but a human product: flawed by subjectivity (psychologism) and fallibility (empiricism). It is this fear that is responsible for the dehumanisation, as it were, of logic. But the fear is unwarranted, for grammar – though internally linked to our form of life – *is* beyond our control.

It is wrong to assume that it follows, from the *humanness* of our logical bounds of sense, that they are *under our control*. Our grammar is *ours,* that is *not* to say that we control it – it is "not as if we *chose* this game!" (OC 317). Our agreement about how we use words – about what we deem endowed with sense or devoid of sense – is not a conscious, subjective, *controlled* agreement, but an *unconcerted consensus*. The agreement that underlies our language-games is as blind as social mutations are blind. We have not any more *decided* that 'This is (what we call) a table', than we have *decided*, at some point in our history, to live in groups, clans, tribes, families, rather than according to height or hair colour. Like our norms, our language is not rooted in intellectual agreement: "Language did not emerge from some kind of ratiocination" (OC 475). Though our rules for the way we use words and concepts are indeed constrained by how we are and how the world is[26], they are

not *rationally* or *empirically* constrained. We do not reason from previous beliefs or from experience that 'There exist people other than myself' or that 'Humans beings cannot switch bodies'; these are not derived or inferred *conclusions*, but certainties that *come with* being human – indeed, with being *animal*; certainties that *stand fast* for us independently of reason or cognition. Our universal hinges are *caused* or *conditioned* by certain facts; they are not, however, *justified* by, or *answerable* to, *any* fact[27]. Grammar *is* autonomous. No fear of psychologism or empiricism. Logical necessity is not less compelling or objective for being specifically human. It is *objective, humanly speaking*[28].

9. Conclusion

Our bounds of sense turn out to be less than absolute; they do not apply to *all possible worlds*. Our *objective certainty* is, as Gertrude Conway puts it, an "objectivism without absolutism" (1989, 142). The absence of absolutism does not, however, make the objectivism less stringent or less formidable. What *is* less formidable, and utterly implausible is the chimera of a superhuman, supernatural, imperturbable *absolute* logical necessity which by dint of being applicable to *all possible worlds* makes a farce of ours – forcing us, as it does, to consider evil geniuses, brains in vats, and zombies as *real* possibilities in our world.

The turn here is towards the *pragmatic* and the *anthropological*: grammar, the way we use words, is not due to some ahistorical, decontextualised benchmark. Far from being a type of *Begriffschrift*, in advance of use, grammar shows itself only *in use*. It is this *logic in action* which I have tried to render here. *Logical pragmatism* – the idea that our foundational certainty is *logical*, *enacted* and *ineffable* – makes at least three contributions to the philosophical clarification of how we, humans, work: it clarifies the nature of that unimpeded, streaming certainty which carries the saccaded, tentative strokes of knowledge in its flow; it allows us to realise the *impotence* of the sceptic's mere discursive or imaginary attack on our certainty; and it makes the explanatory gap obsolete. In this paper, I have attempted only to draw a clearer picture of our foundational certainty and to let it shed light on the impotence of philosophical scepticism.

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PG   *Philosophical Grammar*. R. Rhees (ed.). Trans. A. Kenny. Oxford: Blackwell, 1974.
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RPP I   *Remarks On The Philosophy Of Psychology* , vol. I, ed. G.E.M. Anscombe and G.H. von Wright, tr. G.E.M. Anscombe, Oxford: Blackwell, 1980.
Z   *Zettel* G.E.M. Anscombe and G.H. von Wright (eds). Trans G.E.M. Anscombe, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970.

NOTES

[1] "Pragmatics and Pragmatisms", lecture delivered at the University of London in March 2000.

[2] Jacques Bouveresse (1987) distinguishes a Jamesian brand of pragmatism, based on utility, from a Peircean brand which, strictly speaking, is a method of conceptual clarification or analysis, not concerned with the truth, justification or rationalisation of our beliefs. Bouveresse places Wittgenstein in the Percean line of pragmatism. Hilary Putnam holds a similar view, suggesting in his *Pragmatism: An Open Question*, that "even if Wittgenstein was not in the strict sense … a "pragmatist" … he shares … a central – perhaps the central – emphasis with pragmatism: the *emphasis* on the primacy of practice" (1995, 52). Also, Putnam sees the combination of anti-scepticism and fallibilism as pragmatism's most distinctive feature. On this reading, Wittgenstein would be an exemplary pragmatist: a fallibilist about knowledge (OC 12), he is also, as Avrum Stroll puts it, an "arch anti-sceptic" (1998, 17).

[3] See my "Words as Deeds: Wittgenstein's 'Spontaneous Utterances' and the Dissolution of the Explanatory Gap", *Philosophical Psychology* 13:3 (September 2000), 355-372.

[4] C.I. Lewis might be thought to have anticipated Wittgenstein, particularly in his "A Pragmatic Conception of the A Priori", but Lewis belongs to the narrow line of pragmatism; it isn't that the *a priori* is enacted, but that it is pliant to "alteration on pragmatic grounds": "through all our knowledge runs the element of the *a priori,* which is indeed malleable to our purpose and responsible to our need" (1922, 239). With respect to Peirce, who is Wittgenstein's closest precursor, Arnold Johanson notes that, whereas both Peirce and Wittgenstein "agree in that their indubitables are part of a basic, primitive system of action in the world", for Peirce, these are not, as they are for Wittgenstein, part of the supporting framework of the belief system, but "built so solidly into the system because they are true" (1994, 181, 182).

[5] I take the liberty of thus naming philosophers who share the *therapeutic* approach to Wittgenstein's philosophy, championed by Cora Diamond, James Conant and Juliet Floyd. For an exposition of this approach by its proponents, see *The New Wittgenstein*, ed. by R. Read & A. Crary (Routledge, 2000).

[6] By e.g. Rorty (1980, 5-6), Wright (1985, 469), Levi (1999,182), Phillips (1988, passim). Descriptions of the foundational character of 'hinge' belief pervade *On Certainty* (e.g.: "At the foundation of well-founded belief is belief that is not founded" (OC 253)). Avrum Stroll finds that more than one-tenth of the entries that comprise OC refer or allude to foundations which underlie or support the language-game. But Stroll rightly stresses that Wittgenstein's foundationalism breaks away from Cartesianism, the doctrine that what is foundational is also propositional (Avrum Stroll, "Wittgenstein's Metaphors". Forthcoming in *The Third Wittgenstein,* ed. D. Moyal-Sharrock, Ashgate, 2002).

[7] I have counted approximately 300 occurrences of 'hinge propositions' in approximately 200 passages of the 676 that make up *On Certainty*.

[8] Whereas *linguistic* hinges, and some *local* hinges are subject to change, what I have called *universal* hinges are not. Wittgenstein alludes to this diversity amongst hinges when he compares our foundational certainty to a bedrock subject to "no alteration or only to an imperceptible one" (OC 99).

Universal hinges save the bedrock from a thoroughgoing relativism. As Gertrude Conway puts it: "Accounts charging Wittgenstein with extreme relativism appear to zero in exclusively on passages addressing … multiplicity [that is, *the many forms of human life*], and fail to consider passages considering the [single] human form of life" (93). Whereas *local* hinges underpin thought in some forms of human life and not others; *universal* hinges underpin thought in our human form of life.

[9] See OC 43, 53, 57, 448, 653-657 *inter alia.*

[10] David Kaplan's restriction of the validity of pure indexicals to a "validity without necessity" (1989, 596) or a circumstantial validity (e.g. 'I am here now' might be valid only in the actual world) has no relevance on a conception of necessity which is grammatical and therefore (on Wittgenstein's conception of 'grammatical'), necessarily *circumstantial*; that is: internally linked to a particular form of life. But before sounding the alarm of relativism, we must remember that circumstances or form of life can be those of an individual, but they can also be those of a *species*. See Gertrude Conway for a discussion of Wittgenstein's form of "generic relativism", a species-relative notion of apriority that allows for an "objectivism without absolutism" (1989, 94, 142).

[11] I address the possible objection that some normal human beings do not share some of these universal hinges in section 6.

[12] OC 34, 103, 94, 105, 253, 58-59.

[13] This is the subject of my "The *Third* Wittgenstein & the Category Mistake of Philosophical Scepticism". Forthcoming in *Wittgenstein and the Future of Philosophy.* Proceedings of the 24th International Wittgenstein Symposium, Kirchberg am Wechsel, 2001.

[14] That is, not articulated *qua certainty,* but the same words that make up a hinge can be meaningfully articulated as a *figurative* or as a *fictional* utterance and, in certain circumstances, as an empirical proposition. I shall assume it to be understood in this paper that inarticulateness or ineffability characterises hinges *as such* and not their figurative, fictional or empirical *doppelgänger*. (More on this in the next section.)

[15] See OC 150, 283, 509. Indeed, Wittgenstein's move to disburden *Gewissheit* (certainty) of its Cartesian, rational, inferential baggage is discernible in his frequent use of the more arational *Sicherheit* (assurance or sureness; see OC 77, 233, 308, 358ff *inter alia*) – I owe this point to Göran Sundholm. Wittgenstein also distances our objective certainty from a reasoned, an inferred or temporal conclusion by comparing it to a spontaneous, unreasoned "utterance" (OC 510).

[16] Inasmuch as Wittgenstein holds only falsifiable propositions to have sense, grammatical rules (in that they are unfalsifiable) are nonsense. He writes as much: "… when we hear the two propositions, 'This rod has a length' and its negation 'This rod has no length', we take sides and favour the first sentence, instead of declaring them both nonsense. But this partiality is based on a confusion: we regard the first proposition as verified (and the second as falsified) by the fact 'that the rod has a length of 4 meters'." (PG 129). For Wittgenstein, "*the negation of nonsense is nonsense*" (to Ramsey; CL 2.7.27); and so *both* the grammatical 'proposition' and its negation are nonsense.

[17] In "The *Third* Wittgenstein…" (*op. cit.*)

[18] Ineffable or, as Guetti and Read have it, *invisible*: "Grammatically, a rule in action is "invisible" just in virtue of the fact that, to be taken as a rule – to be an actionable or capacitative concept – it must be *un*-expressed and *un*-exposed." (1996, 52).

[19] For Wittgenstein, propositionality entails falsifiability and the thing about hinges is that, being grammatical rules, they are not susceptible of falsification, hence their nonpropositionality. I maintain, *contra* P.M.S. Hacker, and alongside Anthony Kenny (1973, 229) Newton Garver (1996, 148-9) and Jacques Bouveresse (1991, 93) that Wittgenstein never ceases to consider bipolarity as definitive of propositionality. So as to justify the unfalsifiability of *hinge* or *Weltbild* propositions, which he takes to be unfalsifiable *empirical propositions,* Hacker contends that Wittgenstein eventually switched from bipolarity to bivalence (1989, 133; 1996, 34n; see also 221n). On my view, the unfalsifiability of hinges is due to their not being empirical propositions at all, and it is therefore not necessary to posit that Wittgenstein changed his mind about bipolarity in order to justify their status. Rather, Wittgenstein came to see that *Weltbild* propositions are not empirical propositions at all, but expressions of grammatical rules.

[20] Hinges that are valid for some human beings only. See note 9.

[21] Conflating imaginability and possibility is uncomfortably close to what demented individuals do. In the same issue of *Mind & Language,* Gregory Currie suggests that delusions might have their origin in a *misidentification of imagination*: 'Imagination is a cognitive tool of great power, but it is also potentially a rather dangerous one. Loss of the distinction between what is imagined and what is true, or seriously a candidate for truth, can be psychologically disastrous. … the schizophrenic patient is someone who has lost the distinction between what he or she imagines, and what he or she believes or

experiences.' (2000, 168, 174). Here again, the sceptic emerges as the innocuous counterpart of the neurotic: though she does not, like the schizophrenic, seriously confuse the product of her imagination and the object of her belief, the philosopher does conflate the possibility of imagining with the possibility of believing, or with the belief of possibility: If I can imagine that p, I can believe that p. What has to be recognised is that the possibility of conceiving or imagining something is not logically linked to the legitimacy of believing that something is possible. I discuss this in the next section.

[22] There are also local grammars, linked to *particular forms of human life* but, as previously noted, I do not discuss these here.

[23] Fortunately, the last decade has seen some philosophers protest and argue against this deplorable view, as old as philosophy itself. Stephen Yablo is the most notable. In "Is Conceivability a Guide to Possibility?", he writes: "Conceivability evidence has been accepted without qualm of question" throughout the history of philosophy, and "In the actual conduct of modal inquiry, our theoretical scruples about conceivability evidence are routinely ignored. … Those of us willing to be persuaded of *p*'s possibility by our ability to conceive it (and that is most of us, most of the time) should face the issue squarely: is this procedure ill-advised?" (1993, 3). Imaginability, conceivability, and also intelligibility are not synonymous, but they have usually been used interchangeably in ordinary language, and by philosophers. Most notably, Hume: "Tis an establish'd maxim in metaphysics, That whatever the mind clearly conceives includes the idea of possible existence, or in other words, that nothing we imagine is absolutely impossible. We can form the idea of the golden mountain, and from thence conclude that such a mountain may actually exist. We can form no idea of a mountain without a valley, and therefore regard it as impossible." (*Treatise* I, ii, 2). I also use them interchangeably here.

[24] Hume's distinction between philosophical and ordinary doubt is echoed by Michael Williams (1991, 359). See my "Third Wittgenstein…" for a discussion of the philosophical confusion between a falsifiable fictional proposition and an unfalsifiable grammatical rule.

[25] That is, *caused*, not *justified*. This will be clarified in the next section.

[26] "… if our memory functioned differently, we could not calculate as we do" (RFM, p. 236)

[27] "Indeed, doesn't it seem obvious that the possibility of a language-game is conditioned [*bedingt*] by certain facts?" (OC 617; see also RFM 80, 116). The crucial distinction Wittgenstein made between what is *caused* (or *conditioned*) and what is *reasoned* (or *justified* or *grounded*) is often too-thinly formulated. See, however: PI 325; OC 130-1, 429, 474.

[28] Putnam uses this phrase, which he attributes to David Wiggins (1981, 55).