

Chapter 45

A Debate on Skepticism and Perceptual Belief



Annalisa Coliva, Anil Gupta, and Crispin Wright

Abstract This chapter consists of five exchanges between Annalisa Coliva, Anil Gupta, and Crispin Wright. These philosophers debate a wide range of issues including (i) whether perceptual judgments presuppose general hinge propositions (e.g., “External objects are, by and large, as they appear to be”); (ii) whether the justification of perceptual judgments requires that the hinge propositions be justified; (iii) whether the idea of hinge proposition helps address skeptical arguments; and (iv) which skeptical arguments deserve a constructive response and which deserve to be dismissed as fallacious.

45.1 The First Exchange

Anil Gupta

(AG 1.1) All three of us agree on the importance of views in assessing the justification of perceptual beliefs, but we disagree on the precise bearing of views on this assessment. In particular, we disagree on the relationship between perceptual beliefs and acceptance of what Annalisa calls, following Wittgenstein, *hinge propositions*. If, for example, on seeing a bird I come to believe that the bird is a cardinal (P), you two think that my belief presupposes acceptance, or at least the assumption, of

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a hinge proposition such as “my sense organs work mostly reliably” (H).¹ I, on the other hand, deny this; I think no such relation obtains between the perceptual belief P and the acceptance or assumption of hinge proposition H . This disagreement traces, I think, to disagreements over larger issues, including (i) how to conceive of experience, (ii) what rational contribution experience makes to cognition (i.e., what the *given* is in experience), and (iii) what exactly the problem is that the skeptic raises about empirical cognition. My question at the conference concerned this last point. Let me restate the question in what I hope is a clearer way.

(AG 1.2) Crispin distinguishes two levels at which the question of perceptual justification can be raised. One level concerns the *forming* of justified perceptual beliefs while the other level concerns a subject’s *laying claim* to possession of justification for such beliefs (Wright, this volume, Chap. 37). It is at the second level, Crispin thinks, that the skeptical worry, as well as the role of hinge propositions, truly comes into view. At the first level, we can stay, he thinks, with a simple story, such as the one the Dogmatist offers. We can think of experience as providing default sufficient justification for perceptual beliefs; we can remain, as Crispin puts it, “Pryorian Dogmatists” (Wright, this volume, Chap. 37 p. 300). But when we shift to the second level, the dogmatist stance is no longer tenable, and we need to appeal to one or more hinge propositions to make good our claim to possess justification. Crispin constructs various dialogues to bring out the untenability, at the second level, of the dogmatist stance and to show the need to appeal to hinge propositions. In one such dialogue he offers in “Perils of Dogmatism” (Wright 2007, p 39), the question “Why do you believe P ?” is answered by the subject by saying “Because it looks to me to be the case that P and I have no reason to regard my visual system as defective,” and this is used to motivate the idea that the subject needs “to take the stance that it is reasonable to believe that his visual system is working properly unless there is evidence to the contrary” (Wright 2007, p. 40).

As I see things, the skeptical problem arises already at the first level. Furthermore, if it is conceded that the Dogmatist gives a satisfactory account of forming justified perceptual beliefs, then he faces no difficulty at the second level. For, in the bird example above, if I am justified in the formation of my perceptual belief that P , then I am justified also in the formation of the belief that I see that P . This is a remarkable feature of perception: if I justifiably transition to a belief that Q , then I can justifiably transition to the belief that I perceive that Q ; the same experience that renders rational the one transition renders rational the other; see *Conscious Experience: A Logical Inquiry* (Gupta 2019a, henceforth *CE*), §78. So, I can make good my claim to possess justification for my belief that P not by saying “Because it looks to me to be the case that P and I have no reason to regard my visual system as defective,” but more simply by saying “I see that P .” And this response only requires me to take the stance that it is reasonable to believe the general proposition that when I see that Q , Q .

¹ I take the present example of hinge proposition from Annalisa’s *Extended Rationality* (Coliva 2015, p. 4). The specific character of this example is immaterial; other examples of the same general character will suffice—for example, “external objects are, by and large, as they appear to be,” which is one of Crispin’s examples of an authenticity condition in “Perils of Dogmatism” (Wright 2007, p. 47).

So, my question was why cannot the dialogue in which one lays claim to possess justification go in this alternative way. If it can go in this alternative way, then we lose this route to motivate the claimed role of hinge propositions in perceptual justification. How then to motivate this role? Incidentally, Sellars also assigned to the reliability of sense-perception a position similar to the one you both assign it. He took the general proposition “Perceptual judgments are likely to be true” to be epistemically prior to particular perceptual judgments. I discuss critically Sellars’s claim and his argument for it in *CE*, §§39–40.

Annalisa Coliva

(AC 1.1) I agree with Anil that conceding the dogmatist position at first order deprives one of at least some motivation to be a conservative at second order. Indeed, if it is granted that one is justified in forming the belief “Here is a hand” just based on one’s occurrent sense experience, absent defeaters, one is also justified in forming the second order judgement “I see a hand” (as long as one has the necessary concepts), thereby being justified in responding to the question “How do you know?”, by saying “because I see it”.

This response, however, will not satisfy a skeptic of a Cartesian kind who is troubled by undetectable error possibilities. For a dogmatist goes only for defeasible justification. Thus, it may be consistent with dogmatism that one is only defeasibly justified in holding “Here is my hand”, based on one’s sense experience, absent defeaters. Similarly, it is consistent with dogmatism that one is also thereby defeasibly justified in holding “I see a hand” and then returning the “Because I see it” response to the “How do you know?” question. Yet a Cartesian skeptic will raise the possibility that one’s initial experience might in fact have been produced by an evil demon (say) and will thus deny that one was in fact justified in the first place. It then seems that brining in the authenticity conditions for one’s initial experience would be relevant to dismiss this kind of whole-sale skepticism. (I think Duncan Pritchard’s bispopic hinge epistemology is essentially motivated in this manner; even though, contrary to Pryor, he is a disjunctivist about perceptual experience).

In other words: it is not so much for the situations depicted in Crispin’s dialogues (*à la* Austin, in fact) that one may appreciate the need of going conservative at second order. Rather, it is when specific skeptical scenarios are introduced. Yet, those scenarios are such that, typically, they would not concede to dogmatists that there was anything like a justification—at first order—for beliefs such as “Here is a hand”.

Irrespective of these skeptical hypotheses, however, my worry is that Crispin is conceding too much to a dogmatist. Pryor’s position regarding perceptual experience is very weak. On his view, perceptual experience has a phenomenal and representational content, but it can only defeasibly justify *basic* perceptual beliefs—probably not even “here is a hand”. It is difficult to see how perceptual experience so conceived could give one a justification for beliefs about specific physical objects in one’s surroundings, absent defeaters (internalistically conceived). It may indeed seem to me that there is a pinkish expanse with roughly the shape of a hand, and I

may have no reason to think that my experience is somewhat illusionary or defective; yet it could be. For it could be caused by some other physical object or be just a hologram; or even be a perceptual illusion generated by an evil demon. Thus, absent any view about the obtaining of the authenticity conditions, it seems difficult to say that that experience is enough to provide one with a justification for “Here is a hand” (but even for “Here is a hand-like looking physical object”).²

(AC 1.2) This is in effect why—as a moderatist about perceptual justification—I think that more is needed than just an experience, absent defeaters, to have a justification for a belief about physical objects in one’s surroundings. Where I disagree with conservatives (at “first order” as it were—and I am not clear that Crispin is one anymore) is that—at that order—one needs a justification for assuming that the relevant authenticity conditions (or “hinges”, in my preferred terminology) obtain. For me, it is enough to assume the relevant hinges, without any kind of justification or entitlement for them. I agree, though, that, at “second order”, one will have to justify the rationality of assuming hinges, but this is not equivalent to saying that one will need a justification for hinges for them to be rationally assumed in the first place. On the constitutive view I have developed in Coliva (2015), the justification of the rationality of hinge assumptions is provided by means of an a priori argument which relies on their constitutive role with respect to epistemic rationality. This is not an a priori justification that corroborates the truth of any given hinge *H*, but only of truth of the claim “To assume *H*—without any justification in favor of *H* itself—is rational”.

(AC 1.3) I am also not clear that one can separate issues about truth and reliability from issues of intellectual conscience, in the way suggested by Crispin’s axiological pluralism. In particular, I don’t think one can be intellectually conscientious while having no justifications for one’s beliefs. One may be excused for them (if certain conditions obtain). Yet, being excused for something does not mean having done well (from an epistemic point of view). Sure, in some cases one couldn’t have done more. That is why one is excused; but one is excused for *failing*—without negligence—to secure the good standing of one’s beliefs (from an epistemic point of view). It seems only a recipe for confusion to say that in both cases one would be justified (or indeed rational). At the very minimum, one would have to distinguish between two senses of “justified” (or “rational”).³

Furthermore, such an axiological distinction seems to me orthogonal to the internalist/externalist debate about justification. This is a debate about the conditions that need to obtain to corroborate the truth of one’s judgements. Internalists

² The same holds for an even thinner conception of experience such as the one presented by Anil in Gupta (2019a, b, c).

³ This connects with one of my criticisms to Anil’s hypothetical given in Coliva (Chap. 6, this volume). Since an experience *e* could make any transition to any judgement *j* rational, if one’s view permits it, Anil’s proposal obscures the difference between being rational in the sense of being excusable/ed for one’s judgment and being rational in the sense of having a justification for one’s judgement.

think these conditions depend on factors that are somewhat internal to individuals—e.g. their experiences and their views, or their hinge-assumptions, internalistically conceived—and that can be produced by (conceptually endowed) subjects if requested to do so. Externalists, in contrast, think that these factors depend solely on the de facto reliability of one's belief-forming methods and that subjects need not have access to them, even when requested to produce them, and even when conceptually endowed. (Think of the chicken sex-teller case here). Thus, both parties aim to provide answers to the same question concerning the conditions under which the truth of one's judgement is corroborated. They are not talking past each other by addressing different problems—viz. under which conditions a judgement's truth is corroborated vs. under which conditions a subject may be excused for her judgement/belief. In fact, internalist positions are usually considered to be more demanding than externalist ones because on top of truth-corroborating conditions, they require first-personal accessibility to them. If one followed Crispin's suggestion that—at least in principle—these requirements could be completely divorced from one another, internalist positions would be much less demanding (and epistemologically significant) than externalist ones.⁴

Conversely, this sits badly with the often-perceived problem that externalist positions are unsatisfactory vis-à-vis skeptical worries. For even if they succeeded in identifying the conditions under which justifications obtain, externalists would simply *posit* their obtaining, rather than being able rationally to redeem it.⁵

Crispin Wright

(CW 1.1) On my alleged concession of the correctness of perceptual dogmatism at “first-order”.

There is a misunderstanding here. I could/should have been clearer.

Dogmatism is the view that, for any P which is susceptible to purely perceptual justification, (defeasible) justification for believing P is conferred purely and simply by a suitable episode of perceptual experience (*modulo* the absence of any relevant defeater). I do not think that view is correct. But I do think that an ordinary subject whose experience is so patterned, and who has no other relevant information, is justified in believing P.

That may seem like a contradiction but it is not. One (theoretical) question is: what is the *architecture* of perceptual justification? When one is (purely) perceptually justified in a belief, what factors require mention, under what kind of headings, in an account of why one is thereby justified? A different (practical) question is: what does a subject *have to do* to have, or get, perceptual justification?

The question which I am saying that Dogmatism answers correctly in a wide range of cases is the second. All you have to do to get perceptual justification for

⁴ My worry with Anil's hypothetical given is that precisely by divorcing rationality from truth-corroboration, in favor of mere truth-preservation, it ends up being too weak a notion to be epistemically significant.

⁵ Consider also that a refined externalist like Sosa is quite happy to insist that animal knowledge may obtain without reflective knowledge, yet would not hold that the latter may obtain without the former.

believing P (for a suitable P—see below) is to have a suitable episode, E, of experience and to have no other relevant information. But the architectural question requires, in my view, a more complex answer: one that makes mention of the *authenticity-conditions* on which the evidential relevance of E depends. It is because (some of) these are entitlements—*propos* rather than *lemmas*—and therefore things for which no independent evidence is required, but which may be simply be taken for granted or properly ignored, grasping which indeed may even be beyond the conceptual resources of the subject—it is because of all that that in basic cases Dogmatism is able to offer a correct answer to the practical question.

(CW 1.2) Entitlements

Epistemic Entitlements, as I think of them—(others, e.g. Burge who also contrasts “justification” and “entitlement” in epistemological contexts, think of the notion differently)—are *epistemic rights*: they are rights to take for granted, to assume without investigation, to ignore, to be ignorant of. For P to be an entitlement in a cognitive project is for it to be rational to proceed in that project unreflectively but exactly as a rational subject would proceed who did consider P but for whom P was certain.

Most entitlements have that status as a function of the needs, interests and practical possibilities pertaining to a particular investigative context. In a different context, they could be lemmas and would then require independent corroboration in order to underwrite a rationally obtained result. In any given case, there will be a relatively complex project of describing what are the investigable props that one is nevertheless entitled to take for granted without investigation and why—the conditions which one needs to obtain in order for the integrity of the investigation to be safeguarded but which it would impress as excessively fastidious or neurotic to investigate. The stakes, interests and relevant alternatives literature is relevant here.

However the metaphysical “heavyweights”—Annalisa’s “Hinges”—are *absolute* entitlements, beyond the reach of investigation. (That in effect is the lesson of the best sceptical arguments.)

(CW 1.3) Do I concede too much to Dogmatism in another way?

I was surprised to read Annalisa writing as follows:

Irrespective of these skeptical hypotheses, however, my worry is that Crispin is conceding too much to a dogmatist. Pryor’s position regarding perceptual experience is very weak. On his view, perceptual experience has a phenomenal and representational content, but it can only defeasibly justify *basic* perceptual beliefs – probably not even “here is a hand”. It is difficult to see how perceptual experience so conceived could give one a justification for beliefs about specific physical objects.

She goes on to elaborate the point in terms of ‘handy holograms’, and in general cases where a certain kind of object does have a characteristic appearance, which can nevertheless be aped by ‘fools’ counterparts.

But I was, absolutely, sensitive to the difficulty that Dogmatism encounters here, and indeed devoted most of section 2, on ‘purely recognitional’ judgements, of my PEER paper to it.

(CW 1.4) Are the Hinges warrantable?

Annalisa tends to write as though my tendency to talk in terms of entitlements as the upshot of “non-evidential warrant” is a mistake—in her view, the propositions in question are rather things for which there is *no* epistemic warrant but whose acceptance is rather part of what she terms “extended rationality”.

I think there is again a misunderstanding here (and perhaps a confusion), the effect of resolving which may be to disclose that we have no serious disagreement on the warrantability-status of the Hinges.

What, in my view, is warranted by Entitlement? The answer is: not the proposition that P but *an attitude to it*. An entitlement is not, as it were, ‘non-evidential evidence’ for P, a kind of non- truth-indicative corroboration. That idea comes across as some kind of conceptual solecism, and, if I had ever suggested such a thing, Annalisa would be perfectly justified in resisting it. However that is not, and never has been anything I wanted to suggest or make sense of.

No: entitlement is a right to accept, to take for granted in ones proceedings,..., etc. as glossed above. (And actually, I think there is no real contrast with the truth-indicative justification supplied by quotidian evidence in this respect. The justification provided by evidence is also for *attitudes* to the proposition in question. It is just a kind of shorthand to speak of the proposition to which the attitude is taken as it being justified.)

With that issue set aside, I think Annalisa will—and actually must—agree that there is a sensible question about how the attitude we take to Hinges is to be vindicated. Scepticism assumes that where there is no evidential justification, there is no vindication. That has to be contested. According to Annalisa’s ‘Moderatism’, the Hinges are assumptions that we need to make in order to enjoy perceptual justification. But Scepticism can agree with that. Since assumptions, in general, can be made unjustifiably, there has to be a question about why we are “doing doxastically well” in making them in the cases in point. And Annalisa does accept the question—the story about “extended rationality” is her answer.

So I think Annalisa and I are on the same page, at least at a broad strategic level. The differences between the Moderatist conception of the justificational architecture of perceptual judgements and the conservative account that makes play with Entitlement, are differences of detail. We both accept the role of Hinges and a certain explanatory obligation. It is merely that we have canvassed different responses to the obligation. (Extended rationality vs. the different stories about how absolute entitlements may be underwritten in Wright (2004a, b and 2014.)

(CW 1.5) On ‘Extended rationality’;

I do, though, have reservations about this direction.

First, what is properly included in the domain of possible “extended-rational” acceptances? Could it e.g. be part of extended rationality to believe in God? Or to accept Solipsism? Or to believe that I am a brain-in-a-vat? If not, why not?

Second, can we justifiably pay ourselves the compliment of thinking of *our* metaphysical heavyweights as *rationally* accepted?

I am not drawn to Annalisa’s terminology. I’d prefer to reserve “rational” as an epithet of the techniques and transitions that are part of good belief management, rather than of belief content. The role of the heavyweight Hinges is to determine

a maximally general metaphysics of the world,—as it were, a maximally general taxonomy of its species of facts—and to underwrite standards of local-evidential relevance. It is to articulate a world-view in which rational belief management is possible. But the acceptance of that world-view is not itself the upshot of rational thought.

I find this passage from *On Certainty* suggestive.

94. But I did not get my picture of the world by satisfying myself of its correctness; nor do I have it because I am satisfied of its correctness. No: it is the inherited background against which I distinguish between true and false.

95. *The propositions describing this world-picture might be part of a kind of mythology.* [My italics]. And their role is like that of rules of a game; and the game can be learned purely practically, without learning any explicit rules.

(CW 1.6) On Anil's suggestion of the instability of the first-order/ second-order (level of claims) distinction

Anil wonders why the distinction is not undermined by the simple reflection that if I am perceptually (say, visually) justified in believing P, then I am also justified in taking myself to *see* that P, and hence to *know* that P. Whenever I can justifiably assert P on the basis of visual experience, I can also justifiably assert “I see that P”. Hence, since seeing is factive, I can lay claim to knowledge that P—in short the concession to Dogmatism at first-order already brings with it justification for the putatively second-order claim.

(Anil interprets this point as entailing that “the problem of scepticism” already arises at first-order.)

I already qualified the alleged “concession”. But there is more to say. Anil's objection is well taken if one thinks that the distinction between having knowledge and being in position to lay claim to it is simply to be drawn in terms of vocabularies characteristic of the distinction between first and second order assertions. But that is not where the distinction is fundamentally to be made. Rather it consists in the respective *levels of epistemic responsibility* that need to be discharged before an assertion at either respective level can be considered properly made.

Meta-epistemic assertions—assertions embedding epistemic notions (justification, knowing, seeing)—can be made at first order, as it were, on the kind of grounds dogmatism regards as sufficient for justification. The “level of claims” is rather a *forensic* notion (“forensic” in the sense indicative of debate, rather than criminal proceedings!). It is the level one ascends to when pressed fully to articulate one's evidence, relevant background theory (‘view’), the conditions one has to take to be satisfied if one's evidence is to have the evidential force one takes it to have, which of such conditions are independently attested and which taken for granted, and so on.

The level of claims is a level of full, adult epistemic responsibility. But it is probably unfortunate to think of it as a single platform, so to speak. As in the practical sphere, so in the epistemic, what it is for an agent to meet their due responsibilities in a project of information gathering depends on their capacities and the needs of the context. We let children off moral responsibilities that we would not so readily

excuse adults. And we qualify adult responsibilities by considerations of stakes and roles. We have a notion of a pointless precaution—a notion whereby it is reckoned Ok to run certain, as we like to say, negligible risks. And how far this extends is contextually variable.

Scepticism teaches us that all enquiry runs unavoidable risks. (At least, it teaches us this provided that we think of the hinges as robustly truth-and-falsity apt.)

The philosophical—Cartesian—level of claims, as I would like to understand the notion, is the level at which we arrive at the limit of the taking of epistemic responsibility—again, this comes in degrees—a level at which absolutely no presuppositional stone, as it were, is to be left unturned.

45.2 The Second Exchange

Anil Gupta

(AG 2.1) Annalisa motivates the role of hinge propositions (in Crispin’s terminology “authenticity conditions”) in perceptual justification by invoking a certain kind of skeptic. She writes:

Yet a Cartesian skeptic will raise the possibility that one’s initial experience might in fact have been produced by an evil demon (say) and will thus deny that one was in fact justified in the first place. It then seems that bringing in the authenticity conditions for one’s initial experience would be relevant to dismiss this kind of whole-sale skepticism. (AC 1.1)

I have a couple of questions about this proposed motivation. (i) How can the mere raising of the possibility that “one’s initial experience might in fact have been produced by an evil demon” entitle the skeptic to deny that one was justified in one’s perceptual belief? (ii) Further, if the skeptic is so entitled, how would pointing to one’s assumption of a hinge such as *H* (“my sense organs work mostly reliably”) answer his challenge? If skeptical possibilities are in any degree a challenge to particular perceptual beliefs, they are a yet greater challenge to the acceptance of hinge propositions such as *H*.

It seems to me that by making perceptual beliefs dependent on hinges such as *H*, we help the skeptic, not hinder him. For there are better grounds to call hinges into question than there are for calling perceptual beliefs into question. *H*, for example, is a more expansive and more precarious claim than our particular perceptual beliefs (e.g., “that bird is a cardinal”). By making perceptual beliefs dependent on *H*, we make them more open to legitimate challenges.

I think we can respond to Annalisa’s skeptic simply by denying that the mere possibility of a skeptical scenario undermines perceptual justification. I do not think there is any need to invoke heavy hinge propositions. Incidentally, Descartes’s purpose in bringing up the evil demon possibility in *Meditation I* was not to challenge perceptual justification but something entirely different.

(AG 2.2) I have a question concerning the level of claims that Crispin characterizes as philosophical and Cartesian, a level at which “no presuppositional stone... [is]

left unturned” (CW 1.6). It is at this level, I suppose, that the authenticity conditions of our perceptual beliefs come into view. The question is: how to make good the idea that a claim such as *H*, or Crispin’s own “external objects are, by and large, as they appear to be” (*H**), is an authenticity condition for a perceptual belief such as “that bird is a cardinal”? How would the dialogue with the skeptic (or some other forensic expert) go that would bring this to light?

(AG 2.3) Like Annalisa, it seems to me that Crispin makes too large a concession to the Dogmatist. He writes:

Dogmatism is the view that, for any *P* which is susceptible to purely perceptual justification, (defeasible) justification for believing *P* is conferred purely and simply by a suitable episode of perceptual experience (*modulo* the absence of any relevant defeater). I do not think that view is correct. But I do think that an ordinary subject whose experience is so patterned, and who has no other relevant information, is justified in believing *P*. (CW 1.1)

The claim in the last sentence seems to me too strong. Consider an ordinary subject who is viewing a red ball in normal circumstances and whose view is ordinary except that his belief that the lighting conditions are normal is unjustified. (We can imagine that the circumstances are such that the subject can arrive at the belief about lighting conditions only through reasoning, and the subject’s reasoning to the belief was fallacious.) This subject meets the conditions in Crispin’s claim, but the subject is not justified in his perceptual belief that the ball is red. If he were justified, then he could circle back from the justified perceptual belief to the belief that the lighting conditions are normal, and render the latter justified. The subject could reason that since the red ball looks red, the lighting conditions must be normal. Since this reasoning rests on justified beliefs, the belief that the lighting conditions are normal would be rendered justified—an absurd result.

It seems to me that Crispin’s position allows him to jettison the Dogmatist view entirely. Crispin can—and, in my view, should—hold that the justification of a perceptual belief depends on the epistemic status of the relevant part of the subject’s antecedent view. What this relevant part encompasses is under our current debate. I deny that the justification of perceptual beliefs depends on an acceptance or assumption of heavy hinge propositions. You both hold that it does so depend.

Annalisa Coliva

(AC 2.1) Crispin asks: “Could it be part of extended rationality to believe in God? Or to accept Solipsism? Or to believe that I am a brain-in-a-vat? If not, why not?”. The answer is negative because none of these propositions is constitutive of epistemic rationality. Epistemic rationality consists in the practice of providing justifications for or against ordinary empirical beliefs, understood as about physical objects, based on one’s perceptual experience.

(AC 2.2) Regarding Crispin’s further remarks under his (1.1): the distinction between the architecture of warrant vs. what subjects need—practically—to do to have warrant is really helpful, at least to me. In fact, I wonder whether it amounts to the distinction between propositional and doxastic justification, or whether it is different from it.

I also agree with Crispin that at the practical (doxastic?) level dogmatism is correct. However, the whole debate between conservatives, liberals and moderates is best captured at the propositional level—that is, as a debate about the architecture of warrants.

(AC 2.3) Regarding Crispin’s remarks (1.2) & (1.4): I did indeed think of entitlements as non-evidential warrants, which would be part of the architecture of perceptual justification. That is, as non-evidential, yet propositional warrants. Namely, as warrants for “There is an external world” (and other very general hinges). And, of course, the worry is that unless entitlements corroborate the truth of the propositions they warrant, they may serve for epistemic purposes, but they won’t be *epistemic* warrants.

Is then the claim that they are not non-evidential warrants for “There is an external world” (or any other general hinge) but for “To take for granted/to trust that there is an external world is epistemically rational”? In the latter case, I think we are more in agreement than on the original understanding of entitlements.

Notice, however, that that would turn Crispin’s position into a moderate one. For now hinges themselves—e.g. “There is an external world”, “I am not a BIV”, etc.—wouldn’t be warranted (if only non-evidentially). Rather, entitlements would be species of a priori warrants that would corroborate the truth of entirely different propositions, such as “To take for granted/to trust that there is an external world is epistemically rational”.

(AC 2.4) Regarding (CW 1.5): of course, I agree with Crispin and Wittgenstein that we did not get our picture of the world from ratiocination. Yet, unless one wants to subscribe to some form of Platonism, epistemic rationality too must be seen as a product of our practices. Once we recognize that it hinges on certain very general assumptions, asking for their validation comes down to a solecism similar to asking “Are the rules of chess correct?”, while playing chess. Of course, one may wonder whether one is really following the rules of chess while playing (which may be glossed as asking whether one is playing chess correctly), but that is an entirely different question from asking whether the very rules of chess are correct. And of course, the positive suggestion one may elicit from the analogy is that just as we need not answer the question “Are the rules of chess correct?” to play chess legitimately, we need not answer the question “Are hinges correct?” to play the “game” of epistemic rationality legitimately.

As to Wittgenstein, let me take this opportunity to state something very close to my heart (philosophy-wise) and relevant to determining the significance of the later Wittgenstein for present-day analytic philosophy. In the passages quoted by Crispin, Wittgenstein is insisting on the rule-like role of hinges. I think the analogy with games that I keep using to explain the constitutivist position builds precisely on that aspect of Wittgenstein’s thought.

Furthermore, the external validation of hinges is what an epistemic realist would look for, whereas Wittgenstein is insisting on the fact that hinges are part of our world-*picture* and could be likened to a *mythology*. This is indicative of his leaning towards an anti-realist position. One in which the hinges we have are not validated by a mind-independent reality or need to be so validated for us to be within our rights in

holding on to them. Rather, they are what they are because of the epistemic practices we engage in, which are not themselves the result of ratiocination, and yet depend on taking certain propositions for granted, so that these hinges become norms—or, as I prefer to say, conditions of possibility—of inquiry.

I don't think there is any big mystery in all this. It is simply one more instance of Wittgenstein's indeed revolutionary and anti-Humean thought that "is"—use, or practice, in his terminology—generates norms, or "oughts".

Or, from a slightly different perspective, it is an instance of Wittgenstein's Kantian, rather than naturalist, attitude. Once norms and rules can no longer be grounded in a transcendental domain, they get grounded in deeds and actions. Yet, they do not disappear, or become impossible. On the contrary, while their origin may not be as "strong"—that is, as objective and universal—as in Kant, their normative force is just as binding as it could sensibly be, at least for those who are playing the relevant games. (Notice, moreover, that the "game" in question here is a very universal one, as it is the "game" of forming, revising or withdrawing beliefs about mind-independent objects based on one's perceptual evidence).

This "normativism with a human face", as it were, is what draws me to Wittgenstein. I think it is an unfortunate outcome of too many naturalist (Strawson, Moyal-Sharrock) and therapeutic interpretations (Conant, Diamond) of his thought that it gets hidden, or even goes unnoticed.

(AC 2.5) Concerning Crispin's remarks under (CW1.6) and Anil's comments (AG 2.1) on my response: I think we need to strike a balance between thinking that Cartesian skepticism is a distraction and thinking that it constitutes a real challenge. To do so, I don't think that we can provide a direct response to Cartesian skepticism. That is one, which, by utilizing the same presuppositions as Cartesian skepticism, ends up returning an opposite verdict on the legitimacy of our hinges and of our everyday empirical beliefs based on perception. Rather, we need a diagnostic response. That is, one which diagnoses what goes wrong with the Cartesian quest while also acknowledging some of its merits. The merit that I find in Cartesian (as well as in Humean) skepticism is that it shows that we cannot produce perceptual justifications for hinges like "I am not dreaming/BIV", "There is an external world", "My sense organs work mostly correctly" (or, *mutatis mutandis*, justifications for "My memory is mostly reliable", "There is a past", "People are generally reliable informants", etc.), by means of instances of Moore's schema:

P	(where P is a proposition about specific physical objects (based on perception)/something we did or that happened earlier (based on memory or testimony)/something we are told)
P → Q	(where Q is one of the relevant hinges)

Q	

The limit is to think that unless Q is justified—a posteriori or a priori—we cannot legitimately proceed in our epistemic practices.

It seems to me that sometimes Anil is too dismissive of skepticism, while Crispin is (or sounds) too appreciative of it and the result is that the lesson we can learn from it is missed or, on the contrary, transformed into a challenge that is very hard—if not impossible—to meet.

That is, I don't think it is wise to dismiss skepticism simply on the grounds that any empirical evidence we can amass against it would never respond to it (Anil's "rigidity" condition); or else, to think that there is a real challenge there, to the effect that "no presuppositional stone" can be left "untuned", for us to be within our rights in proceeding as we normally do epistemic-wise. The key move is to realize that the fact that some "presuppositional stones" are not in the market for warrant or justification is no good reason to think that they are therefore epistemically or rationally in bad standing so that we should suspend them or stop trusting them or, metaphorically, stepping our feet onto them. For even asking for their standing in those respects needs to presuppose them.

More specifically, Anil asks:

(i) How can the mere raising of the possibility that "one's initial experience might in fact have been produced by an evil demon" entitle the skeptic to deny that one was justified in one's perceptual belief? (ii) Further, if the skeptic is so entitled, how would pointing to one's assumption of a hinge such as *H* ("my sense organs work mostly reliably") answer his challenge? If skeptical possibilities are in any degree a challenge to particular perceptual beliefs, they are a yet greater challenge to the acceptance of hinge propositions such as *H*.

The real challenge is that once the possibility that one be a BIV is raised, then the initial claim that one was justified in one's perceptual belief no longer seems to be legitimate but appears to be a mere assumption, precisely because the hinges on which that claim rests, epistemically, are being questioned. If it cannot be taken for granted that we are not BIVs, that our sense organs work mostly correctly, or that there are mind-independent physical objects, then, clearly, "I am seeing a red robin" is not going to be in good epistemic standing either.

(AC 2.6) Hinge epistemology comes to the rescue in different ways, depending on how it is developed. I thought that Crispin's version would have allowed us to say that while those hinges cannot be evidentially justified, they are non-evidentially warranted. Thus, the Cartesian mistake would depend on too narrow a notion of warrant that would comprise only evidential ones. The previous exchange made clear that Crispin may have had something else in mind, which makes our respective positions quite closer than originally supposed.

At any rate, my own version of hinge epistemology proceeds in three main steps. First, it argues that no justification for hinges is needed to have a perceptual justification in the first place, for assuming hinges suffices to that effect. This is the gist of the moderate account of perceptual justification. Thus, even if we cannot justify hinges, that does not mean that we can have no perceptual justification for ordinary empirical beliefs. Second, it argues that hinges are epistemically rational, and hence in good epistemic standing, even if they cannot be justified evidentially or otherwise, as they are constitutive of epistemic rationality and therefore presupposed by any empirical inquiry. This is the gist of the constitutivist move (aka "extended rationality" move). Thus, even if unjustifiable, hinges are epistemically rational. Third,

I claim that hinges are true, yet since they are not themselves specific representations but conditions for representing certain domains of discourse, their truth is best understood along minimalist or deflationary lines. Therefore, asking whether they are correct—that is made true by independent facts—is legitimate only on a conception of their truth of a correspondence lineage that there is no reason to hold on to, at least when we are dealing with hinges (it is a separate issue whether truth should be understood in deflationary terms across the board, or whether there is room for alethic pluralism).

In positive terms, answering the Cartesian challenge, in my view, requires (i) restricting the validity of the Principle of Closure (not denying it altogether, though, for it would still hold when Q is not a hinge, in the Moore schema); (ii) endorsing the extended rationality view, whereby not only evidentially justified propositions are epistemically rational, but also the ones that make the acquisition of perceptual justifications possible; (iii) going deflationary about truth at least with respect to hinges.

To simplify things even more, this kind of response shows that Cartesian skepticism is a challenge and quite an insurmountable one at that, in my view, only if one sticks to a broadly realist view about truth, justification (or warrant), epistemic rationality and to a conservative view about certain principles of epistemic logic, such as Closure.

The philosophical interest of this kind of skepticism, in my view, is that it shows the perils inherent in the realist picture—which of course is the most intuitive one even for someone “converted” to antirealism such as myself—and motivates us to look for alternatives (which, at least in some cases, can also be independently motivated).

Crispin Wright

(CW 2.1) In response to Anil’s challenge (AG 2.2):

“The question is: how to make good the idea that a claim such as . . . Crispin’s own “external objects are, by and large, as they appear to be” (H*), is an authenticity condition for a perceptual belief such as “that bird is a cardinal”? How would the dialogue with the skeptic (or some other forensic expert) go that would bring this to light? ”

How about something like this?:

Claim: “That bird is a cardinal”.

“How do you know?”

“From its distinctive red and black colours and overall *gestalt*”.

“But [alleged possibility] mightn’t it be that, for some bizarre reason, things around here have taken on misleading appearances—either because your subjective perceptions are distorted in some systematic way, or because the objects themselves have deceptive appearances? Perhaps what you are seeing is a freakish Pine Grosbeak that has somehow taken on the adult appearance of a cardinal. In such circumstances, you cannot depend on the way the bird looks to you as a guide to its species. Do you have any specific evidence to discount these possibilities?”

Suggestion: I cannot rationally profess open-mindedness about alleged possibility, i.e. profess myself agnostic about whether things (round here) are more or less as they appear to be, while continuing to regard Claim as justified.

(CW 2.2) On Dogmatism and my suggestion that although the implicit justificational architecture is more complex, Dogmatism correctly reports what is necessary for perceptual justification as far as the practical requirements are concerned:

Anil objects that this is too simple. For instance, a perceptually normally functioning subject to whom it seems that P will nevertheless not be justified in believing P if they also *falsely believe* that the conditions are deceptive, whereas I had asserted that such a subject who has no other relevant information is justified.

About this I want to say that Anil is of course right. Dogmatic justification is defeasible by *misinformation*. I ask that misinformation—collateral false belief—should be counted as ‘information’ for the purposes of my suggestion, which, if it is, I stick by: a subject to whom it perceptually seems that P and who has no other relevant (mis)information on the matter, is thereby justified in believing P.

(CW 2.3) In response to a number of Annalisa’s points above:

Re AC 2.3: On the notion of “non-evidential warrant”. I just want to stress again that I have never proposed that there is any such thing if what is understood by that phrase is something belonging to propositions as opposed to attitudes to them. It is agents who are non-evidentially warranted in accepting (implicitly trusting) in the truth of certain propositions and only in a derivative sense that the propositions themselves can be spoken of as warranted. So it seems the contrast Annalisa wants to draw between her Moderatism and my proposals does indeed to this extent turn on a misunderstanding.

In fact I’d go further and suggest that evidential warrant too is likewise warrant for an attitude in the first instance and only derivatively to be spoken of as a relationship between evidence and a proposition. (Non-evidential) entitlement is a rational warrant to invest confidence in the truth a proposition and to work with it as if it were evidentially justified.

So then the gap between Annalisa’s moderatism and my outlook is narrower, I think, than she has taken it to be. But a significant remaining difference is that I work with the idea that even these non-evidential warrants have to be grounded—that the question, why am I so entitled? needs an answer (after all, you are not just entitled to accept any old proposition.) Whereas Annalisa writes,

Yet, unless one wants to subscribe to some form of platonism, epistemic rationality too must be seen as a product of our practices. Once we recognize that it hinges on certain very general assumptions, asking for their validation comes down to a solecism similar to asking “Are the rules of chess correct?”

I read this as saying: there is no need (or possibility) of grounding—no, it is just that such acceptances are part of what we call ‘rationality’. The status of such acceptances is comparable to the status of one’s acceptance of the rules of a game. There is, as it were, no independently arguable epistemic virtue that they possess.

I think this is very difficult to swallow. The obvious intuitive difference between e.g. Chess and Logic, in particular, is that it is by no means a solecism to ask whether

an accepted rule of logic is correct. Principles of inference owe a responsibility to the truth values of the statements they enable us to connect as premises and conclusions. There is no analogous responsibility with the rules of a game. And what goes for logic goes for principles of belief management in general.

I grant that there are passages in Wittgenstein where he seems to approximate Annalisa's "rules of the game" line, (e.g. the remark about logic and mathematics being "antecedent to truth" in the *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*, I, §156.) But it is not intuitively a great response to scepticism to reply, "You are just assuming that our judgements have truth values independently of our making them or inferring amongst them"

Re (AC 2.4) and Wittgenstein's "leaning towards an anti-realist position. One in which the hinges we have are not validated by a mind-independent reality or need to be so validated for us to be within our rights in holding on to them."

This is exactly an idea that I experimented with in "Facts and Certainty": viz. that the Hinges are not apt for substantial correspondence with reality. But I dropped it in later work for two reasons: (i) that even if accepted, it's not automatic that it pays off as suggested and (ii) that there is anyway a serious difficulty with it.

- (i) It is by no means evident that it is only if the Hinges are apt for 'correspondence truth' that there is any issue about our rights in holding on to them and the belief management practices they inform. The opposed idea seems much too quick—it is as if someone suggested that only a moral platonist has any basis for crediting us with validating reasons for our moral beliefs.
- (ii) The "serious difficulty" is that the heavyweight hinges precisely express our convictions about the broad character of mind-independent reality—that we live in a material universe, with a remote past beyond living memory, subject to natural laws of which we are ignorant and peopled by minded creatures like ourselves—what are these if not convictions about independent reality?

So what is meant by claiming that they are not (apt to be) validated by it?

The two halves of Annalisa's above claim are different; the second, about there being *no need for* their validation—if validation means independent evidential confirmation—is exactly the entitlement view, The first, about *lack of* validation, seems to be a kind of idealism: that there is no question of the correctness, or incorrectness, of our "broad picture of the world".

It seems to be the latter that is intended by these remarks (AC 2.6):

I claim that hinges are true, yet since they are not themselves specific representations but conditions for representing certain domains of discourse, their truth is best understood along minimalist or deflationary lines. Therefore, asking whether they are correct – that is made true by independent facts – is legitimate only on a conception of their truth of a correspondence lineage that there is no reason to hold on to, at least when we are dealing with hinges (it is a separate issue whether truth should be understood in deflationary terms across the board, or whether there is room for alethic pluralism).

An additional great difficulty with this line is that it is at odds with the strong presumption that representational content is closed under logical consequence. If a anything is

representational, diluting its content merely makes it *less specific*, but not less representational, certainly not unrepresentational altogether. If P correctly represents some facet of reality, and Q is asymmetrically entailed by P, then so does Q—it merely conveys *less*.

Re (AC 2.5) and the possibility of a ‘direct’ response to Skepticism:

Annalisa writes (AC 2.5):

I don’t think that we can provide a direct response to Cartesian skepticism. That is one which, by utilizing exactly the same presuppositions as Cartesian skepticism, ends up returning an opposite verdict on the legitimacy of our hinges and of our everyday empirical beliefs based on perception.

That needn’t be the shape of a “direct” response. Another shape would be that assumed by the strategy of “Facts and Certainty”, which attempts to expose sceptical doubt as essentially *eclectic and unprincipled*.

Re (AC 2.5) on taking scepticism (not seriously enough) or too seriously. Annalisa writes.

I don’t think it is wise to dismiss skepticism simply on the grounds that any empirical evidence we can amass against it would never respond to it (Anil’s “rigidity” condition); or else, to think that there is a real challenge there, to the effect that “no presuppositional stone” can be left “unturned”, for us to be within our rights in proceeding as we normally do epistemic-wise. The key move is to realize that the fact that some “presuppositional stones” are not in the market for warrant or justification is no good reason to think that they are therefore epistemically or rationally in bad standing.

I think the difference between Annalisa and me can be encapsulated by the fact that I agree with the underlined passage iff we replace “warrant or justification” with “evidence”. But otherwise I think the passage reads as a solecism. If the Hinges are, to the contrary, not in “bad standing”, despite being *sans evidence*, there must be an account of why this so. And indeed Annalisa is, it seems to me, giving a positive answer: they are in good standing because their acceptance is, on her view, “constitutively rational”—part of our “extended rationality.” But I think more needs to be done to license the invocation of “rationality” here. For there is a tension between it and the “this is just how we do it,” “this game is played” element in her (and LW’s) remarks. The rules of a game have only conditional normative force—if you want to play chess, you must not move like that. The “rules of reason”, like moral norms, at least pretend to some kind of categoricity. Their force does not depend on a context in which one has opted into the Rationality game, as it were. For this reason I think Annalisa steers dangerously close to *dropping* the notion of epistemic rationality as it applies to acceptance of the Hinges, rather than “extending” it.

45.3 The Third Exchange

Anil Gupta

(AG 3.1) Annalisa says that I am too dismissive of skepticism (AC 2.5). I would say, in response, that I take skepticism seriously but differ from Annalisa on what the skeptical argument is that should worry us. I take the worrisome skeptical argument to contain, as an *intermediate* step, the claim that a Cartesian conception of experience is forced. According to this conception, experience cannot provide us with knowledge, or even justified belief, about ordinary external objects; instead, it provides knowledge of such things as ideas, impressions, and sense-data. From this intermediate step, the skeptical argument goes on to draw the conclusion that justified beliefs about the external world are impossible. I think the transition from the intermediate step to the skeptical conclusion is forced (although a long tradition in philosophy has dedicated itself to finding ways of resisting this transition). So, if we are to resist the skeptical conclusion, we need to resist the move to the intermediate step. Now, many philosophers have taken the move to Cartesian conceptions to be founded on the Argument from Illusion. (J. L. Austin's *Sense and Sensibilia* (Austin 1962) is devoted almost entirely to this argument, as is A. D. Smith's *Problem of Perception* (Smith 2002)). I myself think that the Argument from Illusion possesses little power, and it is an easy logical exercise to block it. It is also telling that this argument is not to be found in Berkeley or Hume or Russell, three of the most prominent proponents of such conceptions. I myself think that Cartesian conceptions rest on powerful considerations. In particular, a propositional treatment of the given, I have argued, forces one into a Cartesian conception. (I argue this in Gupta 2006, ch. 2, and in *CE*, §§175–183. Also relevant are *CE*, §§65–71 & §110.) Hence, to resist the skeptical argument one must abandon the propositional given—something that very few contemporary philosophers have succeeded in doing. My proposal that the given is hypothetical is a response to what I take to be the main skeptical problem. I take skepticism seriously: the principal move I make is motivated by it.

As I indicated in the questions I asked Annalisa (in AG 2.1), I do not see how raising the mere possibility of an evil demon poses a skeptical challenge to our ordinary perceptual beliefs. At best, the challenge shows that there is a possibility that our beliefs might be false—a harmless conclusion that we can easily accept. The challenge has no tendency to show that our ordinary perceptual beliefs are actually false or are likely to be false. Furthermore, as noted before, our perceptual beliefs would be justified even if there were an evil demon. So, why would raising the possibility of an evil demon pose a skeptical threat that should worry us?

(AG 3.2) There are two difficulties, it seems to me, with the motivation Crispin provides for the authenticity condition “External objects are, by and large, as they appear to be” (H*). The first difficulty is one that initiated our exchange: The subject need not respond to the challenge, “How do you know?,” to her judgment “That bird is a cardinal” by citing an appearance of the bird. She can simply say “I see that the bird is a cardinal.” This response, which is perfectly legitimate, does not require

(H*). The skeptical/forensic examination can be passed without any appeal to the heavy authenticity condition.

The second difficulty is that even if the subject cites the appearance judgment, she does not need (H*) to sustain her response. Condition (H*) is general, with different readings of it encompassing different grades of generality. Our subject need not accept any reading of (H*) whose reach extends beyond her particular situation. She need only accept that in this particular instance, with respect to this particular bird, this particular appearance indicates a cardinal.

(AG 3.3) The counterexample Crispin addresses in his (qualified) defense of Dogmatism is different from the one I gave. The crucial difference is that, in the latter example, the subject's belief about lighting conditions is *correct* but unjustified. If we say with the Dogmatist that, in this case, the subject's perceptual judgment (e.g., "the ball is red") is justified, untenable consequences follow.

Annalisa Coliva

(AC 3.1) Crispin's remarks re (AC 2.4) turn on a different assessment of the viability of a deflationary conception of truth with respect to hinges. I pause here only to say that Wittgenstein in *On Certainty* is never in favor of thinking of hinges' truth in robust, correspondentist terms. In some passages he inclines towards the idea that they are not truth-apt at all, while in other ones he leans towards the idea that they are so only minimally or in a deflationist sense. He also seems to think that this is compatible with ordinary empirical propositions being true in an evidentially constrained way, thanks to taking for granted hinges that make the acquisition of justification for those propositions possible.⁶

(AC 3.2) Turning to Anil's comments in (AG 3.1), I think it would help me to hear more about why Anil seems to think that while a Cartesian conception of experience would lead to skepticism, the hypothetical given would not. My understanding is that sensory experiences, for Anil, are mere appearances which, depending on one's background views, make certain transitions rational. In particular, if experiences are just mere appearances, even if they are not sense-data, ideas or impressions, they cannot directly make a given rational—whence the importance of background views. Thus, I don't see how experiences, conceived the way Anil thinks of them, can give us "knowledge or even justified belief, about ordinary external objects". If they do, it is only in conjunction with a background view that contains the negation of radically skeptical hypotheses, like the ones normally raised by Cartesian skepticism. The issue then is to exclude such hypotheses from being among the ones we need seriously consider.

I agree with Anil that the Argument from illusion is weak. Still, Cartesian skepticism does not raise any mere possibility. Rather, it raises possibilities—such as being victims of lucid and sustained dreams, being duped by an evil demon, or being a BIV—that, by their very nature, are compatible with the normal course of our experience—especially if experiences are conceived of as a mere appearance. Given

⁶ I have dealt at length with this issue in Coliva (2018a, b, reprinted in Coliva 2022). Wright (1985) and Williams (2004) too propose a deflationary reading of hinges' truth.

that from a subjective standpoint nothing could reveal to us whether those experiences are caused by the reliable interaction with physical objects, there is nothing in our experience we can appeal to ascertain that its deviant etiology is just a mere possibility rather than what is the case. In other words, we lose our grip on the idea that “ordinary experience” is as we normally think of it—that is, caused by mostly reliable interactions with physical objects out there. Since its being caused in one of these alternative ways would be undetectable, then it seems wishful thinking or at least question-begging to insist that “ordinary experience” is as we typically think of it.

(AC 3.3) Finally, and in connection with Anil’s comments regarding the need of an authenticity condition (AG 3.2), I agree that a subject could rationally judge “Here is a cardinal” just based on having an experience as of a cardinal and by having as part of her background view that that kind of appearance indicates a cardinal. However, and this connects with the gist of some of my comments in the paper on Anil’s views in this volume, if “cardinal” is taken to be the name of a bird, and not just of a bird-appearance, then it must already be included as part of one’s background view something like “A cardinal is an animal”, which entails that there are physical objects, for again “animal” will have to entail that much. Furthermore, if the experience, conceived of as an appearance, is to confer a *justification* onto “Here is a cardinal” (with “cardinal” understood as above), then something like “My sense organs are correctly representing physical objects around me” must also be part of the background view that the subject possesses, however tacitly or implicitly. Thus, it seems to me that some authenticity conditions are already part of a view which would either render rational the transition from a cardinal-like experience to a belief about a cardinal (on Anil’s liberal understanding of rationality), or that could provide a justification for that belief.

Crispin Wright

(CW 3.1) Anil writes (at AG 3.2):

There are two difficulties, it seems to me, with the motivation Crispin provides for the authenticity condition “External objects are, by and large, as they appear to be” (H*). The first difficulty is one that initiated our exchange: The subject need not respond to the challenge, “How do you know?,” to her judgment “That bird is a cardinal” by citing an appearance of the bird. She can say simply “I see that the bird is a cardinal.” This response, which is perfectly legitimate, does not require (H*). The skeptical/forensic examination can be passed without any appeal to the heavy authenticity condition.

OK, but the dialogue can rapidly escalate. To the reply “I see that the bird is a cardinal”, the forensic interlocutor can respond: “So you are assuming that your vision is functioning properly today in conditions suitable for its proper function”, to which the answer should be simply, “Yes”. The interlocutor can then press the question whether the subject has any occasion-specific reason for that assumption, or whether it is simply something she just generally takes for granted, absent reason for doubt. Her answer should be the second. And that, I think, is close enough to H*.

Anil continues:

The second difficulty is that even if the subject cites the appearance judgment, she does not need (H*) to sustain her response. Condition (H*) is general, with different readings of it encompassing different grades of generality. Our subject need not accept any reading of (H*) whose reach extends beyond her particular situation. She need only accept that in this particular instance, with respect to this particular bird, this particular appearance indicates a cardinal.

Indeed, but again she can be pressed on whether her acceptance depends on what she takes to be some specific features of the situation, or whether it is rather a matter, as it were, of general policy, and that she has no better ground for accepting the veridicality of the specific appearance than her entitlement to that policy.

Anil also remarks.

The counterexample Crispin addresses in his (qualified) defense of Dogmatism is different from the one I gave. The crucial difference is that, in the latter example, the subject's belief about lighting conditions is *correct* but unjustified. If we say with the Dogmatist that, in this case, the subject's perceptual judgment (e.g., "the ball is red") is justified, untenable consequences follow.

I acknowledge I mistook the example. But I am not sure that, correctly read, it presents any real difficulty for my claim that Dogmatism, while it gets the theoretical justificational architecture wrong, correctly describes what in general a subject needs to do in order to gather perceptual justification for a claim. First, if the belief that the lighting conditions are conducive is in context an entitlement—which in a wide class of cases I would want to argue that it is—then it ranks as justified even if the subject has in addition some spurious reasons to believe it. But second, the "circling back" reasoning that Anil gestures at to generate putatively "untenable consequences" for my claim is in any case presumably an instance of the kind of 'bootstrapping' argument Stu Cohen originally drew to our attention and is, I would argue, non-warrant-transmissive, even when the subject has no special evidence about the quality of the lighting conditions.

(CW 3.2): In response to AC (3.1)

I continue to think that the attempt to hold a deflationary conception of truth for 'heavyweight hinges' while retaining a representational conception for the specific propositions whose justification the hinges underwrite, borders on incoherence. (As I said, I did attempt this line that Annalisa is now favouring in my "Facts and Certainty".) One point I made above to which Annalisa has so far declined to respond is that it is *prima facie* unintelligible how one proposition can be representational while another which is entailed by it (though not conversely) and thus simply "thins" its content, can be anything other than a less specific representation. (Think of erasing detail from a photograph). Representationality must be closed under logical consequence.

But second, the very intelligibility of the challenge posed by sceptical doubt about the hinges—to which we are both, after all, sensitive and trying to respond—arguably requires more than a deflationary conception of truth for them. Consider any other case where alethic deflationism is your antecedent prejudice—maybe the statement, "Snails are a culinary delight"—but which you also agree with, and try to make sense of the idea that it might just be *undetectably* false. But that is exactly the idea that,

in the case of “There is an external material world”, e.g., we do think we succeed in making sense of in so far as we find ourselves reacting to scepticism as to genuine intellectual challenge. There is no such sense of challenge in the snails case.

45.4 The Fourth Exchange

Anil Gupta

(AG 4.1) Annalisa asks me to explain how it is that “while a Cartesian conception of experience would lead to skepticism, the hypothetical given would not” (AC 3.2).

Let me preface my response by stressing that I do not take experiences to be mere appearances (*pace* AC 3.2). Appearances are one component of an experience, but they do not constitute the entire thing. There is another component, presentation, which is fundamental: without presentation there would be no manifestation of appearances in an experience. (See *CE*, §§203–207, for a summary of this account of experience—an account I have labeled **Dual-Component Presentation-alism** (*DCP*).) I work, in short, with a thicker conception of experience than that made available in a Cartesian scheme.

Furthermore, I work with a different conception of the relationship of experience to judgment than that found in the Cartesian scheme. According to the latter, experience equips us with some truths about appearances, and these truths constitute the bases for our ordinary judgments. It is hard to see how, on this scheme, the thin judgments supplied by experience could constitute adequate rational bases for our ordinary judgments. And the conclusion is natural that the scheme renders our ordinary judgments irrational/unjustified. According to the conception I favor (more specifically, the hypothetical given), experience does not equip the subject with truths about appearances, nor does it render some of the subject’s beliefs *prima facie* justified; instead, it renders rational *transitions* (e.g.) from views to judgments. Consequently, an ordinary perceptual judgment is rational if the antecedent view (more strictly: the relevant part of it) is rational and, furthermore, the transition from this view (more strictly: the relevant part of it) to the judgment is rendered rational by the experience. Since the given is not propositional under *DCP*, traditional skeptical arguments are blocked. (Recall that Hume’s argument in the *Enquiry* for external-world skepticism rests on a Cartesian view (Hume 1748, §12, part 1), and his argument for inductive skepticism rests on the propositional given (Hume 1748, §4, part 2).) One way the hypothetical given helps address skepticism, then, is that it blocks traditional skeptical arguments at their very roots.

It is a fair question, though, how to give a positive account of the rationality/justification of our beliefs. I want to observe here, first, that several different notions of rationality/justification can, and should, be distinguished (*CE*, §§352–364). On *one* of these notions the following suffices for a subject’s view to qualify as rational: all transitions through which the subject arrived at her view, including those in the subject’s childhood, are rational. Here it is useful to recall §94 of *On Certainty*

(Wittgenstein 1969) that Crispin cited: “I did not get my picture of the world by satisfying myself of its correctness....” It is plausible to say that one is not responsible for the initial view that was imparted to one in early childhood. Hence, if one is rational in all subsequent transitions through which one arrived at the present view, then one is rational in accepting that view. At least for this notion of rationality, then, there is no problem in understanding how a view could be rational. I recognize that this is no proof that DCP is free of skeptical problems. I want to put this challenge to those that suspect that it *is* subject to skeptical problems: articulate a plausible notion of rationality/justification and then show that DCP allows a skeptical argument to go through for this notion.

(AG 4.2) I do not think a plausible notion of rationality/justification can impose the demand that indiscernibles be somehow discerned. There is a sense in which, from the subject’s point of view, the brain-in-a-vat scenario is indiscernible from the ordinary one. But the mere possibility of the brain-in-a-vat scenario generates no skeptical problem. As I indicated earlier, rationality/justification of our beliefs remains undisturbed even if the skeptical scenario obtains. Any plausible notion of rationality/justification has to be consistent with the possibility of skeptical scenarios; one does not need to attribute special features to a view to address them. Furthermore, if the possible existence of such scenarios did pose a skeptical problem, invoking heavyweight hinges would not help address it, for the scenarios will remain possible and indiscernible and, worse, legitimate serious concerns would arise about the status of the hinges. Moreover, if the hinges did help with the skeptical concern, then so also would ordinary judgments such as Moore’s “here is one hand, and here is another.” The move to heavyweight hinges is no special help in addressing the supposed skeptical problem.

Incidentally, as I read *On Certainty*, Moorean judgments are paradigm examples of Wittgensteinian hinges, not the heavyweight hinges such as “my sense organs work mostly reliably” (*H*) or “external object are, by and large, as they appear to be” (*H**).

(AG 4.3) All three of us agree on the importance of views in assessing the rationality of perceptual judgments (or their justification—from now on I suppress this disjunct). We disagree on the characteristics views must possess if our ordinary perceptual judgments are to be rational. You both insist that some heavyweight hinges such as *H* and *H** must be part of the antecedent view, if only implicitly; I, for my part, deny this. As I see things, all sorts of views can sustain the rationality of ordinary perceptual judgments, even views that carry no implicit commitment to heavyweight propositions such as *H* and *H**. The impoverished view of a very young child who has no notion of external object or of sense organs and their functions can sustain the rationality of ordinary perceptual judgments. For another example, a view may accept negations of *H* and *H**—and do so rationally—and yet warrant rational transitions to various ordinary perceptual judgments.

Crispin’s forensic examinations do not show, it seems to me, the necessity of heavyweight hinges. He has the forensic examiner respond to the subject’s claim “I see that the bird is a cardinal” by asking “So you are assuming that your vision is functioning properly today in conditions suitable for its proper function.” And

Crispin claims that the subject's response to the query should be "Yes" (CW 3.1). Now, I allow that the subject's response *may* be "Yes," but I want to insist that this response is *not* required. The subject can pass the forensic examination even if she responds with a "No." Perhaps the subject knows that her vision has been functioning improperly all day and only now, when she is looking at the bird, is it functioning well enough that she can pronounce of the blurrily perceived bird that it is a cardinal. So long as there is *one* successful series of forensic responses that does not end in the heavyweight hinge, we are entitled to say that the perceptual judgment does not presuppose the hinge. With hinges H and H^* , it seems to me that the forensic examination *can* be passed without invoking them or anything close to them.

Let me add that the forensic examination is not focused solely on the subject's perceptual judgment; it brings into play other elements in the subject's view. Hence, one cannot read the presuppositions of a perceptual judgment from the course of a particular forensic examination. Even if the subject responds to Crispin's forensic query with a "Yes," nothing substantive follows about the presuppositions of the subject's perceptual judgment. All that the response shows is that the affirmation "my vision is functioning properly today..." is a part of the subject's view. It shows nothing about the presuppositional relations borne by the subject's perceptual judgment.

(4.4) The difficulty I raised against Dogmatism does not require the subject to engage in any Cohen-type bootstrapping, or any illicit argumentation; the difficulty has its source, it seems to me, entirely in the principle underlying Dogmatism. But as this point is something of a side issue in our debate, I will not press it any further right now.

Annalisa Coliva

(AC 4.1) I agree with Anil's observation that there are "different notions of rationality/justification", which "can and should be distinguished". In my own contribution to the This Volume, I point out how Anil's preferred notion of rationality/justification is very thin and carries no commitment to the truth of the beliefs that are justified by experience. This, to my mind, makes it difficult to see how Anil's proposal could so much as engage with skepticism. For a skeptic would likely agree that, given a certain background view and a certain experience, the transition to a given belief will be rational, but the belief itself may well not be true after all. Thus, it seems that to engage with a skeptic one should either work with a more robust notion of experience or commit to the idea that only true background views could license justified beliefs, once certain experiences are had; or else, finally, one may object to the robust notion of truth as correspondence between beliefs and mind-independent facts, skepticism is predicated upon.

(AC 4.2) That takes me to a discussion of some of the Crispin's remarks (CW 3.2). I will be brief, as I have developed the details of the proposal in two papers (Coliva 2018a, b, 2021), now reprinted in *Wittgenstein Rehinged* (Coliva 2022). The basic idea is that truth is preserved through entailments featuring "mixed" premises and conclusions as long as one is willing to allow that what is preserved is "plain" truth (see Lynch 2013), while, depending on the area of discourse, there may be more to the truth of the premises (or conclusions) than plain truth. In more detail,

the idea is that “true” expresses a generic truth property, individuated through the usual set of platitudes, which may be manifested or realized differently in different domains. Furthermore, in some cases, “true” may just pick out this generic property. In that case, the proposition would be just plain true. Hinges would fall into this latter category. Yet, they may well be entailed by propositions which are true in a more robust sense. (Note that by the time of *On Certainty*, it seems to me that Wittgenstein had completely dispensed with the idea that truth could be understood in terms of correspondence with mind-independent facts and was rather in favor either of minimalism across the board or of truth as epistemically constrained for propositions within specific areas of discourse). Thus, what is closed under entailment is plain truth, not whatever else may go into the realization of the truth property for some of the premises from which hinges are entailed. If this move is suspect, then I think the whole project of alethic pluralism Crispin himself initiated in *Truth and Objectivity* may well be in danger. For mixed inferences will need to be accounted for anyway and it is difficult to do so without recourse to the idea of plain truth.

I then disagree that making sense of undetectable skeptical possibilities is a desideratum of any legitimate response to skepticism. It may well be that the best we can do—in a diagnostic spirit—is to show how that desideratum arises out of a conception of truth as correspondence that is not mandated. Hence, in my view, a complete diagnosis of skepticism also entails taking a stance on the metaphysics, as it were, that is presupposed by (Cartesian) skepticism. Again, a longer treatment of the issue can be found in my *Extended Rationality* (Coliva 2015) and the papers I have mentioned (Coliva 2018a, b, 2021; reprinted in Coliva 2022); but I hope that what I have just said would at least be suggestive of how one can respond to Crispin’s worries.

(AC 4.3) Finally, concerning the debate between Crispin and me concerning what entitlements operate on, as it were, whether propositions or attitudes to them, I will again add only a few words. First, it is very hard to read Crispin’s “Warrant for nothing” (Wright 2004a, b) as doing what he now claims it was doing. If we were only interested in (re-)claiming the rationality of trusting per se, irrespective of what one does trust—that is, independently of the propositions trusted upon—, then I simply don’t see why one would have to propose four different routes to that, corresponding to different propositions trusted upon (i.e. strategic entitlements for the Uniformity of Nature thesis, entitlement of cognitive projects for the reliability of perception or the falsity of Cartesian scenarios, entitlements of substance for the existence of an external world, entitlements of rational deliberation for the thesis that nature displays sufficiently many inductively and abductively ascertainable regularities). Nor do I see how Crispin’s own gloss on the project pursued in that paper could be squared with phrases such as the following one, which recur throughout it: “In particular, we want to disclose reason to accept *type III propositions* even if the possibility of obtaining evidence *for them* is allowed to be foreclosed by the sceptical argument” (Wright 2004a, b: 179, my italics). Of course, as he states, “‘warrant for nothing’ is entitlement to trust” (Wright 2004a, b: 194), as opposed to believing (properly understood) or as opposed to other propositional attitudes in the vicinity; but it is essential to entitlements to specify what the trust they make rational ranges over.

More importantly, I don't see how being entitled to trust could even remotely assuage skeptical worries concerning specific hinges, or cornerstone propositions. Suppose it is a precondition for the rationality of theology that one trusts that God exists. One may then say that one has an entitlement (of substance? Or of cognitive project?) for that trust. After all, the project is significant, and it may well be that any direct proof of God's existence would ultimately presuppose that trust and any attempt to disprove it would be question begging. Yet if that entitlement did not operate on "God exists" but merely on trusting, how could one possibly use such an entitlement to redeem the rationality of "God exists" vis-à-vis a religious skeptic (i.e. an agnostic and not necessarily an atheist)? After all, a religious skeptic could grant that it is rational to trust in God's existence if one wants to engage in theology and yet dispute that that gives one any reason to hold that God exists. (To make it even more obvious, substitute "Santa exists" for "God exists" and "santology" for "theology" and you will immediately see that redeeming the rationality of trusting in Santa, understood as Crispin recommends, does nothing to support the truth of "Santa exists" which is the proposition under dispute with a Santa-skeptic). Thus, it seems to me that it is indeed in an entitlement theorist's best interest to take entitlements to be entitlements to trust specific propositions.

Crispin Wright

(CW 4.1) Anil writes (AG 4.2)

But the mere possibility of the brain-in-a-vat scenario generates no skeptical problem. As I indicated earlier, rationality/justification of our beliefs remains undisturbed even if the skeptical scenario obtains. Any plausible notion of rationality/justification has to be consistent with the possibility of skeptical scenarios; one does not need to attribute special features to a view to address them. Furthermore, if the possible existence of such scenarios did pose a skeptical problem, invoking heavyweight hinges would not help address it, for the scenarios will remain possible and indiscernible and, worse, legitimate serious concerns would arise about the status of the hinges.

There is a question about what it is that Anil understands in this passage by "mere possibility". A concession of *metaphysical* possibility would probably be epistemically harmless. But there certainly is a sceptical worry if what is conceded is such scenarios' *epistemic* possibility. For if I concede e.g. that "For all I know, I might be in the Matrix", I cannot—this is a routine closure step—rationally claim knowledge of any of the quotidian certainties that entail that I am not in the Matrix. So I had better not concede that. The sceptical challenge is thus to explain with what epistemic right I can refuse such a concession.

Anil continues,

Incidentally, as I read *On Certainty*, Moorean judgments are paradigm examples of Wittgensteinian hinges, not the heavyweight hinges such as "my sense organs work mostly reliably" (*H*) or "external object are, by and large, as they appear to be" (*H**).

I regard Wittgenstein's examples as a pretty heterogeneous bunch. It is true that he focuses a lot of the time on non-heavyweight claims we inherit from our parents and early teachers and then characteristically take for granted throughout our lives. But there are occasional exceptions, e.g. "The Earth existed for many years before my

birth”, “There are physical objects”. I regard it as a limitation of his text that (unfortunately characteristically for Wittgenstein) insufficient direct theoretical attention is paid to the variety of epistemic roles played by his various examples.

(CW 4.2) On the question whether an acceptance of heavyweight hinges should be reckoned to be part of a Gupta-style ‘view’, Anil (AG 4.3) writes:

The subject can pass the forensic examination.

—the forensic examiner has asked, recall: “So you take it that your eyes are functioning OK today in circumstances conducive to their effective function?—

even if she responds with a “No.” Perhaps the subject knows that her vision has been functioning improperly all day and only now, when she is looking at the bird, is it functioning well enough that she can pronounce of the blurrily perceived bird that it is a cardinal. So long as there is *one* successful series of forensic responses that does not end in the heavyweight hinge, we are entitled to say that the perceptual judgment does not presuppose the hinge. With hinges *H* and *H**, it seems to me that the forensic examination *can* be passed without invoking them or anything close to them.

I am doubtful that this is so. But we should not get too obsessed with the letter of *H* and *H**. The crucial point is that the dialogue can always be pressed to a point where the subject invokes a proposition—an authenticity-condition, in my terminology—on which the justification for her original claim ancestrally rests and for which she has no specific evidence. In the above dialogue, for example, she can be asked whether she takes the recently restored sharpness of her visual field as evidence of the fidelity of its representations. If she says yes, she can be pressed for reasons for this. *Sooner or later* we’ll get to something *H-* or *H*-ish*, or otherwise heavyweight.

That said, I’d like to understand better why it is important to Anil to push back on this.

(CW4.3) On Annalisa’s paragraph (AC 4.2) beginning, “That takes me to a discussion of some of the Crispin’s remarks (CW3.2) and the idea of “plain truth”.

I have long shared Annalisa’s hospitable reaction to the general idea of “plain truth” and the role it can play in addressing e.g. the so called ‘mixed inference’ problem for a generalised alethic pluralism. In a more recent paper (in *Metaphilosophy*, last July’s issue) I argue (against my former self in Ch. 1 of *Truth and Objectivity*) that we should recognise a minimal notion of truth available for the dissolution of certain problems that arise in making sense of the idea of faultless disagreement (e.g. in matters of taste or comedy). I wonder if Annalisa would be happy to allow that this, or something like it, fits her idea of plain truth.

Anyway, I am open to an idea of plain truth. But that is not the relevant point. The relevant point is rather the question of whether, or which of, the pluralist’s truth properties are *closed under entailment*. This a quite separate question to the question of the legitimacy of a notion of “plain truth” and so far I am aware of nothing in Annalisa’s contributions that to my mind addresses it satisfactorily.

Specifically, and let the reader forgive me some repetition here, Annalisa needs *representational* truths to be capable of entailing propositions that are not representational but are apt only for plain truth. However in general, there is a question whether the kind of truth possessed by some premises can ‘drop’ across their entailment of

a certain consequence. For example, in a region where truth can be (modeled as) *superassertibility*, then where $P \implies Q$, and P is superassertible, the very same state of information that makes P superassertible will make Q superassertible too. And where truth is *coherence* with some canonical class of statements, P cannot be thus coherent while its consequences are not. So Annalisa requires representationality, or correspondence, to break with this pattern: it has to be possible for P (e.g. a quotidian perceptually verifiable proposition) to represent a feature of the external world while Q , = there are physical objects, does not do so but is merely “plain true”.

Earlier in this debate I put to her the thought that, as with coherence and superassertibility, this too is not easily intelligible—that if P represents how it is with a particular situation, then anything asymmetrically entailed by P likewise represents that situation—is faithful to aspects of it—but merely says less about it. I am still not seeing a head-one response to that thought.

That said, I don’t regard this consideration as decisive. As I remarked earlier in our exchanges, I canvassed this line myself in “Facts and Certainty.” But the point doesn’t go away that we need specific argument why heavyweight hinges are apt only for plain truth. The *convenience* of supposing so is obvious, for I think that an acknowledgement of the plain truth of a proposition need commit one to no specific cognitive achievement in relation to it, and therefore an acknowledged lack of evidence creates no immediate issue about one’s right to accept it (Of course that needs argument). But I think the lack, so far as I am aware, of positive discussion of the issues here—the question of the ‘drop’ and the epistemic presuppositionlessness of claims to plain truth—is a significant gap in Annalisa’s recommended way of looking at these things, so far as it has been manifested in our exchanges.

(CW 4.4) The concluding paragraphs of Annalisa’s contribution to our fourth exchange (AC 4.3) puzzle me. I am afraid I need again to resort to some repetition. Annalisa writes as though in suggesting that non-evidential entitlement pertains to the *attitude* of the entitled thinker rather than the proposition accepted, I make myself vulnerable to the idea that trust per se in any old arbitrary hinge is rational—as though the rationality of the attitude could be grounded independently of the content of the proposition to which it is taken. But I have always stressed that the grounds for our possession of entitlements are various and specific to different kinds of entitled acceptances—briefly, the reasons why one is entitled to accept a proposition are indeed apt to vary with the content of the proposition. So far as I can see, my 2004 writings, which I think Annalisa mainly has in mind,—including passages she quotes in (AC 4.3)—are perfectly consistent with this. Look at the considerations marshalled in favour of our entitlements of cognitive project and compare them with what I say about substance entitlements, for instance.

To be sure, one may still be inclined to write, as Annalisa likes to, as if it is the propositions, rather than the attitude to them, that are warranted by entitlement. Without rereading, I expect there are passages where I too talk that way. But against that, my considered view is that what non-evidential entitlements vindicate is, generically, *exactly the same* as what evidence can vindicate, viz. an *attitude* of acceptance (I prescind from issues about the possible varieties and degrees of acceptance—trust, taking for granted, Pritchardian K-belief, etc.—of the propositions concerned.)

Epistemic warrant, broadly understood, is always warrant for treating propositions in certain ways and only derivatively, or as loose speech, warrant for those propositions themselves.

I think it not only misguided but a potential source of confusion, to attempt to erect a theoretical stance on the basis of the latter way of talking. So, when Annalisa contrasts her ‘Moderatist’ view with the suggestion, attributed to me, that entitlements are non-evidential warrants for kinds of proposition which, in her view, have no possible warrant, she accordingly both misunderstands my view and implicitly, in my opinion, misunderstands the terms of the relation of *evidential* support as well.

That said, I would like to better understand Annalisa’s Moderatism. Is it that anything may legitimately be taken as a hinge?—that the question: which are the propositions that may rationally and legitimately be taken for granted in enquiry, without evidence, has no constructive answer? Or does she recognise limits to what we can rationally take as our “cornerstones”?

45.5 The Fifth Exchange

Anil Gupta

(AG 5.1) One of the central points on which we disagree, I think, is which skeptical arguments deserve a constructive response and which a merely dialectical one (e.g., the response that the argument is fallacious or that it is question begging). I indicated earlier (in AG 3.1) the kind of skeptical argument I think deserves a constructive response. This is the kind that moves from various plausible premisses (e.g., the propositional given) to a Cartesian conception of experience and, thence, to a broad skeptical conclusion. The constructive response I offer is the hypothetical given and, more broadly, Dual-Component Presentationalism. I want to stress that what recommends these moves is not simply that they block the skeptical conclusion but, as I argue in *CE*, that they illuminate empirical reasoning and empirical dialectic.

I will note here, in response to Annalisa (AC 4.1), that I work with an ordinary notion of rationality, not a thin one. Annalisa seems to think that, on my view, rationality of transition entails rationality of perceptual belief. But this is not so: rationality of perceptual belief also requires the rationality of the relevant part of the antecedent view, and this is a substantive condition, not a thin one. It is true that rationality of belief/view does not entail the correctness of belief/view. However, this fact does not make the notion of rationality thin, for our ordinary notion of rationality does not entail correctness either.

The skeptic challenges the rationality, understood in the ordinary way, of our beliefs. My aim is to offer an account of experience and reason that meets the skeptic’s challenge and sustains the ordinary rationality of our beliefs. Our ordinary notion of rationality, it should be observed, is imprecise and can be sharpened in several different ways. I indicate some possible ways of sharpening it in *CE*, §354; none of these can be designated as ‘thin’, however.

(AG 5.2) I am not clear on what Annalisa understands by ‘Cartesian skepticism’, for she says that it presupposes a metaphysics and a robust notion of truth as correspondence to reality (AC 4.1 & 4.2). Nevertheless, if the skeptic were to put forward an argument with such presuppositions, I would confine myself to a dialectical response, not a constructive one. I would want the skeptic to establish the specific metaphysics, and I would want her to explain ‘correspondence’ and ‘reality’ in the formula ‘truth is correspondence to reality’. The skeptic would now be forced to propound doctrine, and I would be able to take on the comfortable stance of the skeptic.

If Cartesian skepticism is the observation that there are indiscernible possibilities (e.g., our being brains in vats) then, as I indicated before, I would resist the transition to the skeptical conclusion. The possibilities skeptic points to are perfectly compatible with the rationality and knowledgeability of our ordinary beliefs.

If, following Crispin’s suggestion, the skeptic says that these possibilities are epistemic, then I would simply observe that the skeptic is begging the question. What the skeptic is taking as a premiss is, in fact, a conclusion we are expecting the skeptic to establish.

(AG 5.3) Crispin responds constructively to a skeptical argument that proceeds along these lines:

(#) A perceptual belief—e.g., “that bird is a cardinal” (P)—presupposes acceptance (or assumption or ...) of a heavy hinge proposition H^* (“external objects are, by and large, as they appear to be”). However, H^* does not possess, and cannot gain, warrant through familiar evidential processes. Hence, belief P is not warranted.

Crispin’s constructive response is to introduce the idea of a special type of warrant that can be had without evidential work and even when there is no evidence for the proposition in question.

Unlike Crispin, I would not respond constructively to arguments such as (#). I would challenge both premisses of the argument. Crispin has given a novel argument for the first premiss, an argument from forensic examination. I found his argument interesting but also puzzling. This is what prompted me to ask the question at the conference and then to clarify it at the beginning of our present debate.

As I see things, the warrant for a perceptual belief can depend on the status of various elements in a view, elements that can differ from view to view. One does not need warrant for a heavy hinge H^* , or anything like it, to possess warrant for a perceptual belief. On the contrary, one may possess sufficient reasons to deny H^* and yet go on to acquire warranted perceptual beliefs and conduct rational inquiry. *Pace* Annalisa, acceptance (or assumption) of hinges such as H^* does not seem to me constitutive of our basic epistemic practices.

I am concerned that the sole motivation for Annalisa’s constitution idea and for Crispin’s idea of unearned warrant for heavy hinges is skeptical arguments such as (#) and, furthermore, that these ideas mess up empirical dialectic. Among other things, they reduce theoretical freedom in responding to aporia.

Incidentally, Reid and Sellars also accept that perceptual beliefs presuppose heavy claims such as H^* . It seems to me that their acceptance is founded on erroneous accounts of experience and reason.

There is a variant of argument (#) that relies on a *light* hinge such as the Moorean “there is an external object.” The focus of our debate has been heavy hinges, so I have not addressed these variants. Let me record, though, that these variants require a different response than that required by argument (#).

By prior arrangement, this round of our exchange is the last one. So, let me end by thanking both of you. I have found the exchanges stimulating, and they have, at the very least, improved my understanding of your positions.

Annalisa Coliva

(AC 5.1) In his opening remarks (AG 1.1), Anil perceptively presents the commonality between our respective positions as consisting in the claim that the justification of our perceptual beliefs does not depend merely on one’s occurrent perceptual experience, but also on a richer informational background—that is, on our antecedent views. Our exchange, however, has brought out important differences about how each of us conceives of such an informational background and of our relation to it.

As a moderatist about perceptual justification (see Coliva 2015, chaps. 1–2), I hold that some very general, “heavy-weight” propositions (see Dretske 1970) need to be assumed, to possess such a justification, absent defeaters. These assumptions, which, following Wittgenstein, I call “hinge propositions” (“hinges” for short), comprise propositions such as “There are physical objects”, “My senses work mostly reliably”, “I am not the victim of massive cognitive deception”.⁷ These hinges secure the legitimacy of taking one’s occurrent experience as of a table, for instance, to bear onto the truth of the specific belief “There is a table here”, understood as about a mind-independent object. As Wright (2004a, b) put it, these hinges allow us to overcome “our cognitive locality” and to take mind-dependent states, such as perceptual experiences, to bear on the truth of beliefs about mind-independent physical objects. Our cognitive locality, however, does not depend on thinking of perceptual experience in terms of sense data, and is indeed compatible with Anil’s account of perception that repudiates sense data in favor of appearances. As far as I can see, overcoming our “cognitive locality” is thus an issue for all specific theories of perception, save for disjunctivism, which posits that in perception we take in outer facts directly. Indeed, it is key to possessing a justification for ordinary empirical beliefs and therefore for making the transition from one’s experience to beliefs about mind-independent objects rational.

However, as a moderatist, and as opposed to a conservative, I do not require there being a warrant—evidential or otherwise—for our hinges. For, as a constitutivist (see Coliva 2015, Chap. 4), I hold that assuming hinges is constitutive of our basic epistemic practice of forming, assessing and withdrawing beliefs about material objects, based on the deliverances of perception. This basic practice, in turn, is

⁷ This list is not meant to be exhaustive, but indicative of the kind of propositions I consider as hinges.

constitutive of epistemic rationality. Therefore, assuming hinges is constitutive of epistemic rationality altogether. Thus, a Humean skeptic, who agrees on hinges' role with respect to the possibility of there being perceptually justified beliefs about specific physical objects, as well as on hinges' lack of epistemic support, is wrong in thinking that hinges are therefore not epistemically rationally held. Rather, they are epistemically rationally held precisely because they are the very conditions of possibility of epistemic rationality altogether.

(AC 5.2) One important element that our exchange has highlighted is that, now more than ever, Crispin is clear that entitlements are non-evidential warrants—or epistemic rights—to non-doxastic attitudes of acceptance—whether they be of trust, or of taking for granted, or assuming—of propositions which, like “my” hinges, set up the “authenticity conditions” for some of our epistemic practices. I have argued, against such an understanding of entitlements, that it is too weak to deliver a satisfactory anti-skeptical result. For the same kinds of consideration that would provide one with an entitlement for trusting the kinds of hinge skeptics are interested in would also give one an entitlement for trusting propositions such as “God exists” or perhaps even “Santa exists”, which are obviously problematic. None of these *faux* (or at least problematic) hinges, as it were, are constitutive of epistemic rationality, though, as they are not essential to the practice that determines what epistemic rationality is. Thus, constitutivism does not fall prey to the same kind of objection as Crispin's account.

Furthermore, if Crispin's entitlements are in effect a priori justifications for “Trusting H is epistemically rational” (where H is a hinge), rather than warrants for H itself, then the conservative account would collapse onto the moderate one, as they would concur that, in the end, there is no warrant for H itself. Ultimately, they would differ merely with respect to the kind of a priori arguments they provide in support of “Trusting H is epistemically rational”.

(AC 5.3) Regarding Cartesian skepticism, like Crispin and contrary to Anil, I think it poses a problem when taken to raise the epistemic possibility that everything we take ourselves to know about the external world would in fact be compatible with its being produced in a skeptical scenario. (Incidentally, Anil is right that for Descartes the demon hypothesis is meant to call into question the reliability of our cognitive faculties rather than of our perceptions).

(AC 5.4) The present exchange has brought to light the challenges inherent in the third horn of the three-pronged anti-skeptical approach I have proposed (and developed in Coliva 2015, 2021). As has emerged, going deflationist about hinges' truth is surely an available strategy, which is in keeping with the spirit of Wittgenstein's remarks in *On Certainty*. What is at issue is whether it is compatible with alethic pluralism. As maintained in Coliva (2021), alethic pluralism would be compatible with alethic closure, if what is closed is “plain truth” and not whatever more robust property would make statements such as “There is a cat on the mat” true. More specifically, just as one may hold that warrant is closed under entailment, even if an evidential warrant does not transmit in an inference which goes from such a humdrum proposition to the hinge “There is an external world” (via the further premise that “If

there are cats and mats, then there is an external world”), because “warrant” disjunctively covers evidential and non-evidential ones, so one could claim that truth too is closed under entailment, for “truth” covers both plain and robust truth.⁸

It remains that a hinge epistemologist unconvinced by this move could go deflationist all the way down, as it were. Yet, insisting on the need of a more robust interpretation of (at least) hinges’ truth, as if only that way could their representationality be defended, would simply amount to begging the question against the diagnostic approach canvassed here. Moreover, it would depend on following in the skeptic’s footsteps by buying into a realist picture of truth (at least for hinges), which, I have argued, we have no overarching reason to accept. In short, we cannot respond directly to skepticism, or even take for granted the terms of the debate it imposes on us, no matter how “natural” they seem to be. Showing that they depend—however implicitly—on theoretically loaded choices, is indeed part of the diagnostic response to skepticism that, following Wittgenstein, I have developed in previous work and rehearsed, all too briefly, here.

Crispin Wright

For my part, I have found our debate most stimulating and instructive and would like to express my grateful appreciation to my two interlocutors. It was, I suppose, too much to expect that we would wind up in full agreement on these issues. Let me conclude by reviewing some of the differences that have emerged.

(CW 5.1) There is, to begin with, a general question about what kind of response is owing to Scepticism. I want to make two points about this.

First, Anil writes (AG 5.1) that

One of the central points on which we disagree, I think, is which skeptical arguments deserve a constructive response and which a merely dialectical one (e.g., the response that the argument is fallacious or that it is question begging).

I am doubtful whether the best sceptical arguments *ever* deserve a merely dialectical response. In my opinion, rather than as the teasing offerings of an imagined philosophical opponent, the best sceptical arguments are properly regarded as *paradoxes*, so that a merely dialectical response is never *a propos*. By a ‘paradox’, I mean, as is I think usual, any argument that proceeds apparently validly from premises of some significant degree of apparent plausibility to an apparently unacceptable conclusion.

A proper (dis)solution of a paradox must thus at a minimum consist in either (a) disclosing error in the reasoning involved or (b) providing reason to reject one or more of the premises or (c) finding a way of accommodating the conclusion. It must in addition, in my view, account for the spurious appeal of the paradox. That will involve explaining (a) how and why the reasoning tricked us, or (b) why the premises seem plausible or (c) why the conclusion seems unacceptable. In no case, though, is it intellectually satisfactory to respond in a way which, were the paradox being presented by an antagonist in debate, would suffice merely to silence them. There is no antagonist.

⁸ This seems to be Crispin’s strategy in Wright (2014).

Second, in my view, the best sceptical arguments do not directly question whether we know or justifiably believe any of some targeted range of propositions but rather present us with a challenge at the level of responsible belief management. They challenge us to make good our *claims* to knowledge/justified belief (this was explicitly Descartes' project). Thus, for example, Robert Nozick's stated ambition (*Philosophical Explanations*, Ch. 2) of rebutting 'The Sceptic' by showing how a modal ('sensitivity') account of knowledge could vindicate the possibility of knowledge of some targeted large range of propositions in the teeth of the concession that we do not know the negations of some Sceptical Hypotheses, was (of some interest but) irrelevant to the main issue. (Indeed, I would argue that externalist responses to Scepticism as a class are irrelevant for the same reason.)

(CW 5.2) There is one such paradox in particular that all three of us are exposed to but to which our responses are very different. It stems from our agreement that there is no 'pure' propositional perceptual given: the evidential force of an episode of sense experience is always a function of aspects of a subject's background 'view'—a function of certain collateral commitments which they will or should acknowledge under forensic probing.

Paradox ensues straightforwardly. If what I may rationally claim that an episode of experience justifies me in believing is a function of collateral commitments, C, then I had better be in position to lay claim to some kind of antecedent justification for the relevant commitments. For if anything goes—if C can be any old unjustified belief that is apt to collaborate in the relevant kind of way with my experience—how can it be suitable to pair with experience so as to issue in something *justified*? On the other hand, if C is required to be justified in turn, there is an immediate threat of vicious regress provided it is assumed (A) that the only foreseeable means of justification of C are likewise sense-experiential.

I take us to differ in how we would wish to respond to this threat. Annalisa's response is to reject (A): for her the regress will be blocked at a point where the background commitments required will be acceptable not because sense-experientially justifiable but because their acceptance is *constitutive of our concept of epistemic rationality*. My own view makes a similar *structural* move: it is that the regress can be stopped if eventually the required elements of one's view are things one is *non-evidentially entitled* to take for granted.

However I surmise, though we have not discussed this, that Anil's response will have a different character: namely, that the regress can terminate in commitments C, to which we have indeed earned an *absolute* entitlement by the kind of process of perceptual belief revision detailed in his *Empiricism and Experience*.

One reason I am sceptical about that response is that I envisage a point in the kind of "forensic probing" we have discussed at which commitment to examples of "heavyweight hinges" will indeed be called for and it is not clear to me that *Empiricism and Experience* has the resources to vindicate an absolute entitlement to commitments of this extremely general character. That is because such commitments are no less 'rigid'—in Anil's technical sense of that—than the sceptical and solipsistic scenarios which Anil rules to be inadmissible as (components of) starting 'views' in the process of perceptual revision. It's notable that he has shown a marked resistance

in our discussions to the idea that the ‘forensic examination’ can be pressed to a point where the examinee must acknowledge such “heavyweight” commitments. I would have liked to explore the issues here further but our dialectic did not develop in that direction. Perhaps the foregoing remarks suggest the correct diagnosis).

(CW 5.3) Despite the strategic similarity in our proposals, I think the differences in detail between Annalisa’s and my responses to the paradox are important. I won’t now further elaborate on the specific objections to her approach I have presented earlier in our exchanges. Rather I want to say a little more about her claim that its *part of our concept of rationality* that the heavyweights be acceptable *sans* empirical support for them. All that is certainly true is that we are accustomed to proceed as though there was no question about their acceptability. However to seek to elevate that point to the status of a reflection of an underlying conceptual truth—that our notion of epistemic rationality mandates such acceptances—is to make a mystery of the intelligibility and intuitive tug of the sceptical challenge in the first place.

The mystery could be mitigated if the way in which our ordinary concept of rationality sanctions the acceptability of such hinges could be shown to flow from the concept, perhaps via some subtle and unobvious inference. I don’t know of any place in her writings where Annalisa spells out such an inference. But even if she does, there would still be a question whether those aspects of the concept of epistemic rationality that were exercised in the derivation were *felicitous*. Concepts can, after all, be in bad standing. Think of *tonk* or Frege’s concept of the *extension* of a concept (*course-of-values*). These are admittedly extreme examples. But there would still have to be a question whether a concept of empirical rationality that gagged any question about the rational acceptability of the ‘heavyweights’ was a concept to which we were epistemically entitled, (rather as there would be a question whether a concept of the moral status of a foetus from its first conception that silenced any question about its right to life would be a concept to which we were morally entitled.) In general, you cannot silence normative debate by conceptual engineering, still less by stipulation.

For this reason, I find it potentially more illuminating to investigate what might constitute *grounds* for an entitlement to proceed on the assumption that a heavyweight holds good. Such an investigation should be open to the possibility that the grounds concerned vary among different heavyweights. This was the direction of enquiry I tentatively initiated in my (2004a, b) and I continue to think it holds out promise of the most explanatorily satisfying response to these questions that so interest all three of us. To be sure, there is no guarantee that it can in the end get anywhere. But we won’t know until we give it a proper shot.

That said, it may prove in the end that we simply have to settle for the idea that it is in the nature of all rational enquiry that it is, necessarily, situated in ‘views’ of which, necessarily, not all components can have been in turn the products of rational enquiry. Maybe that is the core insight of the sceptical tradition in epistemology, which however misunderstands its significance to be the disclosure of some kind of epistemic predicament or tragedy. Maybe that *that* is a misunderstanding is the core insight of Wittgenstein’s notes at the end of his life.

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