Hinge epistemology builds on Wittgenstein’s insight in *On Certainty* that justification and knowledge always depend on a system of assumptions, or “hinges” (OC 341–343). It has been subjected to various developments over the years. The focus has been primarily on the distinctive bearing of hinge epistemology on the issue of perceptual justification (and knowledge), on its anti-skeptical import, and on its implications for relativism. More recently, however, its applications to social epistemology have started being investigated. The present chapter focuses on the distinctive contributions hinge epistemology can make with respect to several prominent issues in social epistemology. In section 1 the topic of deep disagreement between parties to a dispute who hold different hinges is taken up. Section 2 deals with the structure of testimonial justification, where hinge epistemology provides a middle ground between reductionists and anti-reductionists. In section 3 the notion of hinge trust is introduced, and its implications for extant theories of trust and its bearing on testimony are considered. Section 4 deals with the issue of epistemic injustice, where hinge epistemology can help explain the epistemic role prejudices and implicit bias play in the transmission of knowledge as well as the mechanism by means of which they can be overcome. Finally, section 5 deals with the relationship between hinge epistemology and Wittgenstein-inspired feminist epistemology.

hinge epistemology, deep disagreement, testimony, trust, epistemic injustice, feminist epistemology

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Social Hinge Epistemology

Annalisa Coliva

Hinge epistemology builds on Wittgenstein’s insight in [*On Certainty* (1969)](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0083) that justification and knowledge always depend on a system of assumptions, or “hinges” (OC 341–343). It has been subject to various developments over the years. The focus has been primarily on the distinctive bearing of hinge epistemology on the issue of perceptual justification (and knowledge), on its anti-skeptical import ([Williams 1991](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0081); [Wright 2004](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0085); [Coliva 2015](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0018); [Pritchard 2016](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0066); [Schönbaumsfeld 2016](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0077)), and on its implications for relativism ([Coliva 2010](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0017), [2019a](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0020); [Baghramian and Coliva 2020](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0003), pp. 190–204; [Kusch 2013](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0049), [2016](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0050), [2017](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0051)). More recently, however, its applications to social epistemology have started being investigated. The present chapter focuses on the distinctive contributions hinge epistemology can make with respect to several prominent issues in social epistemology. In §1 the topic of deep disagreement between parties to a dispute who hold different hinges is taken up. §2 deals with the structure of testimonial justification, where hinge epistemology provides a middle ground between reductionists and anti-reductionists. In §3 the notion of hinge trust is introduced, and its implications for extant theories of trust and its bearing on testimony are considered. §4 deals with the issue of epistemic injustice, where hinge epistemology can help explain the epistemic role prejudices and implicit bias play in the transmission of knowledge as well as the mechanism by means of which they can be overcome. Finally, §5 deals with the relationship between hinge epistemology and Wittgenstein-inspired feminist epistemology.

1. Hinge Disagreement

In *On Certainty*, Wittgenstein upholds a very wide conception of hinges. Amongst them, he includes propositions such as “The Earth has existed for a very long time,” “There are physical objects,” “There is an external world,” “Nobody has ever been on the Moon (before [1969](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0083)),” etc. Irrespective of the differences in generality and plausibility exhibited by these hinges, it seems safe to contend that individuals can disagree about all of them. Consider the following exchanges:

(EARTH)

Mary: The earth has existed for a very long time.

John: No, the earth has come to exist with my birth.

(MOON)

Lisa: Nobody has ever been on the moon.

Marc: I disagree, twelve people have been on the moon.

(OBJECTS)

Lucas: There are physical objects.

Georg: There aren’t any, Lucas.

(WORLD)

Jane: There is an external world.

June: No, Jane. There is no external world.

On the face of it, there is nothing wrong with describing such cases as instances of disagreement. Moreover, insofar as the disagreement at stake seems to be doxastic in kind, it seems legitimate to ask how the involved parties should rationally respond to their disagreement.[[1]](#footnote-2)

However, these seemingly harmless claims are hard to square with the distinctive metaphysical-cum-epistemological profile of hinge propositions. Famously, Wittgenstein regarded hinges as neither true nor false (OC 196–206); as neither justified nor unjustified (OC 110, 130, 166); as neither known nor unknown (OC 121); and as neither rational nor irrational (OC 559). Furthermore, they are constitutive elements of justification, such that holding on to different hinges would give rise to different and incompatible justificatory standards. Yet, reading through the extensive contemporary literature on disagreement reveals that disagreement has been variously defined in terms of

(a) a relation of interpersonal non-cotenability between the two doxastic attitudes held by the disagreeing parties, which would result in irrationality (cf. [MacFarlane 2014](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0056));

(b) a counterfactual relation between the attitudes’ accuracy conditions such that the fulfilment of one’s attitude’s accuracy conditions makes the other’s attitude ipso facto inaccurate, where the notion of accuracy is ultimately understood in terms of truth (for full belief) or closeness of truth (for partial belief) (cf. [MacFarlane 2014](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0056); [Palmira 2017](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0064));

(c) a relation of exclusion between the two attitudes, to be understood in terms of one proposition’s truth strictly entailing the other proposition’s falsity (cf. [Marques 2014](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0057)).

Since notions such as truth, rationality, and their cognates have variously been taken to constitute central ingredients of disagreement, it seems that that there cannot be disagreement over hinges, if they are neither true nor false, neither justified nor unjustified, neither rational nor irrational. Call this the *lost hinge disagreement problem* (see also [Pritchard 2018)](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0067" \o "Pritchard, D. 2018a Disagreements of beliefs and otherwise, in C. R. Johnson (ed.) Voicing Dissent. The Ethics and Epistemology of Making Disagreement Public, New York, Routledge, pp. 22–38.).

Moreover, even if the lost hinge disagreement problem is addressed, another fundamental problem confronts hinge epistemologists. Rational resolution of disagreement presupposes the existence of shared epistemic standards whereby to assess the rationality of retaining or revising our doxastic stances towards the contested proposition. However, since, as we saw, hinge disputes are such that parties do not share epistemic standards, it seems that cases such as (EARTH), (MOON), (OBJECTS), and (WORLD) couldn’t exhibit the usual normative trappings of disagreement whereby we can rationally resolve our ordinary disputes. As observed by Robert [Fogelin (1985](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0035), p. 6), “the possibility of a genuine argumentative exchange depends . . . on the fact that together we accept many things.” If, for instance, Mia and Neo disagree over whether 43 + 25 = 67, the issue can only be resolved thanks to a shared mathematical practice, like addition. Consequently, disagreements over hinges “cannot be resolved through the use of argument, for they undercut the conditions essential to arguing” (1985, p. 8).

To illustrate the problem, consider (OBJECTS) and suppose that Lucas attempts to provide Georg with reasons in favor of the existence of mind-independent mid-size objects. Plausibly, Lucas might reason as follows: since it seems to him, and to us in general, that there are tables, chairs, plants, and the like, we should accept the existence of mind-independent mid-size objects. Georg, however, couldn’t be moved by such a line of reasoning, for he rejects that our sensory experiences are formed in response to mind-independent objects in the first place. At most, “physical objects” are collection of sense data, but they aren’t mind-independent entities. Thus, Lucas and Georg’s hinge disagreement is bound to be rationally inert. Call this the *problem of rational inertia* (see also [Pritchard 2021)](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0068" \o "Pritchard, D. 2018b Wittgensteinian hinge epistemology and deep disagreement, Topoi, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11245-018-9612-y. ).

[Coliva and Palmira (2020)](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0029) argue that one can make sense of genuine hinge disagreement. If hinges are presupposed by any inquiry, their truth cannot be understood along evidentialist lines—that is, as justification at the end of inquiry (Peirce) or as justification that remains stable for whatever increment of information (see [Wright 1992](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0084) and his notion of superassertibility). For doing so would be hopelessly circular. Nor can it be understood in a correspondentist fashion, since correspondence between a representation and a mind-independent world is possible only once it is granted that there is such a mind-independent world. Hence, those hinges that are conditions of possibility of representation, like “There is an external world,” “There are physical objects,” etc., and are not themselves representations, cannot be considered to be true in virtue of their correspondence with a mind-independent world (OC 80–83, 145, 191, 199).[[2]](#footnote-5) Nor can they be considered to be true because they are supported by evidence (OC 93–94, 151–153, 162), since any evidence for or against the existence of specific physical objects is such only insofar these very hinges are taken for granted. This is not only consistent with some of Wittgenstein’s remarks in *On Certainty*, it also clarifies in what sense “hinges” can be considered to be propositions and, as such, how they can enter relations of entailment, or be meaningfully negated (see [Coliva 2018](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0019) for an in-depth treatment of the issue).

Concerning the problem of rational inertia, Coliva and Palmira are critical of Chris [Ranalli’s (2020)](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0070" \o "Ranalli, C. 2018a Deep disagreement and hinge epistemology, Synthese, pp. 1–33. ) attempt at solving the problem, which rests on an entitlement version of hinge epistemology championed by Crispin [Wright (2004)](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0085). According to Ranalli, if there is an entitlement for “There is an external world,” that should epistemically move deniers, whose hinges are not so epistemically supported. Besides general worries with the very notion of entitlement as presented by Wright (on this, see [Coliva 2020](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0022); [Jenkins 2007](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0047); and [Pritchard 2005](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0065)), Coliva and Palmira point out that the appeal to entitlements is unmotivated. Suppose you are forming beliefs about physical objects, understood as mind-independent entities, and that you take your perceptions to bear on the justification of your beliefs. Coherence between your beliefs—such as “I have got hands”—and the hinges that make it possible for these beliefs to be justified—such as “There is an external world”—is enough to show that you ought to hold on to the hinge “There is an external world.” For it would be incoherent to hold that you have hands (or even that you consider such a belief to be justified) while not holding on to “There is an external world,” once “hands” is understood as referring to mind-independent physical objects. No appeal to dubious non-evidential warrants, such as Wright-style entitlements is needed to solve the problem of rational inertia.

Coliva and Palmira develop a solution to the problem of rational inertia, which deploys the resources of the constitutivist version of hinge epistemology ([Coliva 2015](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0018)). The key contention of the constitutivist-based solution is that a disagreement like (OBJECTS) or (WORLD) is in fact best reconceptualized as a disagreement over the correct explication of the concept of epistemic rationality. In particular, it turns out to be a disagreement between someone who, like a Humean skeptic, accepts as a hinge that there is an external world, and yet deems it unjustifiable and therefore not epistemically rationally held, and someone, like a constitutivist, who, in contrast, holds that that hinge is epistemically rationally held, even if it cannot be justified evidentially or otherwise, because it is constitutive of epistemic rationality ([Coliva 2015](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0018)). In fact, the dispute between such a skeptic and a constitutivist would hinge—pun intended—on two different understandings of the notion of epistemic rationality. Namely,

**Epistemic rationalitynarrow:** it is epistemically rational to believe only evidentially justified propositions; *contra*

**Epistemic rationalityextended:** it is epistemically rational to believe evidentially justified propositions and to assume those unjustifiable ones that make the acquisition of perceptual justifications possible in the first place and are therefore constitutive of epistemic rationality.

A moment’s reflection shows that a constitutivist engages in an epistemic practice—that of forming, withholding, and revising empirical beliefs based on the deliverances of one’s perceptions—the rationality of which she can make sense of. For, on such an account, the coherence between one’s views about the rationality of the practice and about its constitutive rules is preserved. The Humean skeptic, likewise, engages in that epistemic practice. Yet a Humean skeptic cannot make sense of its rationality. For, by her lights, it rests on a hinge which is not rationally held. Yet, if so, how could the practice itself be rational? Hence, irrespective of whether a constitutivist can convince a Humean skeptic to abandon her preferred notion of epistemic rationality, a constitutivist would be offering reasons that a Humean skeptic should acknowledge as germane to her own position.[[3]](#footnote-6)

Therefore, a constitutivist—or, at any rate, a hinge epistemologist who was prepared to embrace the deflationary truth of hinges—has the resources to solve both the lost hinge disagreement problem and the problem of rational inertia. With respect to (MOON) and similar disagreements, in contrast, constitutivists’ position—and possibly other hinge epistemologists’ too—is that ultimately these are not cases of deep disagreement, but of ordinary empirical disagreement, on which ordinary empirical evidence can be brought to bear.[[4]](#footnote-7)

2. Testimonial Hinges

[Coliva (2015](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0018), chapter 4; [2019b](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0021)) presents an extension of her brand of hinge epistemology to the case of testimonial justification. This extension stems naturally from a reinterpretation of the classic dispute between reductionists and anti-reductionists with respect to testimonial justification.[[5]](#footnote-9) The interesting and novel aspect of that reinterpretation is that it brings to light the deep analogy between that classic dispute and the contemporary debate between so-called “liberals” and “conservatives” concerning the structure of perceptual justification, respectively championed by [Pryor (2004)](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0069) and [Wright (2004)](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0085).[[6]](#footnote-10)

According to Coliva, global reductionists, such as [Hume (1748/1975)](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0046), local reductionists, like Elizabeth [Fricker (1994)](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0037), and contemporary global anti-reductionists,[[7]](#footnote-11) like [Tyler Burge (1993)](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0013), conceive of testimonial justification as depending on the justifiedness of either a general or a local hinge—that people are generally reliable (or trustworthy) informants, or that at least the testifier is.[[8]](#footnote-12) They then take a different stance concerning the kind of justification there might be for their preferred hinge. Reductionists take it to be a posteriori, whereas anti-reductionists consider it to be a priori. Either way, notice the analogy between all the above-mentioned positions regarding testimonial justification, on the one hand, and conservatives about perceptual justification, on the other. Conservatives about perceptual justification hold

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where *E* is one’s current sensory experience with content that *p*, and *H*\* is “There is an external world” (or other germane hinges), while different supporters of that view may have different accounts of the nature of the justification for H\*.

Similarly, global and local reductionists, as well as global anti-reductionists hold

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where *E*, in this case, is being told that *p* by *T*, and *H* ranges over “People are generally reliable informants,” “T is (generally) a reliable informant,” or “T is a reliable informant on this particular occasion.” *J*, in contrast, ranges over a priori and a posteriori justification.

Local anti-reductionists, in contrast, hold that *no* *justification* for the hinge *H*—“T is a reliable informant (either in general or on this occasion)”—is needed, nor is it needed to assume *H*.[[9]](#footnote-13) We can schematize their view as follows:

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where *E* is *T*’s saying that *p* to *S*.

Hence, their position is structurally similar to the liberal view of perceptual justification, which can be characterized as holding:

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where *E* is one’s sensory experience with content that *p*.

[Coliva (2019b)](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0021) rehearses the difficulties that beset each of these views and, like in the perceptual case, she proposes to endorse a moderate account of testimonial justification. Once again, the structural similarity between the moderate account of perceptual justification (defended in [Coliva 2015](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0018)) and the moderate account of testimonial justification is striking. The former holds:

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where *E* is a perceptual experience with a given content and *H*\* is a hinge germane to perceptual justification (e.g., “There is an external world,” “My sense organs are working reliably,” etc.).

Similarly, the moderate account of testimonial justification holds the following:

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where *E* is being told that *p* by *T* and H is one or the other of the hinges germane to testimonial justification. Accordingly, in order for a subject *S* to be justified in believing that *p*, based on the attester *T*’s saying so to her, it must be the case that, absent defeaters, the relevant hinge is assumed.

The chief advantage of moderatism over liberalism is that, if no assumption is made, just by being told that *p*, absent defeaters, it would have to be more probable that *p*, rather than *p*\* “I am being deceived into believing that *p*,” which is implausible, particularly if one considers “skeptical testimonial scenarios” in which, unbeknownst to one, one is in 50%-liars land. Likewise, just by having a hand-like experience, it would have to be more probable that *p* “Here is a hand,” rather than *p*\* “I am BIV having a hand-like experience,” particularly if, unbeknownst to one, one were a BIV.

Since, as a matter of fact, the same experience would raise the probability of both *p* and *p*\*, the reason why we tend to think that the testimony or the hand-like experience raises the probability of *p*, rather than *p*\*, is because we are implicitly assuming to be in the good case scenario, that is, one in which there is an external world, in the case of perception, and one in which people are generally reliable informants in the case of testimony. Moderatism simply recognizes this fact and makes it explicit in its requirements for either kind of justification.

The advantage of moderatism over conservatism is that it dispenses with the arduous problem of providing a justification for the relevant hinges. This task is onerous when it comes to hinges such as “There is an external world,” and to provide a posteriori or a priori justification for the hinge “People are reliable informants” is no less problematic. For it is extremely unlikely to come up with an a priori justification for such a hinge, and an a posteriori one would either be circular, or it would risk making testimony epistemically superfluous.

An opponent might object that if a hinge is merely assumed, then it is not epistemically rational to do so. For, by so doing, we would thus expose ourselves to the risk of making arbitrary assumptions that would be no safer, epistemically speaking, than their “skeptical” counterparts.

In response, Coliva claims that the hinge relevant to the testimonial case should be considered to be constitutive of social epistemic rationality. Such a form of rationality depends on the practice of forming, suspending, and changing beliefs based on testimony. If moderatism about testimonial justification is correct, the assumption *H* that people are generally reliable informants is constitutive of that practice and, thus, of social epistemic rationality itself. Hence, *H* itself part of social epistemic rationality. More precisely:

**Social epistemic rationalityER:** it is socially epistemically rational to believe a proposition (or to withhold from it, or hold its negation) on the basis of testimonial justification and to assume those unjustifiable presuppositions (hinges) that make the acquisition of testimonial justifications possible in the first place and are therefore constitutive of them.

In particular, we are *epistemically rationally mandated* by the lights of social epistemic rationality itself—and not just permitted or pragmatically required—to assume the relevant hinge. In turn, a rational mandate is not a justification (let it be empirical or a priori) or a non-evidential warrant (an “entitlement,” in Wright’s terminology), let alone a pragmatic justification. A mandate is a requirement of reason. In particular, in this case, it is a requirement of that “part” of reason that allows us to form justified beliefs based on testimony. Being a requirement of reason, it has no power to corroborate the likely truth of what it mandates. Yet, it has the power to mandate assuming the truth of what it mandates.

The more difficult issue is how exactly we should conceive of the hinge constitutive of social epistemic rationality. In [Coliva (2015)](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0018) a global testimonial hinge was endorsed, but in [Coliva (2019b)](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0021) reasons are presented in favor of a more local one—that is, “T is being a reliable informant on this particular occasion.”[[10]](#footnote-14) If so, it is in the nature of the case that testimonial hinges, being local and only contextual, turn out to be fragile, and indeed more fragile than perceptual ones (which, in for most contemporary hinge epistemologists, are general and quite robust since having reasons to doubt them would ultimately depend on taking them for granted). Yet, this is small surprise, for, after all, it chimes well with the intuition that seeing is believing, while being told thus-and-so is *not* *quite*.

3. Hinge Trust

In *On Certainty*, Wittgenstein returns repeatedly to the nature and the role of trust. His remarks point in the direction of a form of trust which is basic, and which is the characteristic stance we have towards hinges. Therefore, it seems apposite to call it “hinge trust.”[[11]](#footnote-15) For Wittgenstein, hinge trust is not personal. In particular, we do not trust hinges because the person who is passing them on to us is trustworthy (OC 23, 137, 671–673). Rather, we trust hinges because of the peculiar role they play in inquiry. Moreover, for him, we trust our faculties, like our senses and our memory (OC 34, 125, 133, 337), as well as textbooks (OC 599, 600), even if we have only a rough idea of how the latter are produced. Furthermore, we trust epistemic authorities (OC 603–605).[[12]](#footnote-16) All these sources are sources of hinges, for him, and not just of empirical information. Our attitude of trust towards these sources carries over to the hinges we acquire from them.

According to Wittgenstein, hinge trust is basic, both in a transcendental (OC 150–151, 301–308, 509) and in a psychological sense (OC 159–162; cf. [Stern 2017](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0078) and [Moyal-Sharrock 2005](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0061), chapter 9). For him, trust is basic in a transcendental sense because, without hinge trust, we could not acquire either a language or our methods of inquiry, and we could not conduct inquiries or raise meaningful doubts, not even, eventually, about those hinges or sources we started off as trusting. As a stance, hinge trust is also part of our psychologically inbuilt way of approaching reality. That is, as children we tend to trust adults and various authorities, as well as certain worldly regularities. Our doing so—with no grounds or reasons in its favor, at that point—is crucial to the acquisition of language and methods of inquiry, with their own respective hinges, which then make it possible to go on investigating the epistemic credentials of our initial trust, if need be. In addition, for Wittgenstein, evidence can keep corroborating our trust in hinges, but it cannot epistemically ground it, for all our evidence depends on taking hinges for granted (OC 275–280), either contextually or globally. Conversely, the fact that evidence cannot speak against hinges should not be taken to epistemically support either. For it is in the very nature of hinges that evidence putatively against them is either discounted or explained away.

The best way of characterizing hinge trust, therefore, is as a basic stance of openness and reliance (OC 201–213, 508–509, 514–515, 571) on something and/or someone to do something (for us). It is a stance because it comes before even being able to have propositional attitudes, let alone beliefs, if beliefs are taken to be propositional attitudes of acceptance of a proposition based on reasons. It is a stance of openness because it allows us to act and take in information without questioning either its source or its content. It is a stance of reliance on both objects and people and/or institutional practices to provide us with language, methods of inquiry, and other means we need to form judgments and beliefs. As we saw, moreover, it is a basic psychological stance we have as part of our psychological makeup, which serves us well. For, to repeat, it is needed to acquire anything relevant to the entertaining of propositional contents and to their epistemic assessment.

Notice that even if hinge trust can be characterized as a form of reliance, this does not mean endorsing a reliabilist account of it. For, according to Wittgenstein, it is not because certain sources of information and methods are conducive to the formation of true beliefs that we trust them (or that our trust in them is justified, or otherwise epistemically in good standing). Rather, we act in a certain way—that is, we do trust/rely on our senses, memory, textbooks, experts, etc. That gives us a certain picture of the world. Based on that, we then distinguish between what is true/false, or justified/unjustified, known/unknown.

The phenomenology of hinge trust is characterized by feeling secure and certain (OC 217–222). Yet, it is not this feeling that makes it certain and secure that something is so-and-so. What makes it certain is the role that something we basically trust/rely upon plays in the system of our judgment: it allows us to acquire evidence and justification, and therefore knowledge, for ordinary empirical propositions, but also the means to doubt and inquire into ordinary empirical propositions.

How does hinge trust connect to current debates about trust? By looking at current philosophical debates about trust and trustworthiness, it is quite easy to get the impression of a problematic heterogeneity. Theorists seem to be interested in different things and somewhat artificially distinguish trust from reliance (see [Goldberg 2020](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0040) for a discussion; the distinction was first introduced in [Baier 1986](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0004)), while such a distinction is nowhere to be found in ordinary language or even ordinary epistemic practices. Furthermore, to that end, they appeal to resentment ([Baier 1986](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0004) is the locus classicus) as the criterion to distinguish between mere reliance and (what by their lights is) trust proper. Yet, such a criterion is problematic. For it does seem to be neither necessary nor sufficient for trust. That is, one can trust someone to do something without resenting them for not complying with one’s expectations, if the matter at hand is not particularly significant. Or else, one can resent them for not meeting one’s expectations even if such expectations were not formed based on a relation of trust. Theorists, moreover, tend to impose demanding conditions on trust proper, which tend to precisify the notion in a way that is open to many counterexamples (that is, situations in which we would naturally speak of trust, but where the precisification of trust under consideration makes it illegitimate).[[13]](#footnote-17) The notion of basic trust as a stance of openness and reliance on something/someone else to do something (for us) seems to offer a unifying element. Notice that this position does not call for a problematic distinction between reliance and trust; or between personal/affective trust and predictive trust (*contra* [Baier 1986](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0004) and [Hertzberg 1988](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0044)). For (hinge) trust in objects, cognitive faculties, or institutions is not a matter of making a prediction about their behavior, but of unquestioningly relying on them. The very possibility of questioning them comes only after having acquired the means to epistemically evaluate them, which trusting (them in the first place) affords us.[[14]](#footnote-18)

The notion of hinge trust as a stance of openness and reliance on something/someone else to do something (for us) makes it possible to specify more detailed conditions, which may or may not obtain in particular cases. For instance, I may be trusting you to keep a promise; or to fulfill your commitment (which may have been incurred voluntarily or because of occupying a certain social role, see Hawley 2019); or to be a loyal friend/colleague; or to act in a reliable way, etc. These further specifications may well involve trust, but none of them is what trust is. Rather, they would tell us something about what it is to be a word-keeper, a reliable person vis-à-vis one’s commitments, a loyal friend,[[15]](#footnote-19) etc. All these further notions do involve trust but are not themselves constitutive of trust. Appealing to the notion of hinge trust makes this asymmetrical relationship clear.

As remarked, hinge trust is a stance, which does not constitutively involve doxastic propositional attitudes. In particular, it does not constitutively involve the belief that something or someone will do what we trust them to do. Belief is rational only if backed up by reasons, but trust, at least hinge trust, is prior to the very possibility of offering reasons. This, however, is compatible with then (or sometimes) forming such a belief. For instance, if I trust that the floor will not disappear into the abyss, if I have the concepts necessary to consider the issue and I do consider the issue, I may form the belief that the floor will not disappear into the abyss and offer evidence in support of it. Or else, if I trust you to do something for me, if I have the concepts necessary to consider the issue and I do consider the issue, I may form the belief that you will do such-and-so for me, and support this with evidence. Yet these are beliefs afforded or made possible by trust and not themselves necessary or constitutive conditions for trust.

What hinge trust brings to light is the Janus-faced nature of trust. On the one hand, it is characterized by a phenomenology of feeling secure and at ease with our both human and non-human environment. On the other, it is a stance that constitutively opens us up to the possibility of being let down. Far from being a problem, however, this just shows that this form of fragility is in fact a condition of our success as individuals and as a species. In this sense, hinge trust illuminates what it means to say that humans are a social species. For at the heart of our individual and collective success there is a reliance on others that allows us, as individuals and as a species, to acquire all necessary elements to forming beliefs and assessing them. To repeat, we do not trust because it has proved successful. Rather, we do trust and that is what enables us to be successful.

Being such a basic stance, for human beings trust is the default. Distrust, for us, is like illness with respect to health: it is not our “normal” condition, and it is acceptable or justified only when the initial conditions for trust have been systematically or egregiously infringed. Trust, therefore, has “ontological priority” over distrust (see [Stern 2017](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0078)) and it is axiologically superior to distrust.[[16]](#footnote-20) This explains why, as a stance, trust can be maintained in the face of counterevidence, at least to a reasonable degree. That is, it is not justified to move on to distrust if our faculties, other people, institutions, or our environmental conditions have betrayed us once or only on occasion, or if the trust has been broken on non-fundamental issues, or only in “abnormal” conditions.[[17]](#footnote-21)

Trust, however, can be broken, and, when this happens, consequences can be disastrous.[[18]](#footnote-22) For turning to distrust can deeply affect the way people go through life and their being in the world. In fact, as a stance towards life, trust and distrust may be appealed to to mark the difference between the world of the “happy” and the world of the “unhappy” ([Wittgenstein 1921](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0082), 6.43). Whereas the world of the happy is one of openness and ease with respect to others, the environment, and even oneself, the world of the unhappy is one of closure, of insularity and lack of reliance on one’s own faculties. Distrust is therefore deeply dehumanizing.

Finally, trust is a key element of hinge epistemology *tout court*. For it is the stance that characterizes our attitude towards hinges—whether hinges of empirical or of social epistemic rationality. Since hinge trust, for its very nature, is not supported by reasons, nor could or need be, this also indirectly speaks in favor of those forms of hinge epistemology, like the constitutive version of hinge epistemology defended in [Coliva (2015)](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0018), that do away with any epistemic support for hinges.[[19]](#footnote-23)

4. Epistemic Injustice Re-hinged

In a series of papers, Anna [Boncompagni (2019](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0010), [2024a)](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0011" \o "Boncompagni, A. 2021a Prejudice in testimonial justification. A hinge account, Episteme, pp. 1–18. DOI: 10.1017/epi.2021.40) has applied the hinge epistemology framework to the issue of testimonial injustice. After [Fricker’s (2007)](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0038) seminal *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing*, it has become commonplace to acknowledge two forms of epistemic injustice that may harm speakers in their capacity of knowing. Testimonial injustice, on the one hand, assigns a credibility deficit to a speaker due to—mostly—identity prejudice against the group she belongs to. Hermeneutical injustice, on the other hand, depends on a gap in collective conceptual resources, due to hermeneutical marginalization against a targeted group, which prevents people belonging to that group from making sense of certain areas of their experience.[[20]](#footnote-24)

According to [Boncompagni (2024a)](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0011" \o "Boncompagni, A. 2021a Prejudice in testimonial justification. A hinge account, Episteme, pp. 1–18. DOI: 10.1017/epi.2021.40), hinge epistemology helps to clarify how identity prejudice brings about testimonial injustice and is a profitable way of developing the extant literature on epistemic injustice. Fricker recognized that an identity prejudice is not just a stereotype. The latter is a mere generalization concerning a social group. The former, in contrast, is characterized by the fact that subjects resist evidence against the prejudice in an ethically blameworthy way. Understanding identity prejudice as a kind of “local” hinge, specific to the culture or subculture the offending individual belongs to, helps us to understand this difference, according to Boncompagni. For, contrary to empirical propositions and inductive generalizations, hinges play a normative role. That is, they themselves determine what counts as evidence for what. Thus, if it functions as a norm that, for example, “Women are emotional, while men are rational,” whatever counterevidence one may be presented with will be discounted (either by being considered false, or as an exception that does not contradict the general rule).

More specifically, Boncompagni makes use of [Coliva’s (2019b)](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0021) account of testimonial justification to explain the interplay between identity prejudice and testimony. As we saw in §2, testimonial justification is premised on the hinge that the testifier is a reliable informant (i.e., that she is sincere and knowledgeable with respect to what she is saying). According to Boncompagni, testimonial hinges are “tailored to social identities” ([Boncompagni 2024](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0011" \o "Boncompagni, A. 2021a Prejudice in testimonial justification. A hinge account, Episteme, pp. 1–18. DOI: 10.1017/epi.2021.40)a, p. 294). That is, they have the form “People like T are reliable informants.” This may exclude people who are unlike T from counting as reliable informants, due to identity prejudice. In that case, prejudice operates like an alternative testimonial hinge and prevents one from considering *p*, as testified by T\* (who is unlike T), justified (2024, pp. 294-95).

By contrast, [Coliva (2019b](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0021)[)](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0028" \o "Coliva A. 2024 Social and Applied Hinge Epistemology, ms.) claims that identity prejudice intervenes merely as a defeater and prevents the hearer from acquiring the knowledge the testifier is imparting to her, by preventing the hearer from availing herself of the testimonial justification she would otherwise have to believe that *p*. For, as Coliva explains, in the abstract space of reasons, there is a testimonial justification for the belief that *p*, because the speaker is a reliable informant and there is no actual defeater at play. Yet the prejudice functions, for the biased hearer, *as* *if* it were a defeater of the testimonial hinge that the speaker is a reliable informant with respect to *p*. Hence, the biased hearer cannot avail herself to the testimonial justification there is for *p* and that she could have for her belief, if she were not biased against the speaker.

Finally, Boncompagni utilizes the hinge epistemology framework to understand how identity prejudice can be overcome and testimonial injustice remedied. To that end, the role of “radical doubters” is key ([Boncompagni 2019](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0010" \o "Boncompagni, A. 2019 Hinges, prejudices and radical doubters, Wittgenstein Studien 10:1, pp. 165–182.), [2024](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0011" \o "Boncompagni, A. 2021a Prejudice in testimonial justification. A hinge account, Episteme, pp. 1–18. DOI: 10.1017/epi.2021.40)a). Radical doubters are subjects who do not share the same hinge-prejudices as members of the same culture or of a different one. The encounter with them forces prejudiced people to voice their prejudice and to recognize their hinge-role. That is, voicing them brings to light the fact that their prejudices play a normative role in their assessment of evidence. The encounter with others, therefore, allows hinge-prejudiced subjects to bring to light what they normally take for granted, or even as being part of common sense (within their [sub]culture). Once the hinge-prejudice is thus manifest, it can become questionable, and indeed the very encounter with subjects who do not hold it can move hinge-prejudiced people to question it. Radical doubters, that is, provide the kind of “epistemic friction” ([Medina 2013](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0059)) that may allow hinge-prejudiced people to overcome their prejudice. Once the hinge-prejudice is manifested and questioned, it can finally be demoted from playing a normative role and start playing the role of an empirical generalization. For, at this point, counterevidence, in its turn, can play its epistemic role and show that the empirical generalization is actually ungrounded. For instance, pointing to the widespread presence in history and society of highly rational women as well as of emotional men can lead one to realize that “Women are emotional while men are rational” is just a bad generalization. Indeed, once the empirical generalization is shown to be ungrounded, it becomes manifest that its sole motivation was an “ethically bad affective investment” ([Fricker 2007](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0038), p. 35). Namely, the ethically bad practice of downplaying the significance of women’s accomplishments and their contribution to the advancement of disciplines, fields, and conversations the rationality of which is beyond question.[[21]](#footnote-25)

Work within the hinge epistemology framework ([Boncompagni 2024b](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0012" \o "Boncompagni, A. 2021b Hermeneutical injustice and hinge epistemology, ms.) and [Coliva](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0025" \o "Coliva, A. 2021c More and happier women. On the political significance of Wittgenstein and hinge epistemology, ms. (committed to Hypatia).) 2024a, 2024b) is currently being done to extend its bearing onto the issue of hermeneutical injustice. A striking example in *On Certainty* helps to introduce the topic:

That I am a man and not a woman can be verified, but if I were to say I was a woman, and then tried to explain the error by saying I hadn’t checked the statement, the explanation would not be accepted. (OC 79)

The context of that remark is one in which Wittgenstein is insisting that, in certain cases, making a false statement casts doubt on the fact that one understands what one is saying (OC 80–83). By our contemporary lights, a complex hinge-prejudice is embedded in OC 79, namely, that gender identity is binary and that gender identity is identical with sex as assigned at birth. Such a hinge-prejudice can interfere with a person’s capacity to make sense of her own experiences, if these experiences do not fit existent categories or concepts. Now, an important aspect of hinges is that, as we have seen, they are rules of evidential significance. Yet, it should not be forgotten that they are also meaning-constitutive judgments. That is, in a Wittgensteinian perspective, two practices determine the meaning of words and the identity of concepts: ostensive definitions and accord on the truth of certain paradigmatic judgments. You may agree that “hand” is defined by means of a certain sample, for instance, and yet if there were never accord on the fact that this object I am holding in front of myself is a hand, “hand” would not have any established meaning. Notice, moreover, that the paradigm we use to ostensively define a term, and the paradigmatic judgments that contribute to the determination of its meaning, would then naturally be considered to be the most representative examples of a given class. These examples, in turn, would then contribute to the determination of those stereotypes (or prototypes), which would explain subjects’ behavior in selection and recognition tasks, as established since Rosch’s ([Rosch and Mervis 1975](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0074)) pioneering studies in cognitive psychology.[[22]](#footnote-26)

Stereotypes and prototypes do not necessarily exert normative force, but they may. That is, it may become a hinge, and therefore a norm of evidential significance, that only people looking like the paradigmatic examples, or having the same reproductive organs, are taken to be members of a given class. Yet, as remarked, local hinges can change over time. By including transgender people in the category of men (or women), for instance, the hinge-prejudice inherent in OC 79 would thus be dislodged. Furthermore, by changing the practice around one’s identification as belonging to a given gender—taking it to be based on self-identification which may override similarities in appearance and reproductive organs—the norms of evidential significance pertinent to it, and therefore the relevant hinges, would also change.

Notice, moreover, that Wittgenstein’s own conception of the workings of our concepts through family resemblance would offer a clear model of how the initial concept man (or woman)[[23]](#footnote-27) could be extended to these other cases, without presupposing any common biological essence, or any strictly defined functional role. For, according to the family resemblance model, it is enough to share a varying set of characteristics among members of the same group to be included within it.[[24]](#footnote-28) Thus, hinge epistemology has the prospect of intersecting significantly with current work on conceptual engineering—that is, that branch of the philosophy of language that aims to ameliorate society by engineering meanings for contested terms, usually referring to gender and race, which would better expose the oppression members of those categories are subject to (see [Haslanger 2012](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0043); [Cappellen 2018](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0015); [Burgess, Cappellen, and Plunkett 2019](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0014" \o "Burgess, A. Cappellen, H. and Plunkett, D. 2019 (eds.) Conceptual Engineering and Conceptual Ethics, Oxford, Oxford University Press. ); and [Marques and Wikforss 2020](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0058)).

5. Feminist Epistemology, Wittgenstein, and Hinge Epistemology

Wittgenstein’s influence on feminist philosophy and epistemology predates and is quite independent of the rise of hinge epistemology as such (cf. [Code 1991](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0016); [Scheman and O’Connor 2002](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0076); [Tanesini 2004](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0080); [O’Connor 2008](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0063); [Scheman 2011](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0075)). Yet, there are important points of contact and avenues for mutual development, as [Ashton (2019)](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0002) highlights, albeit in a programmatic way.[[25]](#footnote-29)

In fact, it is not by chance that when feminist epistemologists turn to Wittgenstein to develop some of their views, they very often end up looking at his remarks in *On Certainty*. The most obvious reason why this is so is that there Wittgenstein highlights the fact that justification and knowledge always take place against the background of assumptions—or hinges—which are held in place by our practices (OC 93–99, 341–343; cf. [Code 1991](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0016), p. 198; [Scheman 2011](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0075) as paradigmatic examples of such a tendency).[[26]](#footnote-30) Thus, they are not set in stone or given once and for all. Rather, they are a product of what we do. That is, our practices influence what we then take for granted, what goes without saying, and therefore what we find the normal, or even the right way of going about things, including “things epistemic.” Yet, feminist epistemologists argue that Wittgenstein’s anti-transcendentalist attitude towards epistemic principles is the key to the very possibility of changing the underlying practices if, once scrutinized, they appear to be based on prejudice, or, as is likely, on giving pride of place to certain kinds of epistemic subject over marginalized or altogether silenced ones (cf. [Scheman 2011](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0075), p. 5 and chapter 11). That is, far from just acquiescing in the existing practices, they think that Wittgenstein made room for a more revisionary attitude.

This may prima facie seem at odds with Wittgenstein’s quietism—the view that in philosophy we leave everything as is.[[27]](#footnote-31) Yet, on the one hand quietist readings of Wittgenstein are certainly something that hinge epistemologists have greatly opposed ([Coliva 2010](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0017), [2021a](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0023); [Moyal-Sharrock 2017](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0062)), especially with reference to *On Certainty*, where quietist remarks are virtually nowhere to be found. On the other hand, feminist epistemologists have argued that the underlying attitude displayed by Wittgenstein towards the culture of his time was far from quietist or conservative. More importantly, they have taken the vexed issue of his philosophical quietism to be ultimately compatible with a progressive political attitude. For it is consistent with *philosophical* quietism that political and social change can (and should) be effected. Yet, on a quietist perspective of philosophy’s aims, it is not for philosophy to change practices. Rather, it is for “serious politics,” as [Scheman (2011](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0075), p. 37; cf. also p. 152) calls it, to do so. That is, changing epistemic practices is the business of “that circular, Aristotelian crafting of virtuous citizens and a virtuous polis as the conditions for each other’s possibility” ([Scheman 2011](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0075" \o "Scheman, N. 2011 Shifting Ground. Knowledge and Reality, Transgression and Trustworthiness, Oxford, Oxford University Press.), p. 37). Yet, since Wittgenstein’s hinges are changeable as a result of this extra-philosophical activity, while it is not philosophy (at least not on its own) that may bring about change, on his view, his theoretical framework can perfectly well accommodate those changes and indeed locate their source in its proper political and social dimension.

Another important aspect of Wittgenstein’s philosophy feminist epistemologists have exploited is his anti-essentialism. As already remarked, Wittgenstein’s observations on family resemblance are meant to dislodge the idea that in philosophy we should strive to identify necessary and jointly sufficient conditions that should define our concepts, and, concurrently, reveal the essence of the underlying kinds picked out by those concepts. When applied to epistemology, that means forsaking the idea that we could get to the immutable essence of knowledge. Indeed, the myriad counterexamples philosophers have found to any alleged definition of “knowledge” should be taken as symptoms of the fact that our various concerns and practices, which lie behind our ascriptions of knowledge, do not necessarily cohere. Hence, “there is no reason to believe that . . . there is one way of specifying them so as to draw a sharp boundary around cases of knowledge” ([Scheman 2011](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0075), p. 7). Of course, we can always provide a definition for specific purposes, but we should not think of having thereby revealed the essence of knowledge.[[28]](#footnote-32)

Going back to *On Certainty* and the notion of a background of hinges against which our way of going about justification and knowledge takes place, feminist epistemologists have emphasized the social aspect of it. That is, for Wittgenstein, this shared background is something we inherit from our community. Furthermore, as we saw in §3, we acquire it thanks to our trust in people and institutions that are designed to pass it on to younger generations. Hence, feminist epistemologists such as [Scheman (2011](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0075), pp. 44–45) have rightly located in Wittgenstein’s *On Certainty* a decisive shift away from individualist epistemology. Such a move predates by far the traditional date of birth of analytic social epistemology—that is, Alvin Goldman’s *Knowledge in a* [*Social World* (1999)](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0041)—as well as the rise of programs in the sociology of knowledge and of science such as [Kuhn (1962/1970)](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0048" \o "Kuhn, T. 1962/1970 The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, Chicago, University of Chicago Press.), [Feyerabend (1975)](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0034), [Foucault (1969/1972)](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0036), [Rorty (1979)](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0073), let alone the Strong program in the sociology of science ([Bloor 1976](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0008) and [Bloor and Barnes 1996](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0005)).[[29]](#footnote-33)

All these are welcome points of contact between feminist epistemology, Wittgenstein scholarship, and some aspects of social hinge epistemology. In general, however, social hinge epistemologists have been more interested in explaining the specific role hinges play in providing an account of testimony, trust, testimonial injustice, and hermeneutical injustice than Wittgenstein-inspired feminist epistemologists. In this sense, hinge epistemologists, social or general, aspire to bring Wittgensteinian themes to bear onto epistemology as is practiced today rather than denounce the limitations of that discipline and break free from virtually all its constraints. That is, their critique of extant paradigms within epistemology is internal to the discipline, whereas feminist epistemologists have mounted a critique from outside the discipline, or from its borders, as it were, or so have been perceived.

Furthermore, hinge epistemologists have been suspicious of aligning Wittgenstein’s account of hinges and the stratified nature of our bedrock (OC 93–99) with Quine’s idea of the web of belief ([Code 1991](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0016) is a clear example of that, and so are [Garavaso 1999](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0039) and [Scheman 2011](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0075)). The key difference is that Wittgenstein’s hinges play a normative role, while for Quine there are only more or less entrenched beliefs. Whereas for Wittgenstein the difference between hinges and non-hinges is a difference in principle, albeit instances of each can change over time (OC 98–99), for Quine beliefs at the center of the web of belief and those at the periphery aren’t different in kind but merely in the degree to which they may revisable.[[30]](#footnote-34) Finally, for Quine the structure of the web of beliefs is domain specific, with logic, math, and the hard sciences at the center, and beliefs belonging to other areas of human enquiry variously arranged around this nucleus. For Wittgenstein, in contrast, hinges are much more varied, and even propositions that Quine would have regarded as observation sentences and would have placed at the outskirts of the web of belief, like “Here is a hand” (or “Here is a rabbit,” in Quine’s famous example), count as hinges at least in context.

Another and related point of difference is that while interested in concepts such as woman and its extension to transgender people, feminist epistemologists otherwise inspired by Wittgenstein and by his account of concepts in terms of family resemblance ([Scheman 2011](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0075" \o "Scheman, N. 2011 Shifting Ground. Knowledge and Reality, Transgression and Trustworthiness, Oxford, Oxford University Press.), chapter 7), have not connected the issue with the peculiar role of hinges. As we saw (§4), (at least some) hinges are not only rules of evidential significance, but also meaning-constitutive ones. Yet, as we saw, the connection is important and illuminating. For until you shift the background, namely the hinge that, for instance, sex is binary and as assigned at birth, no one would, in practice, accept to extend the concept woman to trans-women. That is, family resemblance is a model of how concepts work that allows one to account for such a shift without thereby saying that there are two different concepts at play, or that there is some biological or functional essence that is shared by individuals falling under it. Yet a philosophical model is just that. For conceptual change to take place a given classificatory practice, with its attendant hinges, needs to change. That change, in turn, can only be achieved by operating on the social structures that keep the practice and its hinges in place.

Yet, far from marking an unbridgeable gulf, this simply shows how feminist epistemology and social hinge epistemology can profitably work together, by drawing attention to the role of hinges and by making clear that they can shift only as a result of “serious politics.”

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1. For a discussion of disagreement and its epistemic significance, see Patrick Rysiew, this volume. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Notice that, contrary to what Wittgenstein holds in *On Certainty*, for [Coliva (2015](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0018), [2018](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0019); cf. also [Wright 2004](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0085)) and [Coliva and Palmira (2020](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0029), [2021)](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0030) these are the only hinges properly so regarded, at least with respect to the practice of forming and revising beliefs based on the deliverances of perception. [Pritchard (2016](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0066), [2018](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0067" \o "Pritchard, D. 2018a Disagreements of beliefs and otherwise, in C. R. Johnson (ed.) Voicing Dissent. The Ethics and Epistemology of Making Disagreement Public, New York, Routledge, pp. 22–38.), [2021)](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0068" \o "Pritchard, D. 2018b Wittgensteinian hinge epistemology and deep disagreement, Topoi, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11245-018-9612-y. ), in contrast, contends that Wittgenstein’s apparently variable hinges are all manifestations of an underlying *über hinge commitment*, according to which we cannot possibly be massively wrong in our beliefs. This is not the place to discuss the issue further. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
3. For different accounts of the bearing of hinge epistemology onto the issue of deep disagreement concerning not hinges but first principles, see [Lynch (2016)](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0055) and [Ranalli (2021)](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0071" \o "Ranalli, C. 2018b What is deep disagreement?, Topoi,  https://doi.org/10.1007/s11245-018-9600-2.). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
4. [Coliva and Palmira (2021)](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0030) proposes a test to demarcate between hinges and entrenched empirical propositions. [Coliva (2024)](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0028) partially revises this position to acknowledge that there may be de facto, as opposed to de jure, hinges. Nonetheless, when there is a disagreement over the former, evidence can, at least in principle, decide the issue, and hence the disagreement is rationally resolvable (at least in principle). In turn, this also shows that de facto hinges can cease to be hinges and be re-immersed in the flux of our epistemic practices, like ordinary empirical beliefs. [Coliva and Doulas (2022](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0031" \o "Coliva, A. and Doulas, L. 2022 What philosophical disagreement and philosophical skepticism hinge on, Synthese 200:251 https://doi.org/10.1007/s11229-022-03735-6.), [2024](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0032" \o "Coliva, A. and Doulas, L. 2023 \"\"Philosophical progress, skepticism, and disagreement\". In J.A. Carter, M. Baghramian, and R. Rowland (eds.) The Routledge Handbook of Philosophy of Disagreement, London, Routledge, forthcoming.)) bring to bear on philosophical disagreements the framework of hinge disagreement developed by Coliva and Palmira but are more cautious with respect to the possibility of providing an epistemic solution to the problem of rational inertia. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
5. For an overview of reductionism and anti-reductionism in the philosophy of testimony see [Lackey and Sosa (2006)](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0052) and several of the papers contained in that volume. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
6. For the general analogies between testimony and perception, see Peter Graham’s chapter, this volume. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
7. See Axel Gerbert’s chapter, this volume. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
8. “Reliable informants” is here shorthand for the following two conditions. People are (i) sincere, and (ii) knowledgeable with respect to what they say, or at least have a sufficient degree of justification for the proposition that *p* they assert in the relevant communicative contexts. Should one feel uncomfortable with the term “reliable” in the locution “reliable informant,” one could substitute it with “credible” or “trustworthy.” In particular, by using the term “reliable” I don’t mean to subscribe to any theoretically committed view (which, moreover, would be at odds with the kind of internalist position defended in [Coliva 2015](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0018), [2019b](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0021)). [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
9. According to [Coliva (2019b)](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0021), this is not Thomas [Reid’s (1764](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0072)/1997) position. Rather, it comes close to the one criticized by [Fricker (1994)](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0037) as subject to gullibility. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
10. [Coliva (2024)](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0028) offers further reasons to prefer this local hinge. [Coliva (2019b)](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0021) also deals with how such a local hinge can be rationally unavailable to a hearer due to identity prejudice against the speaker. See also §4 in the following. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
11. [See Coliva (2025)](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0024" \o "Coliva, A. 2021b \"Hinge trust\", ms. (committed to Philosophy and Phenomenological Research).). For a treatment of trust, see J. Adam Carter, this volume. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
12. Regarding trust in experts and how to identify them, see Christoph Jäger and Thomas Grundmann’s respective chapters, this volume. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
13. Some of these conditions that are often problematically presented as constitutive of trust will be listed in the following. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
14. [Coliva (2024)](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0028) develops this point to show how the notion of hinge trust can profitably be used to account for our trust in AI. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
15. For a discussion of friendship, see Anna Brinkerhoff and Nomy Arpaly, this volume. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
16. Sometimes there may be pragmatic reasons to start in the neutral position of neither trusting nor distrusting, but this does not show either that *dis*trust is the default or that neither trusting nor distrusting is or should be the default. See [Coliva (2025](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0024" \o "Coliva, A. 2021b Hinge trust, ms. (committed to Philosophy and Phenomenological Research).)) for an elaboration of this point, as well as for a defense of the idea that allowing trust to be the default does not entail gullibility. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
17. See [Coliva (2025](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0024" \o "Coliva, A. 2021b Hinge trust, ms. (committed to Philosophy and Phenomenological Research).)) for an elaboration of this point. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
18. A powerful narrative of how trust in the world was broken during the Third Reich and the existential consequences that brought about can be found in [Améry (1964)](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0001). [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
19. [Wright (2004)](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0085) takes trust to be out fundamental attitude towards hinges but then appeals to entitlements—that is, non-evidential warrants—to make it rational. The key point of hinge trust, however, is that no such rational backup is actually necessary. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
20. For a discussion of epistemic injustice, see Aidan McGlynn’s chapter, *this volume*. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
21. Of course, in practice there may be a lot of resistance at play. This would just go towards showing that the prejudice works like a hinge that normatively requires one to discount counter-evidence. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
22. For a Wittgenstein-inspired appraisal of Rosch’s theoretical development, see [Bhushan (2002)](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0007). [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
23. Words in small capital letters refer to concepts. For an application of Wittgenstein’s family-resemblance account of “woman,” see [Heyes (2002)](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0045) and [Lindemann Nelson (2002)](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0054). [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
24. For opposite views concerning the prospects of a family resemblance account of gender terms, see [Bettcher (2012)](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0006) and [Stoljar (1995)](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0079). [Coliva (2024a)](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0025" \o "Coliva, A. 2021c More and happier women. On the political significance of Wittgenstein and hinge epistemology, ms. (committed to Hypatia).) sides with the latter. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
25. For a discussion of feminist epistemologies, see Kristen Intemann, this volume. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
26. [Boncompagni (2016](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0009), chapter 5) contains a detailed examination of Wittgenstein’s notion of “background.” [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
27. [Langton (2000)](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0053) is a clear example of such a (misconceived) reaction. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
28. Also of interest to Wittgenstein-inspired feminist epistemologists is Wittgenstein’s reconceptualization of objectivity in terms of intersubjectivity (see [Crary 2002](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0033); [Scheman 2011](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0075), p. 156; cf. also [Harding 1995](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0042)). Embracing such a reconceptualized notion of objectivity allows these epistemologists to oppose the skepticism that other feminist epistemologists have developed towards the very notion, understood solely in terms of congruence with, or tracking of, a mind-independent reality. Bringing forward women’s and other minorities’ perspectives would then contribute to objectivity, so reconceptualized. Connectedly, feminist epistemologists have taken Wittgenstein to be questioning the identity of “we” whenever claims about plural subjects are made. See, for instance, [Tanesini (2004](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0080), chapter 5) and [O’Connor (2008](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0063), chapter 4). [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
29. As is well known, the remarks that were posthumously published as *On Certainty* were written in the last eighteen months of Wittgenstein’s life, between 1949 and 1951. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
30. See [Moyal-Sharrock (2000)](#CBML_BIB_ch41_0060) for an in-depth discussion of this important difference between Wittgenstein and Quine. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)