

Do we need to prove the existence of the ‘external’ world?

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In this paper, I defend Wittgenstein’s insight that Cartesian-style skeptical arguments against the existence of the external world are not false, but linguistic confusions that violate the constitutive rules of our epistemic practices. To do this, I advance a resolutely grammatical interpretation of his later notebooks, posthumously published as *On Certainty*, where so-called ‘hinge-propositions’ function as rules of grammar and logically exclude the possibility of ‘global’ doubt. I then defend this reading from two notable objections by Crispin Wright, namely that (1) if ‘hinges’ are not semantically truth-apt propositions, they cannot function as premises in logical inferences, and (2) the groundless nature of grammatical propositions renders the foundation of our language-game arbitrary, leaving us unable to distinguish a rational world-picture from mere dogma.

Introduction

Kant famously regarded the ‘scandal of philosophy’ to be its inability to present a sound proof for the existence of the world that could withstand any doubt¹. While G.E. Moore argued that his proof accomplishes that task, Wittgenstein maintained that the demand for a proof itself rested on an incorrect understanding of language that, upon correction, would render a proof unnecessary and logically exclude the possibility of doubt. This paper proceeds in three main parts. In Section 1, I present Wittgenstein’s criticism of Moore’s proof that it incorrectly uses the term “I know”, and argue that hinges function as grammatical propositions. I also present a unique criticism of what I term P.M.S. Hacker’s ‘intermediate view’ on the status of hinges. In Section 2, I present Crispin Wright’s theory of entitlement and warrant transmission as a rival strategy before outlining two central objections he raises against the grammatical reading. Finally, in Section 3, I develop a novel defense against Wright’s position and his specific objections. I argue that treating hinges as rules of grammar does not leave our epistemic practices at risk of arbitrariness or leaching off of unearned warrant, which is a more robust dissolution of the problem of skepticism than Wright’s strategy. Furthermore, I establish that Wright’s entitlement theory functions as an epistemically inert pragmatism that is excessively concessionary to the skeptic.

1. Wittgenstein’s Engagement with Moore

1.1. Moore’s Proof and the Limits of Sense

Wittgenstein’s reflections respond primarily to G.E. Moore’s two seminal papers, ‘A Defence of Common Sense’ (1925) and ‘Proof of an External World’ (1939).² Moore sought to rebut idealism with an ostensibly basic proof by declaring, while raising each hand in turn, “Here is one hand”, and “Here is another”. He insisted that this demonstration *ipso facto* proved an external world by meeting the formal requirements for proof, namely, having epistemic certainty of the premises and logically inferring the conclusion. Acknowledging the sceptic’s objection regarding unproven premises, Moore rejected the requirement for an infinite regress of proof; instead, he maintained that certain common-sense truths were known directly and had to be accepted to make further reasoning possible.³ Moore’s strategy, later known as the “Moorean shift”,⁴ was to reverse the sceptic’s logic. While the sceptic used *modus tollens* to argue that a lack of knowledge

¹Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, Bxxxix.

²G. E. Moore, *Philosophical Papers* (1959).

³Moore, *Philosophical Papers*, 146–150.

⁴See Rowe, “The Problem of Evil” (1979), 335–341.

regarding skeptical hypotheses precludes knowledge of the external world, Moore employed *modus ponens* to argue that because he knew he had hands, the skeptical hypotheses must be false.

Wittgenstein denied that Moore could claim knowledge of his premises, arguing that the error lay in misusing the term "I know." Central to this critique is the logical requirement, tracing back to the *Tractatus*, that empirical propositions must be bipolar, i.e. either true or false, to possess 'sense' (TLP 4.022–4.023). Moore's truisms lack this bipolar character, prompting Wittgenstein to label as "obviously nonsensical" any attempt to raise doubts where no questions can be asked (TLP 6.51). This principle reappears later in *On Certainty*, where Wittgenstein maintains that knowledge-claims are only intelligible where doubt is possible (OC 58). Because Moore's assertions, unlike ordinary cases, cannot be justified by citing evidence, they carry an illicit "metaphysical emphasis" on account of their groundless nature (OC 482–484). They are more akin to a child's acceptance of a "tree" through ostensive teaching (OC 480). Consequently, these propositions function not as empirical descriptions but as "hinges" (OC 341) that serve as the "axis" of all inquiry (OC 152–153). Just as a door requires fixed hinges to move, our empirical inquiries depend on certain propositions to remain exempt from doubt so that we can evaluate other claims. These propositions are termed hinges to illustrate their critical role in our language-game. This marks an anti-foundationalist shift that dissolves the infinite regress of justification by recognizing the "groundlessness of our believing" (OC 166). If these hinges are not empirical, they must be understood as constitutive rules of linguistic practice.

1.2. Hinges as Grammatical Propositions

In his transition from the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein reconceives the status of foundational propositions, moving away from a strictly picture theory of language. This meant that words and propositions only possessed a sense if they functioned like a logical map that mirrored a corresponding fact in the world. Language, then, was a descriptive enterprise to 'map' out all the facts of the world and form a picture. However, in his later transitional period after returning to Cambridge from 1929 to 1936, Wittgenstein's understanding of language begins to shift towards a rule-governed activity, as seen in his *Philosophical Grammar*. Wittgenstein recognizes that before any 'picturing' can occur, there must be a background of rules and conventions that function as the conditions of picturing. This marks a shift from a logic of representation to one of linguistic practice. While maintaining that tautologies, contradictions, and logical rules lack bipolarity (TLP 4.466), he departs from the standard logico-semantic usage that reserves the term 'proposition' exclusively for truth-evaluable claims. This later shift marks a widening in his understanding of grammar. Here, grammar is no longer merely a system of syntax but encompasses "all the conditions (the method) necessary for comparing propositions with reality" (PG I, 45).

Hinges, despite carrying the outward syntactic form of empirical propositions, satisfy this deeper grammatical role. For example, the sentence 'nothing can be red and blue all over at the same time' isn't discovered by examining thousands of objects to find a counter-example. Instead, it defines how we use color-words. If someone were to claim they found an object that was red and blue all over, we would question if they understood the meaning of the words 'red' and 'blue' rather than attributing a scientific discovery to their name. They function as logical enabling conditions that make our epistemic practices possible (OC 401–402). Consequently, I retain his technical use of 'grammatical proposition' [*grammatischer Satz*] to capture their unique logical function despite possessing the appearance of a descriptive fact about the world. They act as 'norms of representation' i.e. rules that "describe the structure of language; describe its possibilities" (BT, 149e). Because hinges are propositions that have been 'hardened' from what were once empirical observations (OC 96, 167), they are removed from the realm of verification. They can no longer be tested like hypotheses as they are the very criteria for what it means to 'test' anything at all. Acting as the framework of our language-game, they are the 'limiting cases' (TLP 4.466; cf. OC 54) that give our notions of 'truth' and 'falseness' their sense.

This constitutive role connects the establishment of a grammatical rule directly to the adoption of a unit of measurement. By fixing the 'unit', grammar enables the use of empirical propositions to describe the world; as Wittgenstein notes, while the rule itself establishes the metric, the empirical proposition "says how long an object is" only by making use of that established rule (BT, 189e). This illustrates how hinges, as logical enabling conditions, do not describe facts but rather provide the very possibility of factual description. Consequently, Wittgenstein argues that grammar itself is autonomous and, being unaccountable to

any reality, is ultimately arbitrary (PG I, 133). Attempting to justify the rules of grammar is a category mistake; it is nonsensical because they define the terms of justification itself. As he notes: "the conventions of grammar can't be justified by a description of what is represented... [because] any description of that kind already presupposes the rules of grammar" (BT, 188e). Justification, therefore, must come to an end. What lies at the bottom of the language-game is not a self-evident truth that we perceive, but our way of acting. Hence, grammatical propositions lack truth-aptness, as "the ground is not true, nor yet false" (OC 204-205).

Because these foundational grounds are exempt from truth-evaluations, their adoption is not compelled by objective facts but by our shared practices. The 'arbitrariness' of grammar is thus understood in this strict sense of choosing a metric (BT, 186e). Just as the standard meter bar in Paris (PI 50) is used to measure lengths but cannot itself be measured against the scale it creates, hinges are used to 'measure' truth but cannot be subjected to those same evaluations. The logical exclusion of doubt is absolute. To doubt a hinge is not to question a fact, but to break the tool that makes its expression possible. Such 'global' doubt amounts to an "annihilation of all yardsticks" (OC 492). We recognize these hinges as the constitutive rules of our language-game because of their peculiar role in logically excluding the possibility of doubt (OC 194). This normative function of regulating the boundaries of language, despite being 'arbitrarily' chosen, is how hinges ensure the stability of the entire framework of inquiry.

Given the unrefined nature of Wittgenstein's notebooks⁵, the categorical status of hinges remains contested. Two dominant interpretations emerge from this ambiguity⁶. G.H. von Wright and Danièle Moyal-Sharrock emphasize the 'animal' nature of these certainties, situating them as non-propositional forms of praxis, which refers to the unreflective and habitual ways of acting that underpin our language-games.⁷ Conversely, P.M.S. Hacker argues that they occupy a 'curious intermediate position,' neither wholly empirical nor strictly grammatical.⁸ He contends that they lack the normative function required to determine concepts or inference rules.⁹ However, I argue that Hacker's refusal to grant hinges grammatical status is difficult to reconcile with his own admission that empirical propositions can be transformed into 'norms of representation'.¹⁰ It is important to note that while Genia Schönbaumsfeld primarily defends the grammatical reading as a rejoinder to Moyal-Sharrock's non-propositional account,¹¹ she does not explicitly extend this criticism to Hacker's 'intermediate' stance. Rather, Schönbaumsfeld's only mention of Hacker is agreeing with him that only empirical propositions are bipolar while grammatical remarks are not. She does not seem to note Hacker's position is yet different, despite this brief congruence. I argue this only further indicates that Hacker's rejection of hinges as grammatical propositions is a dogmatic position, since he is already keen on granting the possibility of other empirical propositions 'hardening' into rules, particularly in mathematics, that have the same normative rule-like function as hinges. As such, I extend Schönbaumsfeld's previously focused argument against Moyal-Sharrock into a broader view that also extends to other competing interpretations of *On Certainty* and attempt to resolve previous contradictions into a clearly defined position.

1.3. Grammatical Analysis of the 'External' World

A consequence of the grammatical reading is the exposure of the sceptic's error in bifurcating reality into 'internal' and 'external' domains. Since linguistic meaning is tethered to a shared world, any expression of doubt necessarily concedes the world's existence as a condition of its own intelligibility. The sceptic's position is therefore semantically nonsensical, as it attempts to negate the very framework that makes their speech possible. As Wittgenstein notes, "If you are not certain of any fact, you cannot be certain of the meaning of your words either" (OC 114). On the reading I propose, hinges function as logical enabling

⁵See OC Preface, vii.

⁶This account is not exhaustive. See Williams, *Unnatural Doubts* (1991); Coliva, *Moore and Wittgenstein*, (2010); Pritchard, *Epistemic Angst* (2015).

⁷See von Wright, *Wittgenstein* (1982, 178); Danièle Moyal-Sharrock, *Understanding Wittgenstein* (2004).

⁸Hacker and Baker, *Wittgenstein: Rules, Grammar and Necessity* (2009, 258).

⁹Hacker, *Wittgenstein's Place in 20th Century Analytic Philosophy* (1996, 215).

¹⁰Hacker, *Wittgenstein: Comparisons and Context* (2013, 161). For a detailed critique of Hacker's rejection of hinges as grammatical propositions, see Moyal-Sharrock, "Beyond Hacker's Wittgenstein" (2013).

¹¹Schönbaumsfeld, "Hinge Propositions and the 'Logical Exclusion of Doubt'" (2017, 104).

conditions that regulate the language-game rather than describing a reality beyond it. While they enable the sensible application of truth and falsehood, they are not themselves truth-apt in an empirical sense. This reading, however, faces two significant challenges from Crispin Wright's account of 'epistemic entitlement': (1) that the non-truth-aptness of hinges precludes them from serving as premises in valid logical inferences, thereby blocking the warrant-transmission required to justify our ordinary beliefs, and (2) that the autonomy of grammar poses an epistemic challenge of arbitrariness, threatening the rationality of our foundational commitments.

2. Hinges without Warrant?

2.1. Wright's Diagnosis: Transmission Failure

Wright develops his critique by reconstructing Moore's argument with a tripartite schematic of Type-I, Type-II, and Type-III propositions. Here, (I) the subjective premise 'I seem to have hands', provides warrant for (II) the empirical claim that 'a hand exists', which in turn entails (III) the metaphysical conclusion that 'an external world exists'. Type-I propositions describe sensory experiences that justify empirical Type-II propositions about the external world, such as Moore's truisms. However, warrant can only transmit from Type-I to Type-II propositions if we already possess antecedent warrant for Type-III propositions. He defines these 'cornerstones' as foundational commitments such that, if we lack warrant for them, we cannot claim justification for the set of empirical propositions, or as Wright puts it, a '*region of thought*', that depends upon them for their validity.¹²

Moore's premises, then, are "information-dependent" on Type-III propositions because sensory experiences can only ground empirical claims if we already grant causal interaction with the world. Since belief in an external world lacks antecedent evidential warrant, skeptical scenarios remain live possibilities that threaten to undercut the evidence of our senses. As such, Wright concludes that Moore's proof is epistemically circular.¹³

Wright tentatively draws support for his position from Wittgenstein's own observations that the grounds for common-sense propositions are never "as certain as the very thing they were supposed to be grounds for". Since the grounds are no surer than the assertions themselves, such propositions are instead affirmed "without special testing" (OC 136, 243, 307). Nevertheless, Wright fundamentally diverges from reading hinges as non-truth apt grammatical propositions by reintroducing a need for rational justification that he holds can be acquired non-evidentially.

2.2. Epistemic Entitlement

Wright correctly recognizes that Moore's proof cannot avoid transmission failure if evidential justification is the only way to acquire warrant for cornerstones. To avoid this impasse, Wright proposes a "unified strategy" that expands the definition and scope of acquiring warrant to disjunctively encompass evidential justification, based on proof, and entitlement, based on trust. In other words, Wright now argues that a cornerstone can be rationally held even in the absence of evidence, provided it meets the criteria for entitlement (WN 177, 208).

Wright introduces the concept of 'entitlement' to *accept*, rather than *believe*, any proposition *P* despite lacking evidential warrant. He concedes that the sceptic is correct to claim that we lack justified *belief* in cornerstones but argues this does not prevent our *acceptance* of them (WN 174-176). Whereas belief is a doxastic attitude requiring evidence and conviction of truth, acceptance is the practical attitude of acting on the assumption that *P*. Unlike justified belief, entitlement is a rational trust in accepting *P*. Wright divides this non-evidential warrant into various categories. First, Wright constructs a dominant strategy he terms 'Strategic Entitlement' and analogizes it to the decision-theoretic model in Hans Reichenbach's defense of induction. Reichenbach agreed with Hume that *epistemic* justification for induction was impossible to

¹²Wright, "Warrant for Nothing", 167; henceforth WN. See also Davies, "Epistemic Entitlement," 219n2, who observes a nuanced distinction between not having rational warrant and not being able to claim it.

¹³Wright, "Wittgensteinian Certainties," 23, 26–28; henceforth WC. Wright, WN, 171–172.

prove through both *a priori* and *a posteriori* means but argued that we are rationally entitled to using it because it is the only decision that offers a possibility of success, whereas skepticism guarantees failure (WN 178-180). Likewise, Wright's strategy reframes Reichenbach's pragmatic argument to a form of epistemic consequentialism. It justifies the acceptance of cornerstones based on the epistemic consequence of securing the possibility of cognitive inquiry. Second, Wright identifies the 'Entitlement to Cognitive Project' as an entitlement to presuppositions that stave off cognitive paralysis from an infinite regress of doubt.

Wright insists that this appeal to entitlement does not constitute a mere dogmatic dismissal of the skeptic's challenge¹⁴ but is grounded in the *epistemic* necessity of trust. He notes that while these entitlements are effective against Cartesian and Humean forms of skepticism, they do not readily extend to ontological cornerstones (WN 188, 194-197). Nevertheless, because our lives as rational agents depend on trusting Type-III propositions, Wright argues that avoiding them makes life impossible since rational agency is a "not an optional aspect of our lives". As such, we are justified in presupposing their truth without needing to earn a warrant (WC 53).

Wright immediately identifies a serious problem that threatens to undermine his project. Since Wright affirms that cornerstones are held by trust, they are beyond evidential justification and introduce a degree of epistemic risk. This unearned warrant might 'leach up' and contaminate the warrants for otherwise ordinary empirical claims, such as visually perceiving one's hand. By highlighting the "leaching problem", the skeptic can now argue that ordinary justified beliefs are taken up on mere faith. To resolve this, Wright proceeds by stratifying knowledge claims and restricting warrant to second-order claims. We cannot claim to know that cornerstones are true, but we can still possess first-order knowledge of them (WN 209). On this view, possession of knowledge is "liberal", requiring no antecedent warrant, while claiming it is "conservative".¹⁵ Wright claims that leaching would thus be confined to second-order warrants, i.e. claims of possession, leaving our first-order warrants untroubled.

2.3. The Semantic and Epistemic Challenge

Wright's notion of epistemic entitlement presents a semantic challenge to the grammatical reading of hinges. Namely, Wright questions how hinges can enable us to distinguish between true and false beliefs if their own semantic content is not truth-conditional. Wright maintains that because empirical inquiry has an external objective, the "divination of what is true and the avoidance of what is false" (WC 43), our cornerstones must be answerable to this truth-seeking goal. The rules of arithmetic, like ' $13 + 7 = 20$ ', must not force us to "misassess the truth-values" of the specific things we are investigating. Wright presents an example of a person counting 13 satsumas and 7 bananas but mistakenly arriving at a count of 21 fruits, compelling the person to conclude that they miscalculated. Here, the rule overrides the sensory evidence because its certainty is ranked higher. However, if hinges were merely groundless norms of representation, they would have no authority to dismiss the physical possibility that there really are 21 fruits. This is because, for Wright, unless a rule like $13 + 7 = 20$ is truth-apt, it cannot determine or describe what empirically exists in the world. Wright concludes that if a rule is to reliably guide us to the truth, it must be a "substantial proposition, apt to be true or false" (WC 34, 44-46). Denying this would leave cornerstones incapable of functioning as premises in valid inferences, like Moore's proof, and 'saves' skepticism only by expelling them from the realm of logic entirely.

Even if cornerstones, such as the Earth having existed for many years past (OC 138, 401), serve as rules, Wright argues this is not mutually exclusive with their being truth-evaluable. Interpreting cornerstones as *hors de combat* i.e., incapable of intelligent mismatch with the world, is hasty and does not banish "the spectre of profound and sweeping error" (WC 44).

In addition to the semantic challenge, Wright identifies a deeper epistemic threat of arbitrariness that looms over the grammatical reading. If grammar is autonomous and, by Wittgenstein's own admission (PG 133), arbitrary, it's difficult to see how we can secure a rational standing for epistemic practices. Although Wright acknowledges cornerstones are themselves unfounded [*unbegründet*] by calling them presuppositions (2004b, 48-49) he still maintains the need for a rational basis in affirming and acting upon them.

¹⁴Cf. OC 71, 155, 498, 558, 559. These passages may imply dogmatism if hinges are treated as empirical propositions.

¹⁵Wright, "On Epistemic Entitlement (II)," 217-218; henceforth WSE.

Wright terms the "Problem of Demarcation" as the danger of being unable to distinguish cornerstones from "prejudices, mere assumptions, and idées fixes" (WSE 245). If our cornerstones lack rational warrant, we risk succumbing to a pernicious relativism where we cannot distinguish a legitimate constitutive rule and a mere subjective whim.

To avoid running into an infinite regress of demands for justifications, Wright's tentative response is to reject what he calls the "Evidential Ideal", the notion that a rationally epistemic thinker should proportion all their beliefs to evidence and accept nothing without it. Wright argues that the ideal itself is incoherent because evidential reasons to believe can only occur within a framework held by trusting acceptances. This trust, far from being a flaw, is an essential aspect of rational inquiry without which we lose the ability to determine what counts as evidence (WSE 242–245). For example, determining why perceptual experiences relate to matters in the external world necessitates the acceptance of cornerstone that "There is an external material world, broadly manifest in normal sensory experience" (WSE 217). The grammatical reading, despite claiming logical immunity from skepticism, does not concord with the life of a rational agent precisely because it is free from the necessity of trusting cornerstones. As such, for Wright this reading fails because it cannot distinguish itself from the arbitrary acceptance of dogma.

3. Response to Wright

3.1. The Logical Barrier

Wright is correct to identify that if hinges are not truth-apt, then they cannot function as premises in any logical inferences, including Moore's proofs. Moreover, he is right to note that their non-descriptive nature, as norms of representation lacking sense, precludes them from being items of knowledge.

However, I reject that this has any epistemically catastrophic consequences. First, Wright's rejection of the grammatical reading rests on a subtle category mistake that conflates the rules of the language-game with the moves made within it. Because Wright treats the foundations of our rational system and the empirical claims made within it as belonging to the same class of propositions, namely empirical ones, he incorrectly demands that they be subject to the same epistemic evaluations. To follow Wittgenstein's analogy of language as a game of chess, Wright's approach is akin to claiming that the rule 'The bishop moves diagonally' is of the same kind as the report 'The white bishop moved from its starting square at c1 to f4'. The first sentence only expresses a rule that defines how the bishop functions in every game whereas the latter describes a specific instance of play. Wright overlooks the notion that the scope of rationality, so to speak, is 'local'; it can only take place against a backdrop of propositions, our world-picture as the inherited background, that we don't stand in any epistemic relation to. Hinges are, as Schönbaumsfeld notes, '*logical enabling conditions*' that give our notions of truth and falsity their sense and without which we would lose the very meaning of our words. Their scaffolding status serves to clarify the correct use of language. Moore's very attempt to use hinges, along with his belief that proof was necessary, was mistaken precisely because he treated the constitutive rules of grammar as if they were empirical claims subject to evaluation.¹⁶

In contrast to Wright's assertion that hinges must be empirical propositions in need of warrant, a resolute grammatical reading maintains that this criterion is unnecessary because it is logically impossible to doubt hinges. Wittgenstein repeatedly analogizes the rules of grammar to the rules of chess (BT, 118e) to illustrate that questioning them is no more sensible than questioning why the bishop moves diagonally.

Wright's confusion lies in the fact that he views cornerstones to be descriptive facts about reality. But rather than describing empirical facts, the meaning of grammatical propositions lies in their use in language where their "explanation of meaning" (PG I, 23) serves a prescriptive function; to establish the rules of our language-game and 'police', so to speak, the correct method of using concepts. This is the key insight behind Wittgenstein's assertion that the proposition, "there are physical concepts", is senseless and cannot be formulated (OC 36). Because it is impossible to make sense of the proposition's denial, i.e. that there are only sense-experiences, it follows *ipso facto* that the assertion itself is mistaken. Such propositions find their only use as instructions. It does not follow, therefore, from the lack of truth-aptness of hinges, and their inadmissibility as premises that we cannot make any logical inferences with empirical propositions. Rather,

¹⁶Genia Schönbaumsfeld, "‘Logical’ and ‘Epistemic’ Uses," 239, 244–245.

as I have already attempted to explain, Moore's mistake lay in using hinges in his proof, for the exact reason that Wright purports is allegedly a defect in the grammatical reading.

Having shown that a well-defined distinction exists between hinges as the rules of our language-game and the empirical propositions as 'moves' within it, I argue it becomes clear that Wright's concern about leaching is dissolved. At the bottom of our language-game lie hinges that do not provide warrant but logically enable the conditioning of sense. Since 'risk' is an epistemic concept, it cannot apply to the grammatical framework itself. Thus, leaching does not seep up, and any attempt at grounding this world-picture would only invite further grounding, *ad infinitum*. In a recent debate with Annalisa Coliva and Anil Gupta¹⁷, despite amending his prior definition of entitlement by adding that it is the attitude towards a cornerstone proposition *P*, Wright's view is still at risk of such regress, for the rational trust he places in *P* remains exposed to the demand of entitlement towards *that* attitude as well. Wright's demand for hinges to be truth-apt is an attempt to repair a defect that does not exist if they are taken to constitute a logical barrier for our language-game. By conceding that cornerstones require justification, Wright leaves himself vulnerable to an infinite regress of justification in addition to leaching. I argue this conundrum is downstream of the category mistake I have identified in Wright's work so far. By treating empirical claims and cornerstones as the same kind of proposition, Wright renders the task of preventing leaching impossible.

3.2. Contra Entitlement

Wright explicitly rejects the label of pragmatist by insisting that cornerstones are essential for the possibility of our cognitive projects,¹⁸ and that this constitutes a normative condition. Wright's decision-theoretic strategy contends that because these entitlements aim to enhance "expected epistemic utility" within a cognitive project, they are also epistemic reasons (WSE 239, 241–242). However, I argue this appeal to utility and the goal-dependent nature of the 'dominant strategy' to avoid intellectual stasis functionally represents a pragmatist solution despite Wright's insistence to the contrary. Wright shifts the justification of cornerstones from the evidence of their truth to the utility of their acceptance as the means of attaining warrant, drawing on an earlier contrast he makes between acceptance and beliefs (WN 175, 184–188). As Wright acknowledges, "there is no coherent conception of epistemic rationality which views unevidenced trusting as *per se* a lapse" (WSE 243). In other words, Wright's unified strategy remains an instrumental form of rationality. But, as Wittgenstein is keen to remind us, the sceptic's challenge is not one of practical doubt but a more radical 'global' form that lies behind it (OC 19). The sceptic would succeed in pinpointing the pre-suppositions of our epistemic practices, and consequently the very meaning of notions like "justification" and "warrant" that Wright is keen to employ.

Furthermore, Wright's stratification of warrant fails to dispel concerns of leaching because, as Aidan McGlynn argues, Wright's liberalism towards first-order warrants, such as having a justified belief in Moore's premise ("Here is a hand") in combination with the recognition that it entails belief in the cornerstone proposition ("There is an external world") leads him to adopting a form of neo-Mooreanism that delivers the antecedent warrant that Wright's conservatism at the second-order demands, resulting in his entitlement theory being rendered "an idle wheel".¹⁹

Finally, I argue that the notion of an entitlement is epistemically inert; it satisfies the structural requirement for cornerstone propositions without providing the truth-conducive grounding necessary to stop the leaching of unearned warrant. This results in a system of conditional rationality where the cognitive project of our empirical beliefs is internally consistent but anchored by a set of "blind" wagers that we are incapable of confirming. This underlying pragmatism is notable in Wright's rejection of the "Evidential Ideal" (WSE 243) on the grounds that it is an integral part of our rational reflective inquiry that we take some items of knowledge on unearned trust, because the alternative is "intellectual stasis". This, as I have attempted to show, does not sufficiently address the 'global' nature of the sceptic's doubt.

¹⁷ See Coliva, Gupta, and Wright, "A Debate on Skepticism and Perceptual Belief," 361, 379.

¹⁸ See Pritchard, "Wittgenstein's On Certainty," 189–224; Jenkins, "Entitlement and Rationality," 25–45. Cf. Wright, WSE, 213–248 for his defense against such "instrumentalist" interpretations.

¹⁹ McGlynn, "Epistemic Entitlement and the Leaching Problem," 95–96, 98.

3.3. Hinges as Constitutive of Rationality

This brings us to the core of Wright's 'Problem of Demarcation': the concern that treating hinges as groundless rules renders our world-picture merely optional. I argue Wright's notion of 'Strategic Entitlement' treats cornerstones instrumentally as seen in the contrast Wittgenstein makes between the rules of cooking and grammar; cooking is defined by its end, whereas speaking a language isn't (PG I, 133). There is a categorical difference between instrumental activities and grammatical ones:

"I believe the reason one isn't tempted to call cooking a game is this: ... 'cooking' doesn't refer to an activity that follows those rules—rather, to an activity that has a particular result. . . On the other hand "playing chess" doesn't mean an activity that has a particular result, but rather an activity that corresponds to such and such rules." (BT, 186e).

If someone were to change or not follow the rules of cooking (e.g., boiling an egg for five minutes instead of three), he might fail to achieve the intended result; but if we change the rules of grammar, we don't speak "falsely", rather we are playing a different game. The notion of not following a rule of grammar is nonsense. Wright treats hinges instrumentally in his decision-theoretic strategy, like a cooking recipe designed to achieve a desired outcome: truth or survival. Secondly, Wittgenstein's assertion that grammar is arbitrary does not imply hinges are mere prejudices, assumptions, or *idées fixes*, as Wright worries by identifying a "Problem of Demarcation" (WSE 245) but only that one shouldn't confuse a rule with the use of words or expect it to be answerable to reality in the way an empirical proposition is. This is because grammar is autonomous; it does not 'mirror' the world but rather provides the framework that makes any description of the world possible. The conventions of grammar cannot be justified by a description of what is being represented, as "any description of that kind already presupposes the rules of grammar" (BT, 188e).

As I established earlier, because hinges are logical enabling conditions like the constitutive rules of a game,²⁰ they cannot be random assumptions that we could conceivably make differently, owing to their contingent nature. The arbitrariness of grammatical rules stems from our observing their fixity in language before removing these propositions from the realm of contingency.

Consider: "In language the only correlate to natural necessity is an arbitrary rule. It is the only thing one can remove from this necessity and put into a proposition." Refers to propositions such as $\sim\sim p = p$. (BT, 185e)

Just as the rule of double negation is not an empirical fact we discover, but a constitutive rule informing us of how the word "not" is used, likewise the arbitrariness of grammar consists in the fact that it is not responsible to any reality; it is not a description of facts, but the very framework that makes descriptions of facts possible. Furthermore, our world-picture of hinges are not axioms that provide the starting point for language, but the very medium in which rationality exists.

"And this system is not a more or less arbitrary and doubtful point of departure for all our arguments: no, it belongs to the essence of what we call an argument. The system is not so much the point of departure, as the element in which arguments have their life." (OC 105)

Wright's mistake lies in treating cornerstones as these points of departure since they open us to question if alternate points of departure could be chosen or not, so to speak. By insisting on the empirical and contingent nature of cornerstones, Wright's entitlements are vulnerable to the same problem of demarcation he identified earlier.

4. Conclusion

The debate between Wright and the grammatical reading I have proposed turns on the nature of the ground of our epistemic practices. Wright accepts the sceptic's demand that cornerstones require warrant and offers

²⁰Schönbaumsfeld, "'Logical' and 'Epistemic' Uses," 241.

'entitlement' as part of his unified strategy. Yet, as I have argued in this paper, Wright's strategy is epistemically inert because it doesn't adequately resolve the problem of leaching, leaving us with a system that is only conditionally rational. By conceding to the skeptic that our cornerstones require warrant, Wright leaves our entire epistemic practices vulnerable to the leaching problem. Because entitlement is mere trust, it cannot prevent the further contamination of our empirical claims. In contrast, by acknowledging hinges as grammatical propositions, I argue such doubts are logically excluded and that the arbitrariness of grammar is constitutive, functioning like the rules of a game that define the field of play rather than the moves made within it. I provide a more robust dissolution of the skeptical challenge by identifying Wright's category mistake through my analogies with chess games. I show that hinges are the constitutive grammatical rules that define the moves made within our language game. This is a significant shift towards an anti-foundationalist attempt at securing the rational integrity of our epistemic practices without having to justify, potentially infinitely, each cornerstone proposition.

List of Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Full Title & Edition
BT	The Big Typescript: TS 213, ed. and trans. C.G. Luckhardt and M.A.E. Aue (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005).
OC	On Certainty, ed. G.E.M. Anscombe and G.H. von Wright, trans. D. Paul and G.E.M. Anscombe (Oxford: Blackwell, 1969).
PG	Philosophical Grammar, ed. R. Rhees, trans. A. Kenny (Oxford: Blackwell, 1974).
PI	Philosophical Investigations, trans. G.E.M. Anscombe, P.M.S. Hacker, and J. Schulte, 4th ed. (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009).
TLP	Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, trans. D.F. Pears and B.F. McGuinness (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1961).
WC	Wittgenstein and Skepticism, ed. Denis McManus (London: Routledge, 2004).
WN	"Warrant for Nothing (and Foundations for Free)?" The Aristotelian Society Supp. 78, no.1 (2004).
WSE	"On Epistemic Entitlement (II): Welfare State Epistemology." In Scepticism and Perceptual Justification (Oxford: OUP 2014).

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