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**Special Issue**  
**Groundless Grounds and Hinges.**  
**Wittgenstein's *On Certainty* within the Philosophical Tradition**  
***Edited by Begoña Ramón Cámara and Jesús Vega Encabo***

**Introduction: Groundless Grounds and Hinges.**  
**Wittgenstein's *On Certainty* within the Philosophical Tradition**  
**Begoña Ramón Cámara and Jesús Vega-Encabo**

When in 1969 Wittgenstein's remarks published under the title, chosen by the editors G. E. M. Anscombe and G. H. Von Wright, of *Über Gewißheit* (*On Certainty*, in English), they aroused some interest, but they were not the object of an analytical and systematic study.<sup>1</sup> In fact, it seemed to many that these remarks, otherwise never revised or corrected by their author, did not add much to what were then the main topics of interest to the scholars of the "second" Wittgenstein and his *Philosophical Investigations*, in particular the topics of the nature and method of philosophy, the notion of following a rule, and the so-called argument against private language. Moreover, Saul Kripke's reading of the *Philosophical Investigations* (1982), centred on rule-following, conditioned and guided, both positively and negatively, the critical literature on Wittgenstein for many years.

It is also worth noting that, in the eyes of some Wittgensteinians, the remarks of *On Certainty* might seem marginal or secondary in comparison with the philosophical work of the "second" Wittgenstein for at least two reasons. The first reason was that in these annotations Wittgenstein seemed to give ample space to epistemological questions (about knowledge, doubt, justification, etc.) that had had little weight and relevance with respect to his previous philosophising, which was, so to speak, of a logico-linguistic kind. The second reason was that these annotations seemed to move away from the critical-negative (or "therapeutic") method characteristic of the *Philosophical Investigations* (and, earlier, of the *Tractatus logico-philosophicus*). In terms of themes and attitude, the Wittgenstein of *On Certainty* seemed, in short, much less removed from the philosophical tradition than the Wittgenstein of the *Philosophical Investigations* was (or was thought to be). More particularly, many more arguments, or outlines of arguments, could be found in *On Certainty* than in the observations and descriptions of the *Philosophical Investigations* and their method based on language games.

Besides, what seemed difficult to do with respect to the Wittgenstein of the *Philosophical Investigations*, namely, to ascribe some philosophical label to him or to make him enter into some philosophical "ism", seemed easier to do with respect to the Wittgenstein of *On Certainty*. Indeed, the interpreters of *On Certainty* have often wondered, sometimes without much caution, whether the Wittgenstein of these remarks is a foundationalist or an anti-foundationalist, a sceptic (and, if so, what kind of sceptic: whether ancient or modern, whether Pyrrhonian or

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<sup>1</sup> However, in the course of the 1970s, 1980s and early 1990s a number of comprehensive or exhaustive works came to light that can still be read today with some interest and profit (cf., among others, Morawetz 1980, Svensson 1981, McGinn 1989, and Perissinotto 1991). We must also mention Wright 1985, which anticipates many of the themes of the later debate on the anti-scepticism of *On Certainty* and on "hinge epistemology".

Cartesian, and so on), or a convinced and radical anti-sceptic. But they have also asked, for example, whether he is a phenomenist or some kind of realist; or whether he is a pragmatist, and whether he is eventually a pragmatist in the sense of C. S. Peirce or of W. James. And one could go on recalling, for example, the naturalistic readings of *On Certainty* or the attempts to read in it premises and anticipations of contemporary enactivism or of the so-called “4E Cognitive Science”. This would explain the distrust of those scholars who have taken care to stress that Wittgenstein is not a philosopher that can be labelled and that his aim was never to defend any philosophical doctrine or theory. But it would also explain why *On Certainty* has ended up arousing the interest of a number of philosophers who, although they find it difficult to recognise themselves in the *Philosophical Investigations*, on the contrary, feel at home or feel an air of family, so to speak, in *On Certainty*.

Although *On Certainty* initially had difficulties in attracting the attention of Wittgenstein scholars, with the turn of the century this situation has changed radically,<sup>2</sup> and these late annotations have come to occupy a prominent place in Wittgenstein’s philosophical production, to the point that *On Certainty* has been considered to be Wittgenstein’s third masterpiece.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, there are today countless studies devoted to *On Certainty* and scholars who try to understand the overall meaning as well as the individual passages of this work, or who search in it for guidance and inspiration for their own philosophical work.

To give an idea of the place that this special issue of *Topoi. An International Review of Philosophy* occupies in this new appreciation of *On Certainty*, it is necessary to introduce a distinction between two kinds of approaches to that work. On the one hand, there are authors who, without worrying too much about the problem of how to place *On Certainty* in the wider context of Wittgenstein’s philosophy, have been inspired in various ways by that work to elaborate the essential lines of what is known as “Hinge Epistemology”,<sup>4</sup> or to seek in it guidelines for a new confutation (or dissolution) of scepticism.<sup>5</sup> And, on the other hand, there are others who, on the contrary, have been more concerned with examining *On Certainty* in relation to the rest of the Viennese thinker’s philosophy, insisting above all on the grammatical character of the observations of this work or on its critical-therapeutic strategy.<sup>6</sup>

As for the first kind of approach, there is nothing wrong, obviously, in using Wittgenstein for one’s own philosophical (epistemological, etc.) purposes, once it has been admitted that his purpose was probably not to formulate and solve epistemological problems, and once it has also been admitted that “Hinge Epistemology” is now evolving or developing on its own, independently of its Wittgensteinian roots.<sup>7</sup> After all, one might think that Wittgenstein could also have said about these late notes what he writes at nearly the end of the Preface to the

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<sup>2</sup> Especially since Stroll 1994, Moyal-Sharrock 2004a and 2004b, Coliva 2010 and Hamilton 2014.

<sup>3</sup> “A philosophical masterpiece comparable to the *Tractatus* and to the *Investigations*” (Stroll 2002:125; cf. also Moyal-Sharrock 2004a:10, n. 3).

<sup>4</sup> See the essays collected in Coliva and Moyal-Sharrock 2016.

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, Pritchard 2016 and the long and intense debate that followed, and Schönbaumsfeld 2017.

<sup>6</sup> See, in particular, Conant 1998, who argues for a “neo-Wittgensteinian” reading of *On Certainty*.

<sup>7</sup> Coliva 2015, for example, explicitly acknowledges that it is one thing to interpret Wittgenstein and quite another to draw inspiration from his remarks in order to elaborate one’s own “hinge epistemology”. See more recently Sandis and Moyal-Sharrock 2022.

*Philosophical Investigations*: “I should not like my writing to spare other people the trouble of thinking. But, if possible, to stimulate someone to thoughts of his own” (Wittgenstein 2009:4).

With respect to the second kind of approach, it is convenient to avoid a danger that seems to hang over many readings of Wittgenstein’s work, namely, the conviction that his philosophy is so unique and peculiar that any comparison with other philosophies only creates confusion and misunderstandings. In effect, in the critical literature on Wittgenstein, the temptation has often prevailed not only to explain Wittgenstein’s texts considering exclusively other texts by him, but also to view with suspicion those who, for their own philosophical elaboration, seek support in Wittgenstein. Thus, it is characteristic the almost aprioristic way, one might say, in which it has often been denied that Wittgenstein has anything in common with R. Carnap and, in general, with logical empiricism; or the insistence on stressing the radical differences between his thought and that of philosophers such as G. Ryle or J. L. Austin.<sup>8</sup> But it is also characteristic the suspicion with which attempts to link Wittgenstein to the philosophical tradition are viewed, almost as if such attempts were equivalent to detracting from the originality and genius of his philosophy. As regards *On Certainty* in particular, there is no lack of interpreters who, in the spirit just mentioned, have suggested that Moore and his famous essays “A Defence of Common Sense” and “Proof of an External World” (now in Moore 1959) were for Wittgenstein a mere pretext and not, as is now a common opinion among interpreters, an effective philosophical interlocutor who should indeed be criticised, but who also had something to teach.

The essays collected in this special issue of *Topoi. An International Review of Philosophy* aim to avoid, as its very title openly suggests, this tendency or temptation. Although we are aware of the peculiarity of Wittgenstein’s philosophical work and the complexity of his attitude towards the philosophical tradition,<sup>9</sup> we believe that it is important, precisely in order to understand his work and to appreciate it better, to compare and interact it with other ways of working in philosophy, whether current or historical. Our guiding idea is that it is not only useful or interesting, but somehow philosophically essential, to make Wittgenstein part of the complex vicissitudes of philosophy, as well as of sciences. This applies to the philosophy that preceded him, ancient and medieval as well as modern, and also to contemporary philosophy, in its various schools and articulations, from analytic philosophy<sup>10</sup> to phenomenology<sup>11</sup> or to

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<sup>8</sup> We are not suggesting that Wittgenstein was a neo-empiricist or an ordinary philosopher of language, but only that, if he is considered not to be one, it should be documented and proved. It is not enough to declare that Wittgenstein could only be, so to speak, Wittgenstein.

<sup>9</sup> As Moore recalls, in his lectures Wittgenstein asked at a certain point whether what he was doing could be called “philosophy”. His answer was that “it was not the same kind of thing as Plato or Berkeley had done, but we may feel that what he [Wittgenstein] was doing ‘takes the place’ of what Plato and Berkeley did, though it is really a different thing” (Moore 1959:305). Cf. also Moore 1959:322: “He [Wittgenstein] said that what he was doing was a ‘new subject’, and not merely a stage in a ‘continuous development’; that there was now, in philosophy, a ‘kink’ in the ‘development of human thought’, comparable to that which occurred when Galileo and his contemporaries invented dynamics; that a ‘new method’ had been discovered, as had happened when ‘chemistry was developed out of alchemy’; and that it was now possible for the first time that there should be ‘skilful’ philosophers, though of course there had in the past been ‘great’ philosophers”.

<sup>10</sup> As has been pointed out, Wittgenstein, who was long regarded together with Frege and Russell as one of the founding fathers of analytic philosophy, is nowadays more appreciated by phenomenologists, Heideggerians, etc., than by analytic philosophers, or at least by those analytic philosophers who are inclined towards Quine’s naturalism or who have “converted”, so to speak, to metaphysics or ontology. On the attitude of analytic philosophers towards Wittgenstein, see, for example, Hacker 1996 and Tripodi 2020.

<sup>11</sup> See Kuusela, Ometita and Uçan 2018.

Heidegger,<sup>12</sup> and to the various sciences, in particular the cognitive sciences and neurosciences,<sup>13</sup> with which philosophy today must measure itself. The guiding idea is, therefore, that Wittgenstein can be a serious interlocutor for other contemporary philosophies not in spite of his conception and practice of philosophy, but precisely because of them, and also that bringing to light the complex links of Wittgenstein's texts with the philosophical tradition not only responds to historical-philosophical requirements, but is also a way of enhancing or valuing the philosophical potential that they contain. These considerations also apply to *On Certainty*, a text which in some respects has stirred up (at least in the sense of having opened up new paths and perspectives) contemporary epistemology and which, as the essays in this issue show, is rich in ramifications and in suggestive or interesting links with the philosophical past and its present.

What we have just commented on explains the variety of essays collected in this issue. On the one hand, there are papers focused on a careful and conscious exegetical-analytical work of the remarks included in *On Certainty*. On the other hand, there are papers born from the conviction that historical-exegetical work is not an end in itself, but a means to a better approach to philosophical questions, both old and new. As it will be seen next, in our outline of the problems and contents of each of the essays, the questions from *On Certainty* dealt with in this issue are among the most classic and significant in philosophy: from the speculative problem of the beginning to that of rationality and its limits; from the problem of historiography and its propositions to that of religious belief. Just as varied are the philosophers and philosophical orientations discussed here: from Hegel to the pragmatist tradition of Ch. Peirce and W. James; from Th. Reid and J. H. Newman to the most influential exponents of contemporary epistemology from F. Dretske to E. Sosa. But in the background also appears the sceptical tradition, ancient and modern, and its presence in contemporary philosophy, and the way in which philosophy has approached the problem of foundation (and the lack of foundation).

In a long tradition of systematic philosophy, the problem of the ground seemed inseparable from a quest to establish a presuppositionless beginning of philosophical speculation. In his contribution to this volume, J. Mácha's "Hegel and Wittgenstein on Difficulties of Beginning at the Beginning" brings Hegel's approach to the problem of the beginning into dialogue with the suggestive Wittgensteinian remarks on this subject in *On Certainty*. According to Mácha, both authors establish a beginning to the logical series in both its objective and subjective moment. Although Wittgenstein almost certainly did not approach Hegel's philosophy directly, echoes could still be found in his work through his knowledge of Kierkegaard's critique of Hegel. The Wittgensteinian remark in which he reminds us of the difficulty of starting from the beginning and not trying to go beyond it (see *On Certainty* 471) (for instance, how to be sure that the beginning has no presuppositions) captures in full depth the problem of the beginning. Mácha offers us an exhaustive reconstruction of the Hegelian views on the problem and stresses some parallels in Wittgenstein's philosophy. The objective moment corresponds in Wittgenstein to certainties, to all that which cannot be doubted; the subjective moment (for example, from the point of view of the philosophising subject) consists in an arational decision that mimics the Hegelian resolution (*Entschluss*) to begin the logical

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<sup>12</sup> See, for example, Braver, L. 2012, and Egan, Reynolds and Wendland 2013.

<sup>13</sup> See, for example, the essays collected in Loughlin 2021.

series with pure being. Mácha connects both views through his interpretation of the nature of hinge propositions and rule-following. A rule, by itself, does not establish what its correct application is; in obeying the rule, we repeat, as it were, the original decision, without doubt. At the beginning we will find a way of acting that is groundless. This is also shown in the way in which something is accepted as a hinge proposition and how those propositions function as standards with which all language games begin. The arational decision that underlies any application of the rule is not free of certain commitments; on the contrary, they show our commitments to act, whose expression are the hinge propositions. Goethe's dictum ("In the beginning was the deed"), that returns again and again in this special issue, finds here its significance as a way to address the problem of the beginning and the problem of the ground.

If there is a point to which each of the articles in this volume turns, it is in the reading and re-reading of what have come to be called hinge propositions (which Hamilton calls Moorean propositions). It is needless to recall here the many recent debates about the nature of hinges, for, whatever they are (whether propositional or not, to mention the most common example of interpretative discrepancy), it cannot fail to be noted that they constitute certainties and act as a framework within which the rational pursuit and epistemic practices of providing grounds or reasons of any kind make sense. And again, irrespective of the types of hinges we may identify (for example, personal or impersonal), it is worth asking to what extent different fields of knowledge or human practice rely on characteristic hinges. Several articles in this volume seek to define the role of hinges in different fields of practice; thus we find articles examining the nature and role of religious, historical or mathematical hinges.

The development in recent years of hinge epistemology has been accompanied in several authors by a reconsideration of the Wittgensteinian remarks on religion from the point of view of hinges.<sup>14</sup> The idea is the following: there are certain religious convictions that function as hinges insofar as they can ground religious beliefs and significantly articulate the life of the believer without being themselves grounded. There are religious groundless grounds that are not mere arbitrary or irrational assumptions. In her article "Religious Hinges: Some Historical Precursors", A. Boncompagni offers different possible readings of how religious beliefs can constitute a special kind of hinges, relying above all on the pragmatist proposals of W. James and Ch. Peirce (although she reminds us of the antecedents that can be found in Th. Reid and J. H. Newman). The pragmatist reconstruction of religious hinges makes us realise that it may not be possible to offer a unified picture of their nature and role, for the religious beliefs that act as hinges are presumably groundless, instinctive and indubitable, but at the same time they are hypothetical and subject to the control of self-experimentation with one's own life. Besides, when one assents to such convictions, one is in a sense aware of the leap of faith and of the risk that one incurs by taking this leap of faith, an aspect one does not share with other hinges, which are implicit and unquestionable common-sense certainties. Maybe it makes sense to claim that there are religious hinges, which are neither supported by evidence nor irrational, but this does not mean that we should assimilate common-sense certainties to religious commitments.

But is it still possible to treat religious beliefs as rational, and are they really beliefs with propositional content? Different versions of quasi-fideism (recently defended by D. Pritchard inspired by a reading of Wittgenstein) hold that some of these beliefs (the most fundamental

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<sup>14</sup> For instance, Pritchard (2000, 2018, 2022).

ones) act as hinges and, to that extent, are to be treated as arational and as standards and grounds for other religious beliefs. In this, religious beliefs seem to be on a par with other ordinary beliefs of a non-religious kind, that is, insofar as they presuppose arational commitments. This seems to be the strategy of the particular form of quasi-fideism proposed by R. Vinten in his article “Wittgenstein, Quasi-Fideism, and Scepticism”. In it, he engages D. Pritchard and M. Gómez-Alonso in dialogue, examining the reasons for and against bringing fundamental religious beliefs closer or not to the hinge commitments of common sense. To do so, he proposes a non-propositional conception of religious hinges (and of hinges in general relying on the recent work of D. Moyal-Sharrock): they are primitive certainties, ungrounded commitments that constitute the logical or grammatical framework from which any other rational evaluation can make sense. And this is true again of the way standards function in our measurement practices.

One field in which to test again the role that these primitive certainties can play in our practices is that of historiography. A. Hamilton (“*On Certainty* on the Foundations of History as a Discipline”) invites us to explore how some historical propositions function as “a rule-like framework for judging”; what he calls Moorean propositions seem empirical propositions, but in fact function as a framework for all other empirical propositions to operate against, the background against which truth or falsehood is determined. Or, again, that framework of standards against which the operations of measurement are possible. Hamilton takes a holistic, dynamic and changing view of such propositions and insists on a structure proper to all practice in which matters that are judged and matters that serve to judge are distinguished. It is not by chance that in the various articles of this volume we are reminded again and again of a central remark of *On Certainty*, in which Wittgenstein stresses the need to identify which propositions we use to “measure up” other propositions, because “What would get judged by what here?”. This should draw attention to the fact that it is a condition of all practice that it shares the river-bedrock distinction of which Wittgenstein speaks in *On Certainty*. So, as Hamilton reminds us at the end of his article, it is not surprising that we find it again in aesthetics, artistic canons and standards of taste. Whatever the nature of the propositions (empirical as they seem to be in history, or normative as they are brought into play in art criticism), what is relevant is their role in a rational practice.

J. Martin, in his article “On Certainty, Change, and Mathematical Hinges”, re-embraces the river-bed metaphor as a way to develop a Wittgensteinian-inspired hinge epistemology of mathematical practices. In discussion with A. Coliva, who had questioned the existence of mathematical hinges, Martin argues that one can distinguish among mathematical propositions some of them that act as hinges, as ungrounded commitments that need to be in place in any practice where it makes sense to speak of correctness or incorrectness. In the case of mathematical practices, it would seem that the task is hopeless, since mathematical propositions seem to enjoy the same objective certainty and mathematical statements are justifiable by proofs. Martin gives several examples of possible mathematical hinges and exploits the river-bed analogy to point out that mathematical propositions are all riverbank, but that one can still distinguish in them between the hard rock of mathematical hinges and proven propositions that “shade out from there into the sand”. Interestingly, the author makes the Wittgensteinian framework work to account for mathematical practices and change in mathematics. The very identity of a particular inquiry is measured in terms of how some propositions, the hinges,

remain fixed, but as the analogy with the riverbed shows, hinges can be modified, which can help to illuminate change, progress and innovation in mathematics.

As could not be otherwise, epistemological questions dominate some of the papers included in this special issue. We have already pointed out that the weight of hinge epistemology in recent discussions is noticeable in several of them, both to accept some of its proposals and to qualify them on the basis of alternative readings of Wittgensteinian annotations. Recent hinge epistemology has sought to confront the radical sceptic from assumptions somewhat different from the traditional ones, but taking the sceptical challenge seriously. M. Gómez-Alonso in his article “Wittgenstein and the duty to believe” suggests that some versions of hinge epistemology have not addressed with sufficient radicality the skeptical problem. If one wants to advance a response, the first thing to do is to correctly understand what the normative structure of hinges is and what makes them groundless. Following Gómez-Alonso, a first move to do that requires to take seriously what he calls the phenomenology of the acceptance of hinges: hinges, if they are to guide our epistemic behaviour, require real assent. Moreover, in response to the sceptic, this assent cannot be arbitrary, nor can it be a natural, compulsive, animal attraction. What, then, is the commitment we must have towards the hinges, Gómez-Alonso asks. The answer cannot be found in the search for more foundations in the theoretical arena, so the normativity at stake in the case of the hinges cannot be epistemic. That is why the author appeals to a form of ethical normativity that reveals itself in the self-determination of agents and the rule of free agency. This idealist turn, so to speak, is necessary to account for the motto “In the beginning was the deed”: assent to the hinges is articulated as an approval of free agency, which does not depend on anything that founds it from the outside (as given) and which is revealed as the only way to conjure up any theoretical doubt. Epistemology, he concludes, has to take an ethical turn to resolve its impasses.

A very different tone—and conclusions in a different line—can be found in L. Perissinotto’s article “A Comfortable Sureness: Knowledge, Animality and Conceptual Investigations in Wittgenstein’s *On Certainty*”, since it takes as its starting point a rather methodological annotation in *On Certainty*, the desire to consider man “as an animal”, and a careful treatment of what Wittgenstein called a “comfortable sureness” referring to what we sometimes express with “I know”. Wittgenstein embarks on conceptual investigations in order to avoid as far as possible certain confusions arising from certain uses of terms. This is so, in *On Certainty*, in relation to the expression “I know”. There is an ordinary (epistemic) use which indicates that reasons, possible specific doubts and particular investigations are implied there. But there is also a logical use in which it is pointed out that what is said to be known functions more as a standard of measurement and not as a particular measurement. But Perissinotto is also concerned with accounting for the kind of sureness that we express in these usages and that is revealed as animalistic. He also suggests that this does not justify a naturalistic reading of Wittgenstein’s philosophy and proposes that this observation functions more as a methodological precept than as a thesis. This precept helps us to see how there are certain facts that are embedded in the foundations of all action and all thought, in such a way that they constitute part of who we are, something that considering the human being as a primitive being with instinct, as an animal, helps us to see. That is the sense in which some propositions that are at the foundation of action and thought are groundless, and in them we have sureness.



The sceptical problem is addressed more directly in S. Sunday Grève's article "Lunacy and Scepticism". The paper turns to the relation of the Wittgensteinian proposals in *On Certainty* to Moore's arguments against scepticism. It is suggested, first, that the so-called Moorean and neo-Moorean strategies do not capture the essence of Moore's anti-sceptical reaction. Once a distinction is made between Moore's rejection of idealism in "Proof of an External World" and his response to the scepticism of the external world, the closeness of Moore's and Wittgenstein's anti-sceptical strategies is less surprising. In fact, the author argues that Wittgenstein in *On Certainty* provides the necessary materials to complete Moore's anti-sceptical argument. Every doubt about the existence of the external world can be proved false; and everything that would appear to be a doubt turns out to be nonsense. The sceptical challenge amounts to nonsense, for it must rely on asserting something that is logically impossible. In Moore, to have the sensory experiences and memories one has, and yet be dreaming, is logically impossible (as concluded in his article "Certainty"). In Wittgenstein, leaving aside his considerations of dreams in *On Certainty*, the lack of intelligibility and the logical impossibility show themselves in the strangeness of the kind of mistake one would make if one were willing to deny common sense propositions about objects in the external world. We cannot talk here of a mistake; it is rather a mental disturbance. It is a logical matter that denying such statements does not make sense, so that here the possibility of a mistake is as such a logical impossibility. The result is an original proposal that serves to bring the figures of Moore and Wittgenstein closer together.

What then of Cartesian sceptical hypotheses, for instance the one that drives the dreaming argument? How are they to be dealt with? One option is to declare them as nonsense, too. That is the point of A. Segatto's article "Wittgenstein on Dreaming and Skepticism". Starting from the austere conception of nonsense defended by J. Conant, and defending the continuity between the *Tractatus logico-philosophicus* and Wittgenstein's later work on this, the author argues that scepticism is nonsense and, as such, cannot be refuted. Sceptical arguments themselves are also devoid of sense. Segatto formulates Wittgenstein's worries with the dreaming argument by comparing "There are objects" or "There are physical objects" with "I am dreaming". The first of these utterances is meaningless, not least because in the context imagined by Wittgenstein no meaning has been determined. And this, it is argued in the paper, is also the case with the utterance "I am dreaming". When one says it when dreaming, the situation in which it is uttered is not suitable for its use. It is unintelligible for one to assert "I am dreaming" on such an occasion. This explains, in turn, why sceptical doubt is also unintelligible. In brief, it cannot be taken for granted that the sceptic's words mean anything in that context of use.

In the last article included in this special issue, "Caught in the Language-Game", N. Venturinha takes a more determined look at contemporary epistemological debates. By reconstructing how epistemological reflections have been gaining importance in Wittgenstein's philosophy since the 1930s, he suggests that the Viennese author had already anticipated such substantial debates as the internalism-externalism of justification and knowledge, as well as some of the responses to scepticism that have been offered since then. Venturinha argues that the way out of this dichotomy is to adopt an infallibilist conception of knowledge that is already outlined in the way Wittgenstein considers that we are always trapped in one language game or another. The idea is simple and apparently very effective: when we are involved in a language

game, whether we can identify meaningful questions and doubts will depend on whether there are already propositions free of doubt. Thus, the very nature of language games favours infallibilism. What is really interesting is that if this is so, the different strategies in recent hinge epistemology that try to explain how hinges work epistemologically or their particular nature does no longer seem necessary; it is enough to remember how within every language game doubt will always be subsidiary and that the most primitive thing will be a reaction. Interestingly, the Goethe's dictum in Faust, "In the beginning was the deed" appears here under a new light: Wittgenstein would not be here pointing to the groundless normative structure of free agency, as in M. Gómez-Alonso, or to an arational resolution, as in J. Mácha's paper, but to our most primitive modes of action. This is maybe the reason why we find it difficult to realise the groundlessness of our belief or to begin at the beginning or to understand the status of the grounds. But once we are caught up in the language-game and accept the "infallibilist stance" they imply, the task will always be to explain how we are able to achieve knowledge and how we engage in practices of inquiry.

This reconstruction of the contents of the essays collected in this issue of *Topoi. An International Review of Philosophy* should confirm what was said at the beginning of this introduction in order to make explicit the intentions that motivated the editors and the spirit that, so to speak, animated them. On the one hand, we believe that the authors felt committed to tackling Wittgenstein's text with all the necessary exegetical acumen, adding new pieces to the history of its interpretations and attempting to unravel some of its hardest and most resistant problematic knots. From this point of view, the present issue will certainly appeal to all those who are interested in a better and deeper understanding of this "third masterpiece" of Wittgenstein and the meaning and implications of the different interpretative options that are currently in the field. In short, it belongs, in its own right, to the critical literature on Wittgenstein. But, from another point of view, although by no means antagonistic, this issue is not only, or even exclusively, addressed to Wittgenstein scholars or to 'Wittgensteinians'. What the various essays collected here seek to show is, in fact, that important philosophical stimuli can be derived from *On Certainty*, and that serious attention to this late Wittgensteinian text in its relations to the philosophical tradition must be present in those who today move through the complex and rugged terrain of contemporary philosophical thought.<sup>15</sup>

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