

# TRACING THE TERRITORY: A UNITARY FOUNDATIONALIST ACCOUNT

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**ABSTRACT:** The paper offers an integrative interpretation of the different lines of thought Wittgenstein was inspecting in *On Certainty* and what he might have been looking for through them. It suggests that we may have been focusing our attention too strongly in the wrong place and comes to a new conclusion about where the real import of these reflections lies. This leads to an answer to the initially posed question of foundationalism that revises the way in which there can be said to be a grounding intention in *On Certainty*.

**KEYWORDS:** foundationalism, Ludwig Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, hinges

## 1. Introduction

Ours is an inherited world; beyond the purely physical there are so many sediments of understanding that we cannot even imagine making any sense of our surroundings without some guidance. Not just knowledge and experience about nature and how to deal with it, but our own self-understanding and the way to behave with and towards others in society, are due to history. This was the deep insight brought about by late phenomenology. Even if we reform, revise and renew, there is so much we take for granted that we can't even begin to become aware of it. It is not just that we assume a world with such saturated drawn contours; it is that we would not even come close to the idea of questioning much of it, at least not regularly.

We rely on steadfast linguistic meaning to speak about our environment, develop theories, establish connections between ideas, calculate and measure. This built-in vocabulary that we take for granted, already records deposits of information, condensed hypotheses, theories (and errors), pragmatically guided distinctions, customary evaluations, and much more. On the basis of the meaning introduced through explicit or implicit definitions of our terms we consider some claims as analytic. We regard them as true in virtue of the meaning of their constitutive terms. Ordinarily we don't question the linguistic tools we use; the

truth of our statements relies on the stability of meaning, of linguistic rules – which include, of course, logical ones. We could not make assertions, nor gain further knowledge, without them. We must keep them fast in order to assess, interpret, and gather new information about the world.

Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* entrench with this stream of thought but he is said to have carried it further in *On Certainty*,<sup>1</sup> anchoring this picture of the evolving flow of human gnoseological and linguistic patrimony, or so it is argued, to some new kind of foundation 'with a human face.' This would be less than epistemological or logical in classical terms, but would rather draw the boundaries of senselessness for human beings. It is my aim in this paper to try to see to what extent the considerations Wittgenstein brings up in *On Certainty* advance a specifically new phenomenon in the foundational sense previously referred to.

## 2. Hinges and the Question of Foundationalism

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

The contemporary discussion around Wittgenstein's *On Certainty* has majorly focused on what Wittgenstein called 'hinges.' Hinges are said to be certainties in the sense that they are assumed to be true, or, perhaps, cannot but be assumed to be true, rather than being a priori known to be so or being epistemically warranted. Although they are empirical statements they are not in the market for justification or rebuttal. Even if they belong to the normative background of our living they differ from the a priori statements, such as statements of logic and what Wittgenstein called 'grammatical statements' in that they are contingent.

The standard statements Wittgenstein provides as examples in the context of *On Certainty*, statements such as "The Earth has existed for many years past," "Here is a hand," "My name is L. Wittgenstein," "I just had lunch," "There is a staircase outside my bedroom," "I have never been to Asia Minor," "No one has ever been to the Moon,"<sup>2</sup> or "Objects don't disappear when they are not looked at" etc. would be undoubtedly accepted for reasons other than proof or any clear

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<sup>1</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein. *On Certainty*, eds. Elisabeth Margaret Anscombe and George Herbert Von Wright (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1972. First published 1969)

<sup>2</sup> Said, of course, in Wittgenstein's time. A contemporary equivalent could be: "No one has ever been to the Galaxy Cassiopeia Dwarf."

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epistemic justified necessity in their support. It is rather, so it is argued, that we could not make sense of our lived world without them being true.

The question of whether there were foundationalist intentions in Wittgenstein's last work has also been at the centre of the recent debates. Positions have ranged from those that do ascribe hinges a foundational character<sup>3</sup> to those that rather see Wittgenstein as finally reducing his aspirations to signaling some heterogeneous constitutive, taken for granted statements in our different life contexts that are different from mere grammatical or logical ones and whose acceptance is not in question. Those that do not defend a foundational reading tend to see at best some form of coherentism in Wittgenstein's remarks or deny the apprehension of his position in any of these categories.

The difficulties posed to an homogeneous foundationalist reading find support in some puzzling aspects of the text itself: the different character of the propositions offered as examples of basic hinges (which range from clearly more basic ones to others that would not so easily be considered universally shared), the differing levels of research this implies and the diverse perspectives from which they are approached. The propositions offered as examples of hinges include:

- a. The most basic assumptions about the physical world, without which we could not live or move around without continuous discontent, accidents and suicidal experiences include: "Objects don't disappear when I am not looking at them," "There are physical objects," "I am here right now," "Human beings have parents."
- b. The most basic assumptions about the correctness of our logical and mathematical operations with numbers: "12x12=144."
- c. Recognitional statements,<sup>4</sup> statements such as Moore's: "I have two hands," "There is a tree" etc.

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<sup>3</sup> Among the supporters of the foundationalist reading we find for example, Danièle Moyal-Scharrock, "Unraveling Certainty," in *Readings of Wittgenstein's On Certainty*, eds. Danièle Moyal-Scharrock and William H. Brenner (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 76-99, and also, at least to some extent, Crispin Wright, "Skepticism, Certainty, Moore and Wittgenstein" in *Wittgenstein's Lasting Significance*, eds. Max Kölbel and Bernhard Weiss (London: Routledge, 2004), 228-248. Among those that reject a foundationalist reading we can count Michael Williams, "Why Wittgenstein isn't a Foundationalist", in *Readings of Wittgenstein's On Certainty*, 47-58 and also Annalisa Coliva, "Hinges and Certainty. A Précis of Moore and Wittgenstein. Skepticism, Certainty and Common Sense" in *Philosophia*, 41 (2013): 1-12.

<sup>4</sup> I have adopted the expression 'recognitional statements' from Williams, "Why Wittgenstein," 49, since it seems to me to fit well and clarify the special character of this kind of statements.

- d. Statements about personal life and identity: "My name is L.W," "I come from town x," "there are stairs outside my bedroom," "I have never been to Asia Minor."
- e. Epistemological boundary statements: "No one has ever been to the moon."
- f. Statements about our gnoseological patrimony: comments on chemistry, physics, history, textbooks in general, etc.
- g. Statements about general background assumptions in all kind of contexts and possible language games.

We may have the tendency to select just those examples of statements that most directly favor what we might call a 'basic reading,' supposing that the rest is less essential to the point. But before we do, we should first consider whether we could integrate the whole as research lines pertaining to a common project. If we adopt this strategy the truth is that sometimes Wittgenstein's remarks on those 'contingent statements that would adopt a normative rather than an epistemic role,' allow a much wider reading. Towards the end of the listing above we tend to depart from those very basic propositions whose questioning by any human being would tend to make his life appear absurd to less dramatic ones. The corresponding last remarks appear at times to refer to any contingent statements that fit the bill. So one might wonder, if they weren't of interest for the inquiry in *On Certainty*, why include them, especially if he had already done so in PI?

We cannot simply ignore the fact that sometimes he does seem to be referring to no more than those general background assumptions, transmitted knowledge and layers of understanding I referred to in the introductory passages, many of which are ingrained in our (evolving and disparate) conceptual baggage, and are not universally shared and would not, as Williams argues,<sup>5</sup> satisfy other requirements of an adequate basic, foundational set of statements, which according to him would include: being distinguishable as basic, being universal, independent of the body of knowledge, grounding and allowing resolutions of disputes at a global scale. We could set apart statements from a) to e) as 'the narrow reading of hinges' (NRH) and include them all in what we might call in contrast 'the broad reading of hinges' (BRH). However, according to Williams not even as applied to NRH talking about foundationalism would be justified for the reasons mentioned.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> See Williams, "Why Wittgenstein," 50–58.

<sup>6</sup> I will not go into the reasons offered by Williams to defend this point, since he has done so extensively himself, *ibid.*

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In the paragraphs where Wittgenstein embeds the question of hinges into his characteristic terminology of constitutive rules of language games, he clearly oscillates between examples that seem to embrace all kind of cultural and context-dependent games to others that suggest reference to the more basic hinges (NRH); that is, to shared assumptions of any human life whatsoever, which might differ in the specificity “I have never been to China” or “I have never been to the US,” “My name is LW,” or “My name is OR” but would basically count for the same.

Another turn is given with the passages that focus on what a proper response to the sceptic might be and why Moore’s answer isn’t an answer at all, sliding this way into what I take to be a relatively different problem stage.

All this makes it difficult to give an integrated interpretation of the text. However, in what follows I want to see to which extent even the less basic of these remarks are not just remnants of old thoughts but contribute to the introduction of a new epistemological perspective. One that might point to a unified foundationalist account, in which context most of these basic hinge statements (NRH) would be rather the most immediate fruitage than the ground itself.

### **3. Ideologies, Traditions, Theories and Presuppositions of Differing Sorts...Does Anything Count?**

If we depart from the most standard definition of hinges as those implicit normative but contingent propositions that stay put while others are used, enabling possible talking, discussing and inquiring into or about something else, we certainly face a very generalized phenomenon, since there are plenty of such contingent empirical statements we take for granted in our diverse life contexts. We find them from the most intimate micro-historical personal world levels, such as between me and my partner, me and my family, me and my friends, me and my colleague peers, to more professional contexts and larger communities (theories and ideologies of different sorts, psychoanalysis, physics or chemistry); to different community sizes and sorts; to shared socio-historical or biological ones. We share experiences and exchanges, transmitted knowledge about our life contexts which we take for granted, expecting others to do so too. Some of these might have a more restricted life than others but, nevertheless, as long as they are active, their role appears to be quite similar to that described in Wittgenstein’s examples. Consider his remarks about personal history: people knowing their names, their ancestors, where they come from, the spatial and time contexts in which they are living, where they have been, where they are located right now and, why not?,

whether they just met someone new, brushed their teeth, or other things of that sort.

159. (...) 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.
431. "I know that this room is on the second floor, that behind the door a short landing leads to the stairs, and so on." One could imagine cases where I should come out with this, but they would be extremely rare. But on the other hand, I show this knowledge day in, day out by my actions and also in what I say.
70. For months I have lived at address A, I have read the name of the street and the number of the house countless times, have received countless letters here and given countless people the address. If I am wrong about it, the mistake is hardly less than if I were (wrongly) to believe I was writing Chinese and not German.
71. If my friend were to imagine one day that he had been living for a long time in such and such a place, etc. etc., I should not call this a mistake, but rather a mental disturbance, perhaps a transient one.

These remarks don't seem in themselves very different from similar personal expectations concerning my partner's knowledge that I have been working in this or that University, that I am a philosopher, etc., etc.; or that in Spain we drive on the right and not on the left, or that street signs ought to be respected; or, if my colleague is a psychoanalyst, that he doesn't suddenly ignore that for psychoanalysts there is something like the unconscious, or, as a life-long communist, that he ignores communism's main doctrines, and so on. Or are they? Some of them might concern information more essential to our living, but are the reasons for our reliance upon them (and our expectations towards others in that regard) any different? Am I less disturbed (or are those who share my life) if I cease to know that I am married and I am a philosopher and I work in this or that place than if I don't know my own address? Indeed it might not be that bad if I forget which university I graduated from, or the names of those that did so with me, but is it just a matter of importance and degree? Like when I take good care of the password for my bank account, which I need and keep reusing, while I forget others created in some unimportant, seldom visited websites, or remember the names of all my students while I deal with them, while some of them fade away with time... etc. Some of this is important for a lifetime, some just essential in short-term memory, for a while. Suspicion of Alzheimer arises when a family member starts forgetting the names of his sons, what his profession is, who his wife is, how many times he has been married, what he just did, where he was this

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morning. When he forgets, that is, the course of his main activities throughout his day or life. But not when he doesn't recall whether he was ever in Albacete or not, unless he married and worked in Albacete at one time. Going to Asia Minor might count as a more exotic adventure to forget, but only if you are not some voyager travelling around the world every x number of days, who might once have landed, jet-lagged, in Asia Minor but cannot really say. So, what is the criterion?

Similarly, Wittgenstein devotes many passages to showing how much we rely on our more generally transmitted gnoseological patrimony and how it determines and constitutes all our further epistemological enterprises and dealings with the world. We do not start from zero in conducting experiments, we trust what anatomy and the history textbooks say.

167. It is clear that our empirical propositions do not all have the same status, since one can lay down such a proposition and turn it from an empirical proposition into a norm of description.

Think of chemical investigations. Lavoisier conducts experiments with substances in his laboratory and now he concludes that this or that takes place when there is burning. He does not say that it might happen otherwise, another time. He has a definite world-view – not of course one that he invented: he learned it as a child. I say world-view and not hypothesis, because it is the matter-of-course foundation for his research and as such unmentioned.

600. What kind of grounds have I for trusting text-books of experimental physics?

I have no grounds for not trusting them. And I trust them. I know how such books are produced – or rather, I believe I know. I have some evidence, but it does not go very far and is of a very scattered nature. I have heard, seen and read various things.

602. Should I say “I believe in physics,” or “I know that physics is true”?

603. I am taught that under such circumstances this happens. It has been discovered by conducting the experiment a few times. Not that that would prove anything to us, if it were not that this experience was surrounded by others, which combine with it to form a system. Thus, people did not make experiments just about falling bodies but also about air resistance, among other things. But in the end I rely on these experiences, or on the reports of them; I feel no scruples about ordering my own activities in accordance with them. – But hasn't this trust also proved itself? So far as I can judge – yes.

But not just such globally shared assumptions, actually them all, established theories and shared knowledge as well as more specific scientific paradigms and ideologies and other cultural idiosyncrasies, have mostly this cultural furnishing

role on whose stage we go on living, inquiring and forming further hypothesis. Some might be restricted to specific communities and cultures, others belong to the common patrimony of humankind. Among the latter we find those regarding the human biological species and the physical world, with statements of increasing informational complexity: from being mammals and learning grammar to vulnerability to x atmospheric conditions, virus and bacteria of varied sorts; from our earthly venue to sophisticated theories about the universe as a whole.

However, they are all just steps in the ever narrowing circle of what each person in his personal sphere, in his community, his specialty, his culture, his species and his world takes for granted in living; from direct experiences, to mnemonically recorded ones and transmitted knowledge. Much built into, much sediment from which we depart in becoming active in the world; much belonging to some software deposits from which we draw in order to fulfill our active life but which do not directly belong to the forefront of our living. Those hinges relevant for the constitution of our identity and the world would seem to occupy the deeper, most permanent layers, in each of these stratified structures that we are.

#### **4. Grammar, Certainty, and Knowledge**

##### **4.1 Certainty of What?**

When talking about hinges beyond the importance that this taken for granted informational states have in our life, what is stressed is the certainty with which we rely upon them. We take hold of them with no hesitation, rely upon them almost blindly, how is this to be explained if not justified? Does the relevance they have for our life, or the more or less dependence of whole structures of knowledge upon them, makes them trustworthier? Is there some epistemic basis for our trust or is trust just a function of necessity? Is our certainty concerning the different sort of hinge-statements of the same sort? Or are local ones, for example, less certain in some sense, than universally hold ones?

The wide range Wittgenstein is ready to give his notion of hinges shows itself again in those passages where he more explicitly poses the problem in terms of constitutive rules of language games. Where he offers examples referring also to local, cultural, historical and possibly changing contexts. Actually, given the ample notion of language games he entertains this is simply a matter of consistency. Since we do find those newly acknowledged empirical statements that play the role of constitutive rules in most language games whatsoever and take them for granted just the same as long as we move within their frames.

Consider these remarks:

620. In particular circumstances one says “you can rely on this;” and this assurance may be justified or unjustified in everyday language, and it may also count as justified even when what was foretold does not occur. A *language-game exists* in which this assurance is employed.
609. Supposing we met people who did not regard that as a telling reason. Now, how do we imagine this? Instead of the physicist, they consult an oracle. (And for that we consider them primitive.) Is it wrong for them to consult an oracle and be guided by it? – If we call this ‘wrong’ aren’t we using our language-game as a base from which to combat theirs?
617. Certain events would put me into a position in which I could not go on with the old language-game any further. In which I was torn away from the *sureness* of the game. Indeed, doesn’t it seem obvious that the possibility of a language-game is conditioned by certain facts?

These reflections go on in ζ579, ζ628 and others.<sup>7</sup> In such cases it would not be surprising to hear that our reliance need not depend upon the truth of the relied upon. However, interpreters have stressed the relevance of realizing that the ‘sureness’ Wittgenstein is talking about in talking about hinges is altogether of a non-epistemic sort. It is not a matter of knowing the statements in question to be true. What a community assumes to be the case can turn out false from an epistemic perspective. It would be ignorance not to recognize the numerous examples by which taken for granted statements were discovered wrong and changed throughout history. This notwithstanding that whole cultures relied upon them as their unquestioned background. Nor is Wittgenstein a relativist in the epistemic sense as can be derived from ζ617. So, first of all, if there is something like being certain in these cases too, what is it that I am certain of? and further: Can I be said to have the same kind of certainty regarding some taken for granted beliefs in my local community, or in the world community at large, than I have for the kind of personal hinges we saw above? And, most importantly, if not, why not?

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<sup>7</sup> Wittgenstein’s *On Certainty*, ζ579. It is part of the language-game with people’s names that everyone knows his name with the greatest certainty.

ζ 628. When we say “Certain propositions must be excluded from doubt,” it sounds as if I ought to put these propositions – for example, that I am called L.W. – into a logic-book. For if it belongs to the description of a language-game, it belongs to logic. But that I am called L.W. does not belong to any such description. The language-game that operates with people’s names can certainly exist even if I am mistaken about my name, – but it does presuppose that it is nonsensical to say that the majority of people are mistaken about their names.

Let's consider first the personal hinge cases again. We could draw the following distinctions between them:

- a) "I am here now," "I am sitting on a chair," "I am brushing my teeth," "I just saw a man," etc. and also: a)\* "There are stairs outside my bedroom," "I arrived today," "I had breakfast this morning" etc.
- b) "My name is LW," "I have been living at this address for long" etc.

The first a) allude ultimately to direct experiences I am having, which I simply cannot doubt, since all I do relies in my being capable to trust this kind of things. If I couldn't, I would lose completely my sense of security and would not know what to trust any more. It is of course not that I have an external experience of 'myself doing this and that' but I do have a conscious awareness of '(my)<sup>8</sup> doing this and that,' '(my) experiencing this and that' I need not express it, nor claim to know it, but I have it and base myself on it. There is an enormous amount of experiences (beyond those Wittgenstein mentions) that I might be having and could include here. All my memories are based on my capacity to trust these very basic experiences too. Statements of the sort a)\* are already memories of these more immediate ones. Statements of the sort b) are based also on our memory of experiences, but of experiences of such a persistent sort and so relevant to my identity that they become essential to my living. They are tied to something that is not an episodic memory or a mere punctual experience, such as is the constant consciousness of what I call myself (whose alter-ego becomes LW, OR or whatever for the others). As Kant says, rather than an experience it accompanies them all as a form of continuous awareness. Were I to doubt myself as a whole, then surely nothing goes. But, to be sure, to know that "my name is LW" is not the same as this self-awareness, it is, as I said, a persistently recorded experience intimately tied to it. This sort b) could go beyond the cases mentioned to include many of those aspects relevant to my identity considered before: that I am married, a philosopher etc. The ground of my certainty, and there is such a ground here, is not of a different kind. Being OR is more essential to me than being married, but having been in Asia Minor need not be.

However, my certainty of experiences of the first sort a) or even of the second b), not in the most radical sense alluded before of myself accompanying my experiences, but in the sense of the recorded memory of a personal history I recall as my own (and I could possibly exchange with someone else's personal history, for example Napoleon's) would be just the same if I were hallucinating. I would rely upon them exactly the same. Since as a human being it is no option for me to

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<sup>8</sup> In the sense of an internal awareness of myself as subject and not as object of experience

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rely in my direct experiences but a necessity. Is it possible that I am wrong about my thereupon based beliefs? Yes, it is. Although others would be needed to make me aware of that. What is not possible is 1) that I am not certain of having had those experiences if I have (not of their being reliable if shown otherwise) and 2) that I could live trusting them without difficulties. Unless ... the whole community is having the same hallucinations and they are not incompatible with our remaining experiences about the world! But, in the normal case, if I certainly would be having hallucinations and there is a mismatch between my experiences (or my recalled personal history supposedly based on them), and my certainties, with the world, I would continuously have trouble with others and my environment. Nevertheless, *I prima facie* cannot but trust. It is not that I act as if the conceivable were possible; it is that the ‘merely conceivable for others’ is certain for me and that is why I act accordingly. More than a possibility it is a reality, though I can be wrong.

But now let's go back to the initial question of whether my certainties about transmitted and relied upon ‘knowledge’ in my community (however large) are of the same kind as those certainties about my experiences and memories based directly upon them. The claim is that those personal certainties do not have an epistemic character either and I would say this is true in a sense. It is true in the sense that I can deliver no further justification for them beyond repeating them again. That is, if knowledge requires to be justified as true then I could not deliver that in cases where I am registering experiences which themselves can be given no further justification. However, I am certain that these experiential states are the way to prove how things are and if this counts as knowledge, I have knowledge. This need not be incompatible with Wittgenstein’s claim that saying “I know” adds absolutely nothing to my stating that *p* as I will soon elaborate. So let’s distinguish for now between justified knowledge and knowledge\* of this last sort. Actually, as Timothy Williamson<sup>9</sup> would put it, knowledge (knowledge\*) is already in this first step of registering a experience as *p*. But now, still, in the case of relied upon transmitted information, what is it that I am certain of? Of course, I do take such informational states for granted in my life not necessarily having or asking for justifications. So the sureness with which I rely upon them has nothing to do with me having any kind of proof of its truth. My sureness is not epistemic in the sense that, for different reasons now, I need not be able to give justification here either in the traditional sense of proving knowledge. But, with that out of the way, there are still two different questions here: is my sureness about 1) the content of the statement in question being true (whether I have proof of it or not)

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<sup>9</sup> See Timothy Williamson, *Knowledge and its Limits* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

or 2) about my experience of this having been transmitted to me as something I could rely on? Take the case of the textbook of chemistry: what am I sure of? This being the way I have read things to be or of the content of those read statement being true justified knowledge (even without having been given the needed, maybe sophisticated justification)? Can I really separate both? If I compare the case to my personal experiences and memories, the only thing I can be said to be certain of in a similar way is 2). I have experienced this through textbooks or by seeing how my teachers or other society members apply it or take it for granted in different ways. That is, if this should be seen as a similar kind of certainty as my personal ones, the only thing I can be certain of is my experience that it is treated as knowledge, that I myself treat it as if it were true. I can be as certain of this as I am of sitting in a chair right now. If my experience of being sitting in a chair or having been sitting on a chair is knowledge\*, I can be said to have knowledge\* of those experiences in terms of 2) too. My certainty is a form of knowledge\*. But, when talking about certainty here we cannot reduce it so easily to that, since here the experience is one that concerns some cognitive content.

Let's separate a few ideas.

- (i) I am sure about " $p$ " being true therefore  $p$  is the case.
- (ii) I am sure about having been transmitted " $p$ ' is true."
- (iii) I am sure about having been transmitted that  $p$  (is the case)

I do not have the kind of epistemic certainty of i) we said. I can be said to have some certainty and knowledge\* for ii), but since ii) implies that what I have been transmitted is that  $p$ . If based on ii) I simply rely on what I have been told or raised to rely on, I will be treating " $p$ " as if it were true. So if my certainty is just for ii) and iii) I will be acting as if i) were true. This requires the mediating step of me accepting and internalizing, trusting, that what I have been implicitly or explicitly taught to be true, is true. For this trust, there is in principle no certainty. That is, nothing like certainty of the type of knowledge\*. I do act as if I would have justified knowledge of the transmitted content. Furthermore I act as if the world would be as such statements say. But all I have in terms of certainties comparable to experiential and mnemonic ones, are of the type ii) and iii). Here as opposed to the personal experience cases, I could find out that I/we are wrong precisely by relying on those experiences of the first sort. In principle, though, I have no problem, as Wittgenstein says, "ordering my own activities in accordance to them" (to that transmitted knowledge) taking them to be as I am told, what amounts to taking them to be true. So, ultimately, there is something epistemic in

my attitude of trust, even if no epistemic certainty is at play, neither in the classic nor in the experiential sense.

#### 4.2 Grammar, Transmitted Knowledge, and Language

Moyal-Sharrock has argued that the security with which we hold to constitutive rules of grammar, including hinges which would actually pertain to grammar, is some kind of primitive trust or animal certainty:

Logic is seen as belonging to the realm of instinct, not reason (...), and this is reinforced by allusions to certainty as a kind of primitive (or primal) *trust*. Without this unflinching trust, there is no making sense (...). Trust, here, is not a possibility, but a logical necessity.<sup>10</sup>

The observation that our reliance upon the rules of grammar is not a conscious act but mostly done without much thinking is surely right. When I am speaking I am not thinking or choosing to trust the words I use and their meanings. I simply do. When I rely on some learned physics to do an experiment I am also (in the normal case) not choosing to trust, but trusting. However, as I was saying a moment ago this kind of non-questioned reliance, is not of the same sort as the sureness I have of “me being sitting in a chair right now,” it is no knowledge\*. The fact that I should not have it as an object of consciousness the whole time, doesn’t mean that my reliance is not based of my awareness of having sat on a chair. In the case of trusting informational states with cognitive contents, there is a difference between a) my sureness in talking hold of them and acting upon them ‘as if what they state were the case’ as if the cognitive content of such an informational state “*p*” were justified true knowledge and therefore *p* where the case, and b) my sureness of them, that is my certainty that *p*. While the instinctive attitude of trust, let’s call it ‘sureness-1,’ is the same in both cases (the personal experiential and mnemonic and the transmitted informational state cases) my certainty, or ‘sureness-2,’ in the personal case is based on knowledge\* of precisely that what I am talking hold of, but in the informational case it is not. I would reserve the notion of certainty to cases of sureness-2. If I were to be clarified in the second case and told that I am wrong, it would strike me as incomprehensible. In the first I would have much less difficulty in adapting. I could live with the sudden discovery that those that gave themselves as my parents weren’t my parents after all or that some sorts of daisies (I was so securely telling my daughter to pick up) are poisoning when in contact with salt, or that

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<sup>10</sup> Danièle, Moyal-Sharrock, “Logic in Action: Wittgenstein’s Logical Pragmatism and the Impotence of Skepticism” in *Philosophical Investigations* 26, 2 (2003): 125-148, 5

they aren't considered daisies any more, or that my security in assuming the Dutch homosexual couple in my hotel were not legally married was wrong, etc. Sureness-1, is not necessarily Sureness-2 no matter how quick and thoughtless I rely on it.<sup>11</sup> I think these two notions of 'sureness' are often conflated. I cannot be wrong in my awareness of what is standardly grouped up as a 'daisy' (as far as I know) that is, in my experience of a specimen but I could be wrong in what I take for granted daisies are like. I didn't think about the possibility of error when relying upon all that information but it didn't amount for me to knowledge\*.

One could propose that cases of transmitted knowledge should not be included among the basic hinges. Scharrock, for example, claims explicitly to be referring to what would be a universal grammar, but it is not clear to me where to draw the line between what belongs to it and what does not: not when talking about personal hinges, since she includes hinges of the kind of "those who gave themselves as my parents are such" and not when talking about transmitted informational states, which she doesn't explicitly exclude. Actually some transmitted informational states can be considered universally shared too. It seems to me that the distinction she wants to draw should be based in how relevant it is for our life. But the truly important difference relies in the fact that the ones are epistemically grounded as forms of direct knowledge\* (or directly mnemonically based upon it) while the others aren't. Furthermore, if we consider grammar as a whole, much of it, can be considered of the informational kind even if ingrained in our concepts. Is she ready to see all of this in terms of basic universal certainty of the same kind as personal experiences?

The distinction between those contingent statements that play a normative role in our frameworks and those a priori propositional truths that constitute what Wittgenstein calls 'propositions of logic' is smooth. Since the necessity of those 'truths of grammar' is due to our words' meaning, whose origin is often just as empirically contingent and taken for granted as hinges themselves are. If many of our inherited background assumptions, as Wittgenstein's own remarks show (see below), are inbuilt in language, in their previous stadium they are equally taken for granted contingent empirical statements just as hinges. Surely, functioning as word meanings they fix what are going to be the necessary rules of language, but

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<sup>11</sup> My impression is that sureness-1 comprises both the categorical and the doxastic attitude distinctions that Scharrock (Moyal-Scharrock "Unraveling Uncertainty," 79), makes of objective certainty. Since the first of them refers, as she says, to the foundational status we give such certainties as our non-questioned inherited background, our taken for granted world picture, which comprises all that we take our world to be like in our acting, which makes no distinction between those for which we have knowledge\* and those for which we do not; it expresses also the notion of blind trust that she wants to capture through the doxastic attitude distinction.

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just because we (most of us) have adopted them in the first place without much further epistemic query. That is, we might know a priori as a matter of logic that if something is ‘water’ it is of necessity H<sub>2</sub>O, but we are absolutely taking for granted this information, which we assume without further questioning from our chemical textbooks. That is what it means to say that they are merely a priori truths of grammar.

168. But now, what part is played by the presupposition that a substance A always reacts to a substance B in the same way, given the same circumstances? Or is that part of the definition of a substance?

Wittgenstein is quite aware of this quinean interchange in our language games, in our theories, and how this produces changes in the meanings of our words.

65. When language-games change, then there is a change in concepts, and with the concepts the meanings of words change.  
410. Our knowledge forms an enormous system. And only within this system has a particular bit the value we give it.

In these passages he is considering to which extent statements like that in 168 might be conceptual truths. But many other passages in *On Certainty*, devoted to explaining hinges, include appeal to similar claims from our text books we would not question but on whose basis we go on trying to understand our world further. This is not to say that there aren’t any differences between these ‘logico-linguistic’ statements and at least some hinges (when considering the genealogical origin of the first) since this would not apply to cases such as “my name is Ludwig Wittgenstein” or “I have never been to the moon,” statements whose certainty, as is, would constitute some kind of knowledge\*. Many cases of grammar (surely not all) are, though, of the transmitted ‘knowledge’ sort.

In all these cases, which include much of what makes up grammar, we have no epistemic certainty but trust on rules and information that do surely have a huge epistemic import. But this trust is not detached from epistemic justification either. Not because we do as if the content transmitted is true, not because we should have the needed justification for it most of the time, but because, as Wittgenstein says, the trust itself is justified.

### 4.3 ‘Grammar:’ A New Foundation or a Founded One?

That much of our interaction with the world departs from such taken for granted linguistic and non-linguistic rules, no matter how *surely-1* they are relied upon, doesn’t seem sufficient to accredit the trusted with a foundational role in any

meaningful sense. Being a trusted departure point does not amount to being a foundational one. What kind of a foundation would one be that instead of serving as bottom ground for revisions might be revisable itself? In the interplay between holding fast and changing the wooden planks of our ship all we might achieve is indeed just a form of coherentism. In reading Scharrock's<sup>12</sup> paragraphs on the 'historically or humanly constrained a priori,' which she describes as providing some non-traditional 'logical necessity with a human face,' one gets the impression, though, as if she would be presenting this linguistic grammar-bounded necessity as some sort of last foundation beyond which we could not go. This is not to deny that grammar might change, she agrees, but this would be "all the necessity we can get," a necessity "without absolutes." In providing this picture she appeals to Cavell's reading of Wittgenstein and offers and interpretation reminiscent of McDowell's *Mind and World*. Suggesting that beyond our linguistic apprehension all there might be are *causal* constraints of which we can have no cognitive understanding but just neural impingements, no perceptual awareness when not conceptual. This clearly reminds of McDowell's critique of Davidson. Even if there should be some causal conditioning at a neural level it has no cognitive import and therefore our perception must be understood as conceptual all the way down.

It is true that when Scharrock talks about foundations she is most of the time referring to 'universal grammar' and many of those hinges she appeals to are of what I call 'the experiential kind;' although, as I said, there is no clear separation between these and those of the transmitted knowledge kind. Regarding the experiential ones she considers, it is unclear to me how she puts together the kind of 'animal certainty' she attributes to our ineffable reliance upon such hinges, with her idea that the last ground is some kind of conceptually apprehended 'historical a priori.' Since the certainty with which animals rely on there being a world with a given structure while moving around in it can just be of the experiential non-conceptual kind or due to causal conditioning. While ours, even if understood as ineffable, must be of the propositional conceptual sort if we are to make it cohere with the picture suggested in the paragraphs on the 'historical a priori.' But maybe the comparison was just metaphorical with no pretension of similarity beyond the immediacy aspect of our reactions.

On the other hand, when talking about the linguistic a priori statements of grammar it won't be easy either to sort out those linguistic statements that are to be seen as universal from those that are not. At least I don't think this is

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<sup>12</sup> Moyal-Scharrock "Logic in Action," 12-13

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achievable without going precisely beyond the “historical a priori” and into the absolute position she attempts to avoid.

As opposed to this I do think that we can do better than holding securely to some contents but denying epistemic certainty and any deeper foundation to those (however complex) linguistic a priori statements of grammar. Our security relies not in the immediacy of our trust, nor the necessity to hold upon the transmitted, but on there being, as Wittgenstein says, a justification for the trust itself; one that at the very bottom grounds the same way that our personal experiences do. Because, even if, as Scharrock quotes Wittgenstein in saying, “language is not based on a ratiocination or epistemic agreement” – not in the conscious sense of a ceremony of learning or the signing of a covenant, not any more than the ‘Social Contract’ for accepting common norms can be said to be – it is not disconnected of its epistemic background of origination either. Actually conceptual trust, when conscious of its origins, is trust in there being along with our historical tradition some kind of epistemic background to our conceptual discriminations on whose basis we can rely when it should not be obvious of itself.

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

Sometimes it might be more a matter of conceptually registered or institutionalized practices having pragmatic sense but also here we directly see, or presume worthy, the purpose for which they are established. That is, we surely do not ‘know’ but take much for granted and trust while assuming that mostly there is some kind of epistemic justification (be it: research done, discovered connections, properties, attributes or vulnerabilities, or mere relevant discriminations, relations, affections, etc. whose distinction justifies our use). But we knew too how to rewind back and prove the genealogical epistemic lineage of our words, their purpose and legitimacy and, if necessary, how to go about to change them. Actually anything that might count as the evolution of human knowledge is a matter of doing precisely that. Even in the more pragmatic cases we can come to see that new or conflicting purposes require expansion or restriction of corresponding word meanings (be it ‘marriage’ or ‘phablet-phones’). Therefore, a better picture of our trust might be something like a ‘passing the torch’ of the epistemic trustworthiness of our forbearers and conditional to the rightness of their achievements.

The only kind of foundation I can think of in the light of these reflections is therefore one of the traditional sort. That is, one that reassesses the role of a world

we can perceive, we can ‘be familiar with’<sup>13</sup> (in a cognitive and more than causal sense) previous to our conceptual apprehensions; a world that possess the needed sort of autonomy and universality to correct our meanings, frustrate our purposes and resolve disputes.

### 5. Moore’s ‘Recognitional Statements’: Responding to the Sceptic

Wittgenstein reflections approach the problem from a different perspective in considering why Moore’s claim that “he knows that this is a hand” adds nothing to his claim that “this is a hand” and is no help against the sceptic. Wittgenstein appeals here to the use of words in language games. “This is a hand” or “a tree” because that is the way our words are used, that is what we call ‘a hand.’ Here the point is not one about grammar but about what our words are applied to. Now, these claims could be made no matter the type of words we use if we use them properly, whether we talk about ‘hands,’ ‘neutrinos,’ ‘generous’ people or ‘unchaste women.’ In a sense in all these cases we have the certainty (at least in standard cases) that that is the way words are used in our language games. The “I know” adds of course no further assurance that would not be there in what makes us issue the statement in the first place. So, quoting Williamson again, the knowledge (or *knowledge*) is in that first step already, in the claim that *p is the case*. That perfectly coheres with what Wittgenstein says. But if we push this point further making it say that the ‘doing it that way (rightly)’ gives us an assurance of the truth of what *our words say*, we might seem to land here again in some kind of direct realism of the mcdowellian sort. There are, however, substantial remarks that show that this is not how Wittgenstein means it. Consider this:

584. Would it be possible to make use of the verb ‘know’ only in the question “How do you know?” following a simple assertion? – Instead of “I already know that” one says “I am familiar with that;” and this follows only upon being told the fact. But what does one say instead of “I know what that is?”

Here the difference between being ‘familiar with’ something and knowing ‘what it is,’ are two pair of shoes. Even if that is how we use our words, the trust is not necessarily and identification between the correct use of words and the acquainted experience that makes it correct. What I trust is that this is the way to prove whether this is ‘a hand’ or that a ‘neutrino’ in my language game. But again our notion of ‘neutrino’ might perfectly evolve and as a consequence our claims

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<sup>13</sup> See Wittgenstein’s *On Certainty*, remark 584 quoted further down in this paper

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about what the sorted out items in its extension are (or signalize in this case) too<sup>14</sup>. The point is not one about being certain of the epistemic adequacy of our conceptual terms and corresponding truths and thereupon presumed facts, but rather a certainty in the way we prove that our conceptual conceptions apply, and in my experience of having done so (in terms of knowledge\*); which can be equally expanded to a certainty in our way to determine what counts as correcting them if required. Both the knowledge that this is how my concepts are applied and that I am before an application case are forms of experiential or experientially derived knowledge\*. I am certain (sureness-2) that this is the way to prove whether a cell is an ‘eukaryote,’ I am certain (sureness-2) that I have the experience necessary to prove it, but I simply trust (sureness-1) that the distinctions made with the term in my biological text books are exhaustive enough. I could perfectly accommodate again that against what I was told there might be eukaryotes without mitochondria organelles, as there are<sup>15</sup> and my textbooks have to be changed. Again, I accept the change because I trust that scientists made the necessary experiences to prove it.

It is from this perspective, of course, that the question of certainty in language use and in experiential hinges become connected. In both cases it is the experiential basis that determines certainty (sureness-2).

Actually, my impression is that despite the heterogeneous appearances of Wittgenstein’s differing approaches and the varied layers of depth he considers, they all trace together the intended territory that demarcates what he was after. A better guidance to a unified interpretation of what this is requires asking ourselves in which sense all these varied remarks could deliver an answer to the sceptic. This approach can give us a sense of the way in which we might speak of a foundational ground to them all.

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<sup>14</sup> This is no concession to a metaphysical realist or referentialist position. The referential set is always classified according to some common descriptive properties, and if these descriptions (as a result of experiencing with given, possible and frontier set members) require modification, expansion restriction or whatever, the referential class can be modified too or even be dissolved completely as such. The relation between referential class and description operates both ways.

<sup>15</sup> Recent biological research has found that *Monocercomonoides* Sp lacks mitochondrial organelle, what was considered essential for eukaryotes, but are in all other relevant respects an eukaryote. See [http://www.cell.com/current-biology/fulltext/S0960-9822\(16\)30263-9](http://www.cell.com/current-biology/fulltext/S0960-9822(16)30263-9). This is an information so basic that it might require a reformulation of one of the most assented claims in our biological textbooks.

## 6. A Unified Account

The reason why we might come to the conclusion that hinges do not fit the bill of a foundational account is, I think, because we fix our attention in a given set of statements such as “My name is L.W.” “I have never been to Asia Minor,” “This is a hand,” etc. that are quite heterogeneous. In addition the phenomenon of certainty or trust that is each time considered is not homogeneous either. We find disparate claims: we are told that some such certitudes cannot be questioned because doing so would destroy our world picture, we would be considered insane and so on; other remarks advising us that the point is not that we should be infallible about many such claims but that it would be nonsensical that they all were, some pointing at the wider use of linguistic and non-linguistic statements as constitutive rules of language games, some appealing to statements of our inherited gnoseological patrimony, to contextual and culturally relative ones and so on.

If we look at things, though, from the standpoint of giving an answer to the sceptic, it becomes increasingly clear that it is not a given set or a given class of statements that are beyond doubt or could be considered foundational. It is rather the fact that we can trust for example, not primarily always the adequacy of our specific conceptual tools or a priori rules (in discourse or action) but rather, as seen, that they are proven a given way. That is, that the way we ascertain ourselves of their correctness, on the basis of both our perception and reliance on the existence of meanings as a whole, is non-negotiable, something without which our world does break down. In the same way, it is not specifically that someone could not in some instance be wrong about his name, or must hold it fast, or that I have never been to China or the Moon or that there are some stairs outside my bedroom etc. It is rather the fact that we must rely on our experiences and our memory that without the reliance on this capacity to store and recall our experiences (especially those that draw the central ‘files’ or central categories of our self-conception: who I am, where have I been, what have I done, what I am up to) of course nothing would be as it is, no world at all would be given to us. This is exactly what the sceptic is questioning, the very basis of our knowledge, the conditions of possibility of our world being what we take it to be, both the cognitive conditions of the knowing subject and the conditions of the known world; the sceptic is questioning whether our trusted apparatus of cognition, our memory, our use of words and the evidential basis that support and confirms our claims could not be wrong. It is the very fact that we rely on such means for knowledge that is disputed. Other seemingly dissimilar claims like: “no one has ever been to the moon” but also the remarks on ‘chemistry or anatomy’ allow an

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interpretation on the same lines without difficulties. “No one has ever been to the moon” also touches upon some basic issue about our world constitution and our knowledge structures, since the reason why this is not believable is because in order for this to be true at all, the means that would make it possible must have been achieved and they aren’t. Since for us there are means for anything that could count as knowledge, not anything counts as confirmation or disconfirmation. Just as there are ways to prove that we trust, there are ways that are beyond our possibilities as human beings. The same way we do trust, we rely upon the information that our textbooks, or ancestors, have transmitted us, but we do because, as Wittgenstein says, this is justified. We think it was justified in its origins through the same procedures all our own knowledge\* experiences are. We think someone was in an epistemic position to acquire the needed experience and acquire the claimed knowledge with human means or correspondingly enhanced technical possibilities.<sup>16</sup> Because, at the very end, transmitted knowledge too, even if we should not have experiential certainty (sureness-2) about it, must have been acquired on the basis of some such experiential certainty by our ancestors. Those are the conditions of human knowledge and, therefore, those of our trust too.

108. “But is there then no objective truth? Isn't it true, or false, that someone has been on the moon?” If we are thinking within our system, then it is certain that no one has ever been on the moon. Not merely is nothing of the sort ever seriously reported to us by reasonable people, but our whole system of physics forbids us to believe it. For this demands answers to the questions “How did he overcome the force of gravity?” “How could he live without an atmosphere?” and a thousand others which could not be answered. But suppose that instead of all these answers we met the reply: “We don't know how one gets to the moon, but those who get there know at once that they are there; and even you can't explain everything.” We should feel ourselves intellectually very distant from someone who said this.

670. We might speak of fundamental principles of human enquiry.

Similarly see ζ671<sup>17</sup> on this point. Without rackets and the necessary astronomic and physical knowledge any such experience was impossible. The

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<sup>16</sup> This reminds on how William Kingdon Clifford, “The Ethics of Belief” in *Contemporary Review* (1877), at present in. *The Ethics of Belief and other essays* (Amherst: Prometheus Books, 1999), explains when trust in authorities and transmitted knowledge is justified: ultimately, he says, when we know that someone could have been in the required position, the information could have been acquired with human means etc. Of course, there are also pragmatic reasons to go on trusting when the trusted seems to fit well with our world.

<sup>17</sup> Wittgenstein's *On Certainty*, ζ671, I fly from here to a part of the world where the people have only indefinite information, or none at all, about the possibility of flying. I tell them I have

remarks on chemistry or anatomy appeal again to the role played by our experience of acquisition and our memory in the transmission of knowledge and ultimately to the link of our trust to its foundation. The role of memory too in the building of a historical narrative, both personal and socio-cultural, is essential to the temporally structured human beings that we are: to our self-understanding and our moving around in a trustable environment, to the conception of the world we take ourselves to live in. There is an homogeneity in what all these aspects point to. It is, thus, not to be searched for in the specific remarks but in the capacities and ways through which we support those claims.

In this line the real response to the sceptic is then that coming to realize the very possibility he envisions, the possibility of being wrong about the way we prove and ascertain our conception of the world requires precisely making use of those very capacities he is questioning with no more presumption of certainty than what we already have. There is no going beyond it for a human being, sceptic included. Maybe the answer is not that it is impossible but that it is impossible for us to ever know it, not because we could not awake from a common dream or find much of our experience illusory, but because doing so delivers us back in exactly the same situation we were before with exactly the same kind of warranty and ways of proving.

301. Supposing it wasn't true that the earth had already existed long before I was born - how should we imagine the mistake being discovered?

641. "He told me about it today – I can't be making a mistake about that." – But what if it does turn out to be wrong?! – Mustn't one make a distinction between the ways in which something 'turns out wrong'? – How *can it be shown* that my statement was wrong? Here evidence is facing evidence, and it must be *decided* which is to give way.

Illustrative to this point also paragraphs ζ642, ζ650.<sup>18</sup> So the things we are certain of are those regarding the very conditions of possibility of our knowing (or

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just flown there from... They ask me if I might be mistaken. – They have obviously a false impression of how the thing happens. (If I were packed up in a box it would be possible for me to be mistaken about the way I had travelled.) If I simply tell them that I can't be mistaken, that won't perhaps convince them; but it will, if I describe the actual procedure to them. Then they will certainly not bring the possibility of a mistake into the question. But for all that – even if they trust me – they might believe I had been dreaming or that magic had made me imagine it.

<sup>18</sup> ζ642. But suppose someone produced the scruple: what if I suddenly as it were woke up and said "Just think, I've been imagining I was called L.W.!" – well, who says that I don't wake up once again and call *this* an extraordinary fancy, and so on?

ζ650. This surely means: the possibility of a *mistake* can be eliminated in certain (numerous) cases. – And one does eliminate mistakes in calculation in this way. For when a calculation has

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correcting) something, which relates to a conception of the world and ourselves. Now, can we pronounce what these conditions are, so to speak, can we state them?

I think that some other remarks of Wittgenstein, some of his basic hinges (those shown under a) at the beginning,<sup>19</sup> do give voice to this kind of fundamental assumptions about the world:

101. Such a proposition might be e.g. "My body has never disappeared and reappeared again after an interval."
134. After putting a book in a drawer, I assume it is there, unless... "Experience always proves me right. There is no well attested case of a book's (simply) disappearing."...
153. No one ever taught me that my hands don't disappear when I am not paying attention to them. Nor can I be said to presuppose the truth of this proposition in my assertions etc., (as if they rested on it) while it only gets sense from the rest of our procedure of asserting.
234. I believe that I have forebears, and that every human being has them.
234. ...I believe that the earth is a body on whose surface we move and that it no more suddenly disappears or the like than any other solid body: this table, this house, this tree, etc. If I wanted to doubt the existence of the earth long before my birth, I should have to doubt all sorts of things that stand fast for me.

Most of these remarks are about the permanency of objects, of solid bodies in space throughout time. Again, these are not any particular empirical statements that I hold fast but the very notion of what our conception of a solid body is.

Two points here: first, as just stated, it does belong to our notion of a solid body that it extends in space and remains in time whether we perceive it or not. It is an empirical statement, yes, but as I was suggesting before, because our concepts are at the very end grounded (at least to some extent) on empirical apprehensions. Second, we could say that what is being 'put into words' here (while normally just taken for granted) has more to do with our expectations about the existent world than with what we take the world to be from a more phenomenological perspective. With the constitution of entities as such (those we 'can be familiar with' or not) more than with what the entities are in terms of 'a tree,' 'a house' etc. From a more classical perspective we would say that it somehow relies in what

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been checked over and over again one cannot then say "Its rightness is still only *very probable* – for an error may always still have slipped in." For suppose it did seem for once as if an error had been discovered – why shouldn't we suspect an error *here*?

<sup>19</sup> See *supra*, p. 73.

classical authors tried to capture through the notion of ‘categories.’ Those aspects that pertain to any physical body whatsoever, its being a differentiated and numerical (quantitative) entity, it being substantially extensive, it remaining in time and in a given location when not seen etc. it’s possessing some quality or other. Many of the commentaries that Wittgenstein makes refer at the very end to these aspects, which require eventually not only experiences but results out of inferential processes: If I can retain a memory of myself in space before this moment, there must have existed such a space before. Knowing that you are in a given location (and therefore not in China),<sup>20</sup> that objects don’t disappear, that if something is in a given location and not moved it remains there, the relations of an entity to others around it in its spatial setting (the stairs outside my room) or temporal coordinates:<sup>21</sup> that you are living in a given moment in time and there was time before and after, that you did something this morning. As Ackrill<sup>22</sup> says about the problem Aristotle tries to capture through his *Categories* “it is not primarily or explicitly about names, but about the things that names signify...” It is like an attempt to put into words what we need to take for granted for the world we talk about to be the world we refer to and confirms our statements and, also, what we ourselves have to be like to register this world the way we do, our registering succession of events through memory, our using words with meanings to describe it.

This spatio-temporal character of human beings, both as entities ourselves in a given location related to other entities and as cognitive beings, having a representational structuring capability (that from an epistemic perspective reproduces this order in understanding and situates itself in it) can be considered as pertaining to our notion of ‘a human (rational) being’ and thus necessarily true of it. I think these are the kind of phenomena that Wittgenstein, in line with Aristotle and with Kant, was in his own peculiar way after.<sup>23</sup>

Maybe what raises much puzzlement is that Wittgenstein brings this problem further than his predecessors. Since he would seem to include in it a more historical aspect too.

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<sup>20</sup> At least in the macrocosmic world of experiences, that quanta should have the capacity to be in two places at the same time I find difficult to digest but won’t, of course, dare to dispute. I align myself with both trust and puzzlement.

<sup>21</sup> Some commentaries in Wright, “Skepticism, Certainty,” would seem to go along these lines.

<sup>22</sup> John Ackrill, *Aristotle, Categories and De Interpretatione* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), 71

<sup>23</sup> Actually, the response to the sceptic considered before would cohere somewhat with a Kantian epistemic approach since any discovery of a mistake must be for Kant too stated as a mistake in terms of a phenomenal world beyond which there are nor mistakes nor phenomena but inconceivable noumeno.

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99. And the bank of that river consists partly of hard rock, subject to no alteration or only to an imperceptible one, partly of sand, which now in one place or in another gets washed away, or deposited.

His going into the structure of language games, where some knowledge is taken for granted while we go on playing it and then again it gets ‘washed away,’ our trusting knowledge and (changing) background assumptions appears to put the problem on a different level. But even if what we do in each single case might change, the background assumptions being removed, the fact that we do and must trust in such a way, that we must depart from acquired knowledge by our forebears (mnemonically transmitted, justifiably trusted) and take history into account is a universal one about ourselves too, about our existential historically bounded self. As such, though, it can be considered a stable structure of our being too.

It has sometimes being claimed that the phenomenological rediscovery of our finite historical character, our being subsumed in the current of history and its changing moves, already there in Hegel, somehow superseded previous transcendental approaches that focused more on what are the cognitive capabilities of the knowing subject and the world to be known. That once the inter-subjective socio-historical and pragmatic character of language was discovered, the idea of a transcendental conceptualization, a categorical (absolute?) structuring of the world (and ourselves) had to be abandoned and there was no going backwards. However, what we might find here is a realization that both can and must be put together in an integrative picture, instead of the one being replaced by the other, to show what we actually and universally are. To answer the sceptic we encountered what is it that we must take for granted if our knowledge is to be possible at all: the epistemically (cognitive though not linguistic) accessed evidence that corroborates (and corrects) our statements (and concepts), upon which the sceptic himself must rely to show us wrong (beyond which a noumeno relies), our own capacities to register, locate, relate, remember, and talk about through developed meanings and inferential connections; and, also, transcendental historically bounded structures: our having to rely in a mnemonically transmitted narrative of historical knowledge and language (not of course its possibly changing content each time) about the way the world is and we are in order to have a world and a self-understanding; our having to rely on it in our living, even if it changes because at the very end all waters come from the same source (even if our hypothesizing and elaborating upon them might not) that all is intrinsic to our natures as well. As Wittgenstein would put it: There is something universal here too!