

CRITICAL NOTICE

Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to
Wittgenstein and *On Certainty*
By Andy Hamilton
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First published in 1969 (1), Wittgenstein's *On Certainty* (OC) received an early review in the following year from one of the work's own editors, G.H. von Wright. In a short paper entitled 'Wittgenstein On Certainty' from 1970 (2) he succinctly presents some of its most important ideas:

In every situation where a claim to knowledge is being established, or a doubt settled, or an item of linguistic communication (information, order, question) understood, a bulk of propositions already stand fast, are taken for granted (von Wright, *Ibid.*, 171).

Emphasising that these propositions 'stand fast' in that they form a kind of 'system' which acts, in Wittgenstein's words, as the 'point of departure' for what we can legitimately claim to *know* or *not* to know, von Wright refers his reader to OC § 105 when making his further claim that it is precisely because of this that the concept of *knowledge* cannot itself apply to those statements which are included in the system (*Ibid.*) von Wright thinks of these as a 'pre-knowledge'. Or perhaps reference to a *certainty* (OC § 511) behind the *practice* of judging would be better, given that this term is not Wittgenstein's. For von Wright, that *certainty* is expressed through fragments of a 'world-picture' underlying or 'standing fast' behind ordinary knowledge claims. Yet that 'pre-knowledge' is not *propositional* at all. It is a *praxis*.

Consequently, if justifying evidence comes to an end, then that end cannot be a kind of *seeing*, but consists in our *acting*. It is this that lies at the bottom of the language-game, (OC § 204, and also § 110, § 229, and § 402). If I do not doubt that I have a body, and if this, as Moore would put it, is a fact that I *know* for certain, then the genuine reason for this, as von Wright's Wittgenstein presents it, is that this fact is reflected 'in innumerable things I say and do, and refrain from doing' (von Wright, *Ibid.*):

Such as complaining of headache or of pain in my leg, avoiding collision with other bodies, not putting my hand in the fire or throwing myself out

of the window as if nothing was going to hurt me (*Ibid.*)

On von Wright's assessment, it is within this framework of certainties in his *behaviour* that he learns about his body, the names given to its parts and also about his bodily sensations *etc.* This general point is reflected much later on within the interpretation of *On Certainty* provided by Daniele Moyal-Sharrock (3), who argues that what 'philosophers have traditionally called basic beliefs, and what Wittgenstein alludes to as "hinge-propositions", are merely heuristic, or artificial verbalizations of certainties that can *only* show themselves - *in* what we say and do':

The hinge certainty verbalized as: 'I have a body' is a disposition of a living creature which manifests itself *in her acting in the certainty of having a body.....*This occurrence of her certainty resembles an instinctive reaction, not a tacit belief (Moyal-Sharrock, *Ibid.*, 93).

This, according to Moyal-Sharrock, is comparable to a lion's certainty of having a body as manifested in *acting embodied*, although in the human person it can also manifest itself in the 'verbal references I make to my body'. She illustrates this point with the example of 'My back is sore' as an ordinary factual proposition 'which uses the hinge "I have a body" as a grammatical, not a propositional underpinning' (*Ibid.*, 99, Endnote 40).

If von Wright's paper can be seen to anticipate certain later non-propositional interpretations of what counts as a 'hinge-proposition', he may also be thought to have been rather prescient in his recognition that Wittgenstein's reflections on Moore's infamous claims about what he *knew* for certain, have also been taken to have equally important consequences for the philosophical idea that one might legitimately be *sceptical* about the existence of an 'external world':

Through geophysical investigations we may come to know that the earth has existed, say, for at least 300 billion years - or that it could not have existed for more than 500 billion years.....But in all the grounds which we could give for, or against, these scientific propositions it would be presupposed - though not in the form of a geophysical

hypothesis - that the earth has existed for many, that is, 'for a good many' years past (Cf. OC § 138). (von Wright, *Ibid.*, 172).

According to von Wright, the implication here is that the 'problem of the existence of the external world...is in fact solved before it *can be* raised', for in order to raise it we must first acquire the notion of an *external world*. But to do this requires that we become acquainted with a 'huge number of facts' at least some of which will 'stand fast' for us in just that sense which presupposes 'the existence of an external world'. According to von Wright, this shows that Moore's famous gesture with his hands 'was no "proof" of a contingent conclusion from contingent premisses', but rather a recognition, albeit misleadingly expressed, that our very notion of an *external world* requires that we take certain 'truths' (OC § 56, § 82, § 308) for granted. As von Wright puts it, 'Moore's "common sense" propositions...have the form of experiential propositions but perform the function of logical propositions or rules' (OC § 56. § 82, § 308) (*Ibid.*, 173).

Anthony Kenny in his Chapter 'Of Scepticism and Certainty' from 1973 (4) echoes this conclusion in the course of claiming that Wittgenstein is conducting a three-cornered argument with Moore and the Cartesian sceptic. Doubt makes sense within a particular language-game, but universal doubt outwith the context of any particular language-game 'is impossible', which is as much as to say that it makes no sense (Kenny, *Ibid.*, 161). Referring to Wittgenstein's belief that Moore's claim to *know* such and such is really a misguided attempt to point towards propositions which have a peculiar logical role in the system of our empirical propositions (OC §§ 136 - 138), Kenny, following von Wright, states that these propositions form part of our 'world picture' insofar as they underlie, for Wittgenstein, all of our actions and our thoughts (OC 411) (Kenny, *Ibid.*, 171).

Norman Malcolm, in his Chapter 'Certainty' (5) follows Kenny in comparing Wittgenstein's treatment of the concepts of *knowledge* and *certainty* to that of Descartes; and although his account of *On Certainty* is not as clearly focussed as those of von Wright and Kenny, he does recognise the importance and originality of the work's ideas. The same cannot be said for A.J. Ayer's reading in his Chapter 'Knowledge and Certainty' from his book on *Wittgenstein* (6), because Ayer simply

refuses to engage with the thought that there may be 'propositions of grammar', distinct from purely empirical propositions, which can be said to be *certain* in that they 'stand fast' for us in such a way that our awareness of their 'truth' is an entirely non-epistemic matter. Ayer treats together 'I know that here is my hand' and 'I know that this is red', as examples about the truth of which we are certain. It is, however, worth pointing out that whereas we do not identify our sensations by criteria, and for this reason cannot have *knowledge* of them, the reason for saying that I am *certain* that here is my hand, given that there *are* criteria by which I identify my hand, is that this statement has in this strictly *philosophical* context the 'special role' that allows it to 'stand fast' for us because it does *not* involve a claim to knowledge. Ayer will have none of this:

I have conceded that it may nearly always be pointless and possibly misleading for me to say such things as 'I know that I am seeing red' or 'I know that these are my hands', but I have tried to show that this in no way entails that what I am saying in these cases is not empirically true (Ayer, *Ibid.*, 117).

On this view, the statement that I *know* that these are my hands may be said to be genuine on the grounds that it is so obviously true as not to be worth uttering ; and this is *because* it is being 'used' to express a perfectly valid empirical claim. Yet that claim, a point which Ayer fails to engage with, is now being made outwith any *genuine* context of use, where a context of use for this kind of example would be one, say, in which an ordinary question had arisen whether these hands were mine or someone else's. As an example, von Wright cites a case in which his hands are torn off in an accident, so that there is genuine question whose hands they are; or I can imagine that there might be circumstances in which I find it difficult to identify which of two pairs of hands I can see poking above the bed covers is really mine if, under local anaesthetic, I cannot feel them.

Yet, even if indirectly, Ayer is drawing our attention here to the fact that the role envisaged for the so-called 'hinge-propositions' of *On Certainty* is a peculiar one, in that it has nothing to do with any ordinary context of use of this kind. Consequently, from the perspective of at least one

conception of what ordinary language philosophy ought to be, this use is a strictly *philosophical* one in a sense that Wittgenstein can be understood in the *Philosophical Investigations* to have expunged. He might even be seen to be freely admitting as much when he imagines, in that very famous example OC § 467, that he is sitting with a philosopher in the garden who keeps repeating ‘I know that that’s a tree’. Far from being insane, as anyone suddenly coming upon this situation may be prone to suppose, this individual is only participating in a *philosophical* discussion. He would not be participating in such a discussion if, say, his statement was a rejoinder in an ordinary context of use to someone who was insisting that what they were looking at was not a real tree but a plastic replica, or a realistic portrayal of a tree on a cleverly positioned theatrical backdrop.

But this raises a further question about the extent to which the Wittgenstein of *On Certainty* may really be ‘doing philosophy’ in a way in which the Wittgenstein of the *Philosophical Investigations* is definitely not: if the method of the *Investigations* is therapeutic, a way of dissolving philosophical problems completely through the identification of misleading pictures *etc.*, instead of providing them with novel *philosophical* answers, then a question arises about a possible change in the direction of Wittgenstein’s thinking in his final years. This bears upon the more general question whether we are to agree with Daniele Moyal-Sharrock, for example, that *On Certainty* breaks new ground and points towards a ‘Third Wittgenstein’ (7) who makes a revolutionary contribution to epistemology, one which, as Avrum Stroll expresses it, ‘is the most important contribution to the theory of knowledge since *The Critique of Pure Reason*’ (8).

It is against this background, together with the publication, especially in more recent years, of a number of new volumes about *On Certainty* (9), that we can assess the welcome appearance of Andy Hamilton’s new book. The work is divided effectively into two parts: the first seven chapters reflect on Wittgenstein’s oeuvre in general, the content of *On Certainty*, his idea of a world-picture and his treatment of Moore’s claims to *know*, *etc.*, whilst the remainder of the book concerns itself with the significance of *On Certainty* for scepticism in general, but especially within the context of 20th century epistemology. This gives the book a rather complex structure, and any reader may be given

to wonder whether it might not have been less complex than it actually is, and whether a great deal of the material in the second part might not have been considered within the first part, especially if we reflect that the topic of scepticism is only one aspect, and not necessarily the most important aspect, of *On Certainty*. Despite the fact that von Wright's essay is now nearly 50 years old, it still manages within a very short compass to explain succinctly why the book is important. von Wright also successfully raises the specific questions that have continued to stimulate most of those commentators who have followed him. Andy Hamilton is only too well aware of the complex structure that he has provided for his book. Regarding *On Certainty* itself:

It is relatively uncrafted material, that Wittgenstein did not live to re-work and structure. Yet it has over-arching themes, and was presented as a continuous publication by his editors, who also gave it its title. It is difficult to impose a structure, and so this has been a very difficult *Guidebook* to organise. Questions are examined from different angles in the light of the developing discussion. Appropriately for a book on Wittgenstein's philosophy, the *Guidebook* raises as many questions as it answers (*Ibid.*, Preface xiv).

This Preface highlights what Hamilton calls '*Moorean propositions*', those truisms that help to make up the largely 'unspoken beliefs' of an individual's or of a society's belief-system, one that forms Wittgenstein's 'world-picture'. Familiar examples of these truisms like 'The earth is very old', 'I have hands', and 'I have not been far from the surface of the earth' appear to be empirical propositions, yet are immune from doubt. A puzzlingly diverse collection, according to Hamilton, these apparently empirical truths ought to be distinguished for this reason from the philosophical claims made by sceptics and their opponents about the existence or non-existence of *external objects*, a distinctively philosophical concept. Hamilton follows von Wright by treating scepticism according to Wittgenstein as something which is self-undermining, largely because knowledge-claims take place within a system of propositions which 'stand fast' insofar as they

form the framework within which genuine claims to knowledge can be questioned or confirmed (*Ibid.*, xv).

Andy Hamilton adopts a stand against ahistorical approaches to Wittgenstein's work, and argues for 'an interpretation that is moderately Analytic, combative, therapeutic and reconstructive' (*Ibid.*, xvii), no doubt on the assumption that this combination fails to generate a contradiction in terms. The first Chapter on 'Wittgenstein's Philosophical Development and Method' begins with a survey of the kinds of considerations already raised by von Wright, and reaches the conclusion (*Ibid.*, 6) that one of *On Certainty's* key insights may be '*that propositions that appear to function empirically are in fact framework propositions or rules*'.

Treating Wittgenstein's rejection of 'metaphysics' as central to his entire philosophy, Hamilton sees Wittgensteinian therapy at work throughout *On Certainty*, 'despite the suggestions of some commentators' (*Ibid.*, 11), and this is especially so in the treatment of Moore's claims to knowledge, because what 'appear' to be empirical propositions are not 'really' making empirical claims. According to Hamilton, 'The "therapy" here involves working on the initial formulation in order to uncover the real problem or claim beneath' (*Ibid.*, 12). Whether or not this constitutes 'therapy' is really a matter of terminology, even if one is prepared to accept that propositions that have the appearance of empirical propositions may not be functioning as empirical propositions at all. There is, ultimately, something rather problematic about this idea, especially when it is realised that their functioning *as* rules occurs only within a *philosophical* context, and not within any quite ordinary context of use where day-to-day considerations are paramount.

Nevertheless, and on a more positive note, Hamilton claims that 'The sceptic's challenge, and the search for foundations of knowledge, is one of the many long-standing philosophical problems that result from confusion in our use of language' (*Ibid.*, 12); and this point, followed by a few diversionary pages that discuss Kant, Locke and Hume, is encapsulated in the thought that 'most philosophers up to and perhaps including Moore had assumed that we know what it is to doubt that I have hands, or that there is an external world' (*Ibid.*, 15). The Wittgenstein of

On Certainty succeeds in undermining the debate between Moore and the sceptic. Hamilton is led to say that 'many philosophers have resented his fundamental criticism of their practices' (*Ibid.*).

The final section of this first chapter, '1.4 Wittgenstein's Originality and the Question of a Distinct Final Period', raises the question whether, with Stroll, *On Certainty* ought to be regarded as a work in which the therapeutic thrust of the *Investigations* is much diminished, or in which, with Grayling, Wittgenstein finally acknowledges the legitimacy of philosophy as an enterprise (*Ibid.*, 19). Hamilton's answer is that 'Wittgenstein's entire later philosophy, not just an alleged final phase - is epistemological through and through' (*Ibid.*, 20), although this claim admittedly depends on extending our notion of what is 'epistemological' well beyond what Descartes would have thought appropriate, an admission that allows Hamilton to draw the conclusion that there is no justification for saying that *On Certainty* presents us with 'a distinct final phase'. If philosophy is an activity - an activity involving therapy - rather than a body of doctrine, and if Wittgenstein always agonised over how useful or destructive the activity of 'philosophising' can actually be, then *On Certainty* continues the therapeutic thrust of the *Investigations*, and even of earlier work as well (*Ibid.*). The issues here are again partly terminological, although they also partly depend on how closely the method of *On Certainty*, subject to its highly provisional status as a finished work, can be seen to echo that of the *Investigations*; and on this point Hamilton directs us to *OC* § 31, § 33, and § 37, all of which draw our attention to ways in which ordinary language in a philosophical context is being plainly misused.

Chapter 2, 'Enduring Philosophical Motifs in *On Certainty*', begins by relating the 'rule-like' nature of 'Moorean propositions' to certain general themes of Wittgenstein's work, and claims that to treat these as empirical propositions results in 'nonsense'. Insofar as they succeed in expressing the 'presuppositions of our language-games and practices' (*Ibid.*, 23), our practices can be said to 'rest on or assume these "certainties"'. The remainder of the chapter expands on certain general Wittgensteinian themes, beginning with '2.1 It is Only in Use that the Proposition has its Sense', where it is emphasised that the context of utterance 'of words' serves to make 'an essential

contribution' to their meanings, and so, presumably, to the meanings of the statements which the sentences in which they occur are used to make (*Ibid.*, 27).

Wittgenstein's notion of a *language-game* is claimed to be developed considerably in *On Certainty*, and this theme is related to the fundamental role of action as the basis for our language-games, which themselves 'belong to a broader phenomenon that Wittgenstein terms a *form of life*' (*Ibid.*, 29). However, Wittgenstein does not regard philosophy itself as a language-game, and it 'could be that he learned from experience that philosophical language is confused. Wittgenstein would not say that there is a sharp boundary between everyday and philosophical language, but it is a definite and important one' (*Ibid.*, 30), a distinction said to be a central topic of Andy Hamilton's book.

This is clearly problematic, but things improve with the discussion in two related sections of the idea of 'agreement in judgements', where action within a social context is central to Wittgenstein's general methodology. As Hamilton puts it, 'agreement in the judgement "This is a hand" - speakers agree that this is a hand - underlies the determination of the meaning of "hand" in English' (*Ibid.*, 32). This has the consequence that any speaker of English who in normal circumstances expresses doubt that this is a hand, would be thought either to have an inadequate command of the language or to be defective in their 'cognitive or sensory functioning'.

The discussion of rule-following in the next section, in which Hamilton is forced to admit that his intention to offer a generally agreed interpretation regrettably fails, can hardly in the space allocated to it do much to further the discussion. This is equally true of the inadequate treatment of the 'Private Language Argument' in section 2.6, where 'private ostensive definition yields no standard for correctly applying a term'. Here Wittgenstein is said to insist that no 'private check' could do the work of the required 'public check' in the use of a term like 'pain', with the consequence that the distinction between being right and seeming right has been annihilated. But it is evidently insufficient merely to repeat the wording of a passage like *Investigations* § 258 in any admittedly brave attempt to come to some understanding of what message this and related passages are actually conveying.

Having defined grammatical propositions towards the end of the Chapter as those that show which moves in the language-games make sense, Hamilton is led to ask whether his Moorean propositions, understood non-epistemically, can be included in this category, and concludes that because the latter 'are more like presuppositions of a practice' it would be a mistake to assimilate them to the former, or indeed to regard them as 'senseless' (*Ibid.*, 45). Moorean propositions, of course, *are* sometimes spoken of as 'grammatical', purely to distinguish them from empirical propositions. Yet, even if the term 'senseless' is being used with a technical meaning here, the importance already attributed by Hamilton, following Wittgenstein, to 'Moorean propositions' within *On Certainty*, an importance that is not actually being put in doubt when they are said to be 'difficult to make use of' (OC 203) or to cause 'the feeling of saying something funny' (OC 233), leads one to ask why in this role, as against Moore's own, one should even question whether they have sense. This makes Hamilton's comment that Wittgenstein does not say that they are senseless or nonsensical, rather otiose. This is immediately followed by an example whose relevance to the issue in hand seems questionable:

When uttered in the twenty-first century, 'I know that the Earth has existed for a long time' is taken for granted, while in the late eighteenth century, it was a contested empirical proposition' (*Ibid.* 45).

Because it is not clear whether this statement is being made within a scientific context - even Newton's famous thought experiment in the *Principia* could provide an estimate of 50,000 years for a molten body of the Earth's size to cool - it is not certain what point it is being used to make, beyond perhaps the obvious one made in OC §§ 95 - 99 that what might once have been thought impossible can become an accepted scientific fact. (*Cf.* OC 111: 'I know that I have never been on the Moon'). With a little thought, these anomalies could have been avoided and, indeed, the entire Chapter leaves the impression that within the space allocated to its themes, it is attempting to achieve far too much, and for that reason could even be dispensed with altogether without any obvious detriment to the book as a whole.

Chapter 3, 'Reading *On Certainty*: Text and Work' begins with a brief biographical and historical

survey of how the writing of *On Certainty* was prompted by Wittgenstein's discussions with Norman Malcolm in 1947 at Ithaca about Moore's article 'Defending Common Sense', an account already provided even more briefly by Anscombe and von Wright in their Preface to the book itself. Begun we are told around Christmas 1949, the work as a whole was completed on 27th April 1951, two days before his death; and it is, evidently, together with his treatment of colour *etc.*, one of the most sustained and dedicated attempts within his entire oeuvre to comprehensively cover a single topic.

Hamilton takes time to ask and attempt to answer the general question whether *On Certainty* ought to be regarded as a philosophical work, given its provisional nature as a set of unrevised notes, and is prepared to accept with Baldwin (*Ibid.* 54), that 'the freshness of its thoughts' together with the 'power and originality' of its thinking provide it with a directness not found 'in Wittgenstein's more crafted writings'. This leads Hamilton to conclude that 'the distinctively open quality' of Wittgenstein's work in general, resulting from the difficulties he had with 'completed philosophical products', together with his view of philosophy as therapy, leads to an 'aesthetics of imperfection' where the contribution the reader makes is greater than in more 'prescriptive or "perfectionist" aesthetics' (*Ibid.*). The remainder of the Chapter discusses more strictly literary questions with regard to Wittgenstein's work, and reflects on its irony and dialogue form, an irony claimed to be 'associated with a tragic vision, a recognition of the essential plurality and therefore conflict of values' (*Ibid.* 59).

The four Parts of *On Certainty* is the topic of Chapter 4, 'Synopsis of *On Certainty*', parts which the editors mark off in the text with a line across the page. The reason for these divisions is chronological. The numbering to § 676 is also a decision of the editors. The Parts are: OC §§ 1 - 65; §§ 66 - 193; §§ 194 - 299; and §§ 300 - 676. The most remarkable fact about the writing of these sections is that while Parts 1 - 3 were written between Christmas 1949 and late September 1950, Part 4 containing more than half of the remarks was completed in under two months between 10th March and 27th April 1951, two days before his death. While this Chapter offers a useful precis of the content of each of these 4 sections, and a brief discussion of certain selected passages in each, there is nothing here

that is not also available in much more detail elsewhere in the book, a point confirmed by Hamilton with his several references throughout to the more comprehensive discussions about particular topics to be found elsewhere.

Chapter 5 on 'Moorean Common Sense' is dedicated to a discussion of Moore's Common Sense truisms. Hamilton comments, following Baldwin, that from the perspective of *On Certainty*, Moore appears in the book in two roles - 'as an eccentric who reassures others, pointlessly, that he knows some obvious truths; and as the philosopher who uses these strange knowledge-claims in a misguided attempt to refute scepticism' (*Ibid.*, 74). What Hamilton calls 'common sense realism' is captured by Moore in a large number of claims about what he *knows*. It is not entirely clear whether when enumerating them Moore is committing himself to a common sense *metaphysics* in which there 'really' are *physical objects* 'behind' his sense-data and *other minds* 'behind' other people's bodies. Are these other minds to be regarded as hidden ghostly entities in whose existence Moore wholeheartedly believes, but the reality of which Moore's sceptic may feel he can legitimately put in question ?

Hamilton usefully reminds us that Moore certainly does make a distinction between what he calls the *ordinary meaning* of our words and sentences, and a philosophical *analysis* of that meaning, and that Moore analyses his 'truisms' in terms of sense-data, so that there really is 'an objective, mind-independent, physical reality that we come to know through our sense-data' (Hamilton, *Ibid.* 83), although Moore does admit that this is an analysis with which he is not entirely satisfied. This point was made by Ayer (10), and Hamilton includes a section in this Chapter illustrating how Moore's common sense truisms are to be distinguished from both Descartes' and Ayer's examples of the kinds of statements which are 'immune to error'.

The two longest Chapters in this book are each over 40 pages, and the next Chapter 6 is one of them: 'Wittgenstein's Account of Moorean Propositions' begins by asking whether Wittgenstein's new account of Moorean propositions as 'fossilised' empirical propositions that have acquired the status of rules, is superior to Moore's view of them as 'hypotheses' which embody claims to certain *knowledge*. The value of Moore's misguided treatment for Wittgenstein is, as Hamilton sees it, that he is led to

question the very concept of an empirical proposition. Hamilton's Wittgenstein finds that the divide between the empirical and the *a priori* is not sharp, a claim which, agreeing with Rhees, 'may be a genuinely new feature of *On Certainty*' (*Ibid.*, 87). One cannot say *how* one knows the truth of these Moorean propositions, and one does not have any *evidence* for them: they are, rather, beyond the route of enquiry because they are non-epistemic in the sense that Hamilton has already alluded to. Yet Hamilton feels that it is possible to make too much of this point:

However, one should not exaggerate the role of 'non-propositional' certainty in *On Certainty* - as Stroll does when he suggests that Wittgenstein first held that Moorean propositions are certain, but then decided that this certainty applied more primitively to behaviour. The limited truth in what Stroll says is that Moorean propositions are not normally articulated (*Ibid.*, 100).

Hamilton believes that outwith the post-Cartesian project of establishing foundations of human knowledge, 'talk of foundationalism makes little sense', and for this reason takes both Stroll and Moyal-Sharrock to task because they both talk in terms of foundations. It is difficult not to see this as nothing more than a dispute over the application of a term, given that Hamilton himself states that 'Wittgenstein is not looking for certain or justificatory foundations of *knowledge*, but *non-epistemic* foundations of our linguistic practices' (*Ibid.* 101). That it is the *general* ability to make judgements that rests on Moorean propositions, is not therefore a point that his 'opponents' here are going to disagree with, and for that reason it would seem that Hamilton is making too much of the claim that in 'traditional, atomistic foundationalism.....foundations are particular to each judgement' (*Ibid.*, 102).

A similar dispute arises later on in the Chapter in Section 6.6 (*Ibid.*, 109) in which Hamilton defends his 'dynamic conception' of Moorean propositions against the 'static conception' that he attributes to Daniele Moyal-Sharrock. However, given the broadly informal nature of the very idea of a *Moorean Proposition*, a rather more pragmatic approach to the entire subject is surely advisable.

This is borne out by a reading of the passages under dispute, because both protagonists can be understood to be making claims which are not as far apart as Hamilton appears to believe. According to Moyal-Sharrock, 'it is not the same *proposition*, but an identical string of words, or *sentence*, that can at one time serve as a hypothesis and at another, as a rule' (as quoted, *Ibid.* 109). What Hamilton is apparently complaining about here is that 'Moyal-Sharrock makes it seem that an empirical proposition goes out of use, while simultaneously and fortuitously a Moorean proposition appears' (*Ibid.*, 113). Yet Hamilton presents his answer to the 'misleading *doppleganger*' presentation of Moyal-Sharrock in the following way:

It is more accurate to say that they are *the same sentence*, with two different kinds of use. As Coliva writes, 'Nobody has ever been to the moon' and 'I know....here is my hand' can either express an empirical proposition...or a non-empirical [Moorean] one, in different conditions (*Ibid.*)

But if we adopt the more pragmatic approach that the entire subject demands, it becomes hard to see what is separating these two accounts. Hamilton also gives himself considerable trouble in the next section over the issue of the bi-polarity of Moorean propositions, for if, retaining their status as *Moorean Propositions*, as distinct from empirical propositions, there cannot be any circumstances in which they could be discovered to be false, then we may very well feel that there is a problem about their significance, and this surely must bear upon their role as propositions which are *certain*:

The safest and most accurate interpretation is that Moore's sentences look like propositions.....but are neither true nor false, and cannot be compared to the facts. They have a use, and are still somehow propositions; they are neither senseless nor nonsensical. Like grammatical propositions, their use is rule-like, but unlike such propositions, they outline a practice or discipline such as history or geology, rather than a language-game such as that involving 'know' or 'pain' (*Ibid.*, 118).

If it seems that Andy Hamilton is struggling here, this is because he is searching for a formal definition of a concept that is being used in an informal way. If Hamilton's Moorean propositions are important, and if they embody the *certainty* that Wittgenstein attributes to them, then we would like to believe that in some sense they do have something to say in a strictly *philosophical* context about our relationship to the world around us; and it has already been amply illustrated how, although their character is non-epistemic, that relationship might be described. Yet philosophers may prefer to shy away from saying that because of the informal nature of their applications, these propositions manage to perform their roles just so long as we do not ask too many questions about them. Yet if we cannot accept this, we are going to find ourselves in the position that Hamilton finds himself in here, that of struggling to explain how to give a formal account of their nature as 'rules'.

There is, in fact, a perfectly ordinary application for propositions which can be said to play a 'special role' within a practice, and although that use is inevitably and unproblematically epistemic, it can throw light on Hamilton's use of the term 'Moorean proposition'. The boundary between this 'Moorean' use and a 'purely' empirical use may *in some cases* be indistinct, *e.g.*, OC §§ 95 - 99. Where the use is purely empirical, however, propositions *do* take on 'special roles' in a context of use *only* relative to the aims and purposes adopted within that context. Significantly, however, Hamilton only too readily speaks as if *his* 'special roles' are a *ready-made* feature of 'our' pre-existing historical world-picture:

.....if one doubts the existence of such a well-attested personage as Napoleon, what historical claim could not be questioned ? Napoleon's existence cannot really be 'attested' to ; in Wittgenstein's metaphor, it lies outside the route of enquiry, part of our historical world-picture
(*Ibid.*, 122. Cf. OC §§ 185 - 188).

Yet it remains a matter of historical *fact* that Napoleon existed at all, that he lost at Waterloo, and was finally exiled to St. Helena. Indeed, to someone previously unacquainted with the political history of the period, an acquisition of *knowledge* about Napoleon would allow this person to claim that he was gradually becoming familiar with a wide range of interesting *facts*.

If this individual were to go on to become a professor of European history, he might be inclined to claim that the role of Napoleon in early 19th Century France is central to our understanding of what went on in Europe at that time, and that without that role, we would have to imagine that European history might have taken an entirely different course. This may involve indulging in some pure speculation depending partly on the historical facts assumed to remain true from the outset. Yet within what would become the context of the professor's current understanding of history, Napoleon's existence would be a datum which was assuredly *not* in question, and as such would be wholly taken for granted as part of the background to historical enquiry. It is in this kind of context that we do have a use for saying that because it is part of the *historical record*, Napoleon's existence is not something that we feel has to be 'attested' to, and this is *because* it is part of the settled background to historical debate. But this does not mean that because knowledge about Napoleon is in this sense 'in the archives', it somehow ceases to be factual knowledge altogether. In this case, what we actually would say is that propositions about Napoleon *remain* empirical propositions even when we decide to grant them with a 'special role' in historical enquiry ; and in this context it would be difficult not to agree that this epistemic reading raises no interpretational problems whatsoever.

Chapter 7 on 'Wittgenstein's Idea of a World-Picture' elaborates on the notion, and presents us with the idea that (i) *A world-picture is not judged true or false, but forms the background against which one distinguishes true or false (Ibid., 131)*, (ii) *It is not normally expressed explicitly and (iii) Doubting a particular Moorean proposition is tantamount to doubting the world-picture to which it belongs,* and (iv) *There are alternative world-pictures.* We are also told that 'A World picture, for Wittgenstein, is not assessible for truth or falsity' (*Ibid.*, 135). The inherited background against which one goes on to distinguish between what is true and what is false is a kind of *mythology*, and 'cannot be refuted, as it renders intelligible a particular practice' (*Ibid.*, 131). Whilst all of this, as Hamilton goes on to say, is very much in accordance with Kuhn's notion of a paradigm shift in scientific theory construction, it certainly does not fit every case: *OC* §§ 95 - 99, for example, presents a much more fluid relationship between what remains fixed and what alters with time. *OC* § 292 , on the other hand, suggests that an

entire shift in our background theoretical understanding of a phenomenon can follow from a series of recalcitrant experimental results, forcing us to return to the drawing board: 'Further experiments cannot *give the lie* to our earlier ones, at most they may change our whole way of looking at things'. It may be difficult to see how the Napoleon example provided here falls into either category, given that it does not portray the propositions that enter into the archives as having a non-epistemic role. Nevertheless, the more general and unspecific the background picture, the more it conforms to the paradigm shift model, like Hamilton's '(i) *A fundamental, universal and necessary world-picture* that all human beings share' (*Ibid.*, 138); although it is questionable whether 'Kant's account of the categories of experience', which Moore is said to follow in his modest way, is a suitable example to use for this purpose, just because of its distinctly *philosophical* credentials.

Towards the ending of the Chapter, Hamilton provides us with a list of seven conditions which this notion of a *world-picture* satisfies, and these are very much in accordance with the treatment already provided of Moorean propositions, rooted in human action, which point towards the settled background to particular knowledge claims. If, however, it is true (iv) that 'we form the conviction that they are correct, only through reflection on our general picture of the world' (*Ibid.*, 147), one has to wonder how compatible this is with the claim (v) that the inherited world-picture is neither true nor false, neither grounded nor ungrounded, and neither rational nor irrational. It is also evident that the more we concentrate on specific Moorean propositions that are related to specific fields of enquiry, politics or science for example, the more the importance granted to basic human *actions* as what lie *behind* our language-games, tends to fade into the background.

If Chapter 8, '*On Certainty* in the Context of Modern Responses to Scepticism and Twentieth Century Epistemology', seems at times to digress from the main themes of the book, that may be because, as Hamilton makes clear, '*On Certainty* is sparing in its presentation of sceptical argument, and scepticism is mentioned only twice...' (*Ibid.*, 155). Nevertheless:

On Certainty is concerned with the most radical *global scepticism* that applies to all areas of human knowledge, including the external world,

other minds, and the past or future. (Wittgenstein does not say this, but it is clear from the examples he discusses.) This global scepticism embraces the so-called *Problem of the External World*, which....asks how I know that there are things external to the mind; and *The Problem of Other Minds*, which asks how I know that there are minds other than my own, rather than mindless automata.... (*Ibid.*)

Although Hamilton argues that Wittgenstein sharply separates everyday doubt from general sceptical doubt (*Ibid.*, 154), this Chapter does not explore the relevance of *On Certainty* to general sceptical doubt in detail beyond claiming that Wittgenstein denies its intelligibility and reveals that it is 'self-undermining'. Instead, Hamilton digresses to provide a fairly broad account of scepticism as it connects with historical figures like Descartes, Hume, Kant, the Pragmatists, Neurath and Russell. *The Paradigm Case Argument* as found in Malcolm and Flew brings the Chapter to a close. Analytic orthodoxy has generally agreed in this case that from the fact that there may be quite ordinary circumstances in which we can correctly say that someone is acting of his own free will, or is satisfying some psychological predicate, it does not follow that this can be taken to justify a belief in the freedom of human action or in 'other minds'. If, for example, it can be shown that all human behaviour is causally determined, or if we cannot on principle have direct experiential access to other minds, then many philosophers would have claimed that we might not in the final analysis be able to justify what are usually referred to as our basic 'beliefs'. We may even be 'brains in a vat'. The fact that this 'possibility' is *ex hypothesi* incapable of empirical verification is not usually a matter of any concern. (This issue will arise again). However, beyond distancing his Wittgenstein from any simple Paradigm Case Argument, arguing that it would be mistaken to see him conforming to Malcolm's oversimplistic model of an ordinary language philosopher, Hamilton is content to gesture towards the remainder of the book for any further development of these ideas.

Chapter 9, 'Moore's "proof of an external world"', once again reminds us that Moore's proof that he *knows* that these are his hands, fails because in Wittgenstein's view the existence

of Moore's hands in this kind of context cannot be part of a knowledge claim: his hands are items neither of knowledge nor of doubt, so that we have once again a non-epistemic account of those Moorean propositions. Repeating Malcolm's early 1942 presentation of an Argument from the Paradigm Case which sees sceptical claims as a violation of the use of ordinary language, Hamilton argues *via* a quote from the *Blue Book* (BB 58-59) that Wittgenstein's response to sceptical doubt is much more subtle than Malcolm's, because it tackles the underlying temptation behind it, and so refuses to accept the presuppositions that govern both the sceptic's challenge and Moore's naive response to it, a response that consists in reiterating what the sceptic denies.

Chapter 10, 'Responses to Scepticism [1] Wittgenstein's Arguments Against Moore' contains a further elaboration of the non-epistemic account of certainty, although it significantly discusses the additional idea that in appropriate circumstances it makes no sense to say that I could be making a *mistake*, that to be making a mistake would be 'regarded as having a mental disturbance or confusion' (*Ibid.*,192). OC § 659 about just having had lunch is an obvious example, although here Wittgenstein brings this thought to a halt with the realisation that he could perhaps have fallen asleep immediately after the meal and slept for an hour, only to believe on waking that he had only just eaten. So it is not entirely unreasonable that he was making a mistake after all. Similar examples appear close by and towards the end of the book, *e.g.*, about his name being 'L.W.' (§ 660), about never having been on the Moon (§ 661), or about having just flown from America to England in the last few days, or about presently sitting at a table and writing (§ 675).

The problem with examples of this kind is that, with sufficient ingenuity, we can usually envisage counterexamples to them (*having a body* or *being human* may be more difficult): I have just awakened from a very vivid dream in which I had been sitting at a table and writing, and remark that this is what I *am* doing, although I am still in bed; or I have totally forgotten that I am just back from the Moon, passenger flights having only recently been introduced; or having been intoxicated on the flight from America, my recollections of the journey are confused: the flight actually took place several weeks ago. But if we are going to have to qualify the claim that one cannot be mistaken about *x*, with the proviso

that 'all other things being equal', then the point of making it is seriously undermined. This would apply equally to the claim about being *certain* that these are my hands, *if* the genuine point here is that in *normal* circumstances this is a claim that I have every right to make, non-epistemic or otherwise.

This has a bearing on two examples provided by Hamilton, the first involving a denial by an Iranian President that the Holocaust had ever occurred (*Ibid.*, 193): Hamilton claims that to deny 'a framework historical truth' of this kind that no one could disbelieve, is tantamount to being subject to a delusion. But instead of telling a lie, the President may only have been making a simple *mistake*, in which case it would be open to us to bring the *facts* to his attention. Following the role already provided for Napoleon's existence, there may be reasons in particular circumstances for giving the Holocaust a special 'framework' role in our historical thinking; yet within or outwith this kind of context, it does *remain* a historical fact. Consequently, Hamilton's claim that "'There was a Holocaust" or "This is a plate of fish and chips" are close to Moorean propositions - "Wittgensteinian certainties" perhaps' (*Ibid.*), is much too strong. And as for his plate of fish and chips, the fact that it looks like fish and chips and tastes like fish and chips may not rule out the possibility that what is on his plate is a cleverly devised soya replacement. That, however, may not be at all relevant if it were only taste and appearance, as opposed to material content, that was assumed to be important.

Although these cases do not necessarily throw doubt on Wittgenstein's non-epistemic notion of *certainty*, especially when directly related to human *action*, Hamilton considers a number of objections to it, including Ayer's treatment of those examples like 'I know that these are my hands' or 'I know that I am in pain' which are devoid of any particular surrounding contexts of use, and concludes that none of these objections are valid. This leaves the way open for him to look in further detail at the implications of Wittgenstein's thinking for scepticism.

Chapter 11, 'Responses to Scepticism [2] Wittgenstein's Arguments Against the Sceptic' shows Wittgenstein in the act of offering a 'diagnosis of a philosophical standpoint' and therefore as a philosopher engaging 'in a *therapeutic* method. Unlike many advocates of that method, however, I will argue that diagnosis of scepticism is compatible with its refutation' (*Ibid.*, 217 *et seq.*) Once again

Wittgenstein wishes to undermine the assumptions of philosophers, in particular that Moorean propositions can express what can either be *known* or be subject to *doubt*:

Wittgenstein's *non-epistemic treatment* says that Moorean propositions are not possible objects of knowledge or doubt, but are nonetheless in some sense certain. Moore and the sceptic agree that sceptical doubts make sense, but disagree over whether these doubts are justified. For Wittgenstein, in contrast, the sceptic's doubts and Moore's common-sense responses.....are equally nonsensical.... (*Ibid.*, 218).

Although the reader is bound to feel that he has been here before, this Chapter, which is the longest in the book, discusses these issues in greater detail: everyday belief and doubt takes place against a background in which *certainty* is presupposed, so that real doubt, as distinct from the artificial doubt of the sceptic, occurs within a language-game (OC §§ 23 - 24), and this goes back to von Wright's and Kenny's point that outwith particular language-games, general sceptical doubt has no real application and no sense (OC § 115, § 125, § 163, and § 337). It is self-undermining, in Hamilton's view, partly because, to take what he regards as 'one of the most compelling and original of Wittgenstein's responses to scepticism' (*Ibid.*, 227), Wittgenstein challenges the sceptic's belief that he is entitled to assume that he knows the *meanings* of the words he is using to deny that anything can *really* be known.

Wittgenstein's ultimate objection to scepticism, however, is methodological, and is directly related to how words in appropriate contexts are actually used. Take Hamilton's argument that 'dream-scepticism provides a motivation for scepticism only if one assumes the traditional picture of dreams as events during sleep. And Wittgenstein does not accept this picture' (*Ibid.*, 238). But it would be better to say that the ordinary picture of dreaming as the occurrence of events taking place in the mind during sleep is unobjectionable, provided that one is prepared when *reflecting* on it to weigh the *kind* of emphasis it may have exerted on one's *philosophical* thinking; and that is what the sceptic plainly refuses to do. The basic point here is that there is no genuine first person present tense

use for 'I am dreaming', and that is why, if someone were to be heard uttering those words whilst he was talking in his sleep, our reaction would be, not to presume that he was correct in what he was saying, but to be amused or puzzled by this apparently bizarre behaviour. (Cf. Zettel § 396). This point is echoed in OC 383, where the sceptic's 'I may be dreaming' is said to be senseless because, if true, this remark is also being dreamed together with the meaning of those very words themselves. Similar considerations apply to Hamilton's discussion of the famous 'brain in a vat':

When Nagel concludes that 'a brain in a vat can't think truly that it is a brain in a vat, even though others can think this about it', he assumes that there is a state of affairs describable by others, but that such description is beyond the capacity of the subject-in-a-vat. For the sceptic to make me wonder whether I am such a subject is therefore a sceptical triumph, as it imposes the most radical limits on my knowledge....(Ibid. 241).

Hamilton's suggestion is that this entire proposal is '*pragmatically self-defeating*', because 'Maybe I am a brain-in-a vat', like 'Maybe I am dreaming', invites the reply that if all the events of my life only *seem* to be happening, and are not *really* happening, there would be no *me* that they merely *seemed* to happen to. Wittgenstein's reply is again methodological: if the world of the person designated as this brain is exactly like our own in every respect, and if the proposal that this world is *unreal* is to be genuine, then there must be some means by which he can discover that this is so. But the sceptical proposal has no force unless it is assumed that the person whose world is 'unreal' has no way of verifying empirically that he is a 'brain-in-a-vat'. If we assume that he does have some means of verifying that he is such a brain, by for example, making certain experiments, then the appeal of the proposal evaporates. In exactly the same way, there is nothing to halt the suggestion that the scientists preparing these brains-in-a-vat are themselves brains-in-vats, and this can be proposed to be so *ad infinitum*, a suggestion that rather diminishes the force of the sceptic's case.

Wittgenstein's main point would have been that we cannot make a genuine proposal with

this kind of example unless what is proposed is empirically verifiable for the *subject*, the brain-in-a vat. If that possibility is *ex hypothesi* ruled out, then far from its being the case that this is a remarkable *possibility* that we have no means of knowing *not* to be the case, one that may *be* realised even if we can never come to *know* it, all that remains is an empty proposal that in terms of the ordinary use of our concepts is doing no real work. That is an expression of the methodology that is being used here by Wittgenstein, as one kind of 'ordinary-language philosopher', to 'deflate' the sceptical proposal by showing that where, as here, language is 'idling', the sceptic's thought has no genuine application.

Towards the end of the Chapter, there is a discussion of Cora Diamond on resoluteness, and a treatment of OC § 36, in which it is said that 'physical object' is a logical concept, and that is why no such proposition as 'there are physical objects' can be formulated. This topic is also discussed in OC § 37, where 'there are physical objects' is said to be nonsense, an attempt to express something which cannot be expressed like that: the philosopher is under the spell of a *picture* that he believes can capture the essential 'underlying presuppositions' of propositions about day-to-day objects like ships and shoes and sealing-wax and cabbages, though possibly not of kings; and the attempt to do this inevitably misfires. Annalisa Coliva may appear, ironically, to capture the point succinctly when she argues that 'there are physical objects' is a hinge for Wittgenstein because 'if we gave that up, how could we have a scheme of mind-independent objects?' (as quoted, Hamilton *Ibid.* 263, Footnote 76). However, if this is *not* just a way of saying that 'language-games about ships and shoes *etc* are played', Hamilton is surely correct to argue that Coliva would seem, contra Wittgenstein, to be endorsing a *metaphysical* interpretation here, similar to Moore's claim to know about physical objects 'beyond' his sense-data.

Chapter 12, 'Interpreting *On Certainty*' introduces the reader to 'quietist' *v* 'combative' interpretations of Wittgenstein's methodology, and relates these to Fogelin's distinction between *Pyrrhonian readings* of his work that see him questioning the philosophical enterprise, and opposing *non-Pyrrhonian readings* that see him participating in and offering improvements to positions adopted within philosophy. Generally speaking, Hamilton favours a 'cognitive, combative therapy' (*Ibid.* 266), and proposes a 'middle-way between a *quietist, radically non-cognitive conception of therapy*' and the

non-therapeutic readings of Stroll and Grayling (*Ibid.* 269). Although *On Certainty* 'does not craft a therapeutic approach in the manner of the *Investigations*', one of its central themes is the mistaken inclination to regard Moorean propositions as empirical propositions, so that Wittgenstein is always attempting to exercise therapy in order to remove the grip of an empiricist outlook (*Ibid.* 270).

Once again, the reader will feel that he has been here before, but Hamilton's aim at this point is to explain what the therapeutic method in philosophy is. Here he favours a comparison that Wittgenstein made at one point between his own method and Freudian psychoanalysis, a comparison that Hacker amongst others does not believe should be overstated, and that Ayer was severely taken to task by Wittgenstein for suggesting: in the late 1940's Wittgenstein did not want to see any comparison made between the practice of psychoanalysis and his own therapeutic methods (*Ibid.*) Yet Hamilton disagrees, arguing that Wittgenstein did see 'significant *non-cognitive* similarities between non-rational psychoanalytic phenomena.....and his own philosophical approach' (*Ibid.* 272). Consequently, we are treated to a very person-specific account of a therapy in which (i) *The problem as initially presented may not be the real one...;* (ii) *The problem is personal and individual, and involves psychological disturbance;* and (iii) *The subject is the authority for whether a problem has been diagnosed correctly.*

This, however, is far from being the end of the story, for if we instead take the *cognitive* dimensions of Wittgenstein's therapy into account, the tendency to think in terms of a person-specific form of philosophical therapy, like Gordon Baker's later model, (*Ibid.* 274) disappears. On the contrary: 'Wittgenstein is not a "quietist" because there is a combative strand in his response to scepticism', (*Ibid.*, 279), one shown in an approach that takes it to be self-undermining. (*Ibid.* 282). Once again, the reader will feel that he has been here before, and perhaps that the digression to discuss the comparison with a Freudian form of therapy has added little if anything to the discussion, although in another context it may have something useful to say about issues which are not directly related to the content of *On Certainty*.

One may be left with a similar feeling about Chapter 13, 'Wittgensteinian Naturalism Versus Wittgensteinian Kantianism', where *On Certainty* is said to exhibit affinities towards both Kantian

transcendentalist and Humean naturalist responses to scepticism, with the opposition between these presented as something which is central to modern epistemology. We are advised that whilst the remarks on 'nature' in *On Certainty* 'suggest that liberal or humanistic naturalism would be congenial to Wittgenstein' (*Ibid.* 291), this nevertheless raises a question about the compatibility of his naturalistic outlook with what Hamilton refers to as 'the modestly transcendental standpoint' underlying the arguments he employs to reveal that there are 'conditions for sense that the sceptic violates':

However, a combative interpretation of *On Certainty* could be modestly transcendental, just as the quietist treats Wittgenstein as a liberal naturalist. To reiterate, however, Wittgenstein's thought is too original simply to be subsumed under positions such as naturalism or Kantianism (*Ibid.* 292).

But if this is really so, why appear to be making the attempt to fit Wittgenstein into either of these moulds instead of directly engaging with his methodology in order to grasp what he is up to? Of course there are obvious affinities, and it is natural to refer to them, but if Wittgenstein is as original as this passage makes out, why then ask several pages later on whether Wittgenstein could be both a liberal naturalist and a modest transcendentalist? (*Ibid.*, 295). Not only that, but we are advised following a reference to Lear's view that the rule-following considerations constitute a 'transcendental investigation', that the question can even with some plausibility be answered affirmatively.

The Chapter ends with a treatment of Wittgenstein's work as it relates to the contemporary debate between internalism and externalism, and here Hamilton refers to commentators who have adopted three views on the matter: '(i) Wittgenstein is an internalist; or (ii) he has externalist tendencies; or (iii) the dichotomy is inapplicable, because undermined by Wittgenstein's work' (*Ibid.*, 297). In the final analysis, Hamilton follows Putnam by allowing that *On Certainty* shows the way to undermine the 'picture' behind what may after all be a false dichotomy (*Ibid.*, 301).

The work's final Chapter 14, 'Influence and Implications', begins with the claim that *On Certainty* has achieved a wide readership, partly through its 'persuasive concept of a world-picture, and from its

focus on scepticism' (*Ibid.*, 306). On the work's original publication, it might even have appeared that *On Certainty* is introducing us to a much more traditional Wittgenstein who is tackling philosophical problems that he had previously shunned because attributable to misuses of language. There follows a detailed listing under six headings of the work's novel features, but this is yet another repeat of claims already made in the book concerning 'an original conception of the category of certainties', about 'Moorean propositions', 'A new conception of world-pictures', 'A refutation of scepticism', 'A non-epistemic conception of the foundations of knowledge', and a reference to a standpoint that 'draws on both naturalism and Kantian transcendentalism'.

The remainder of this concluding Chapter presents a Wittgenstein whose work including *On Certainty* 'changed the conception of particular philosophical problems, and indeed of what philosophical problems in general are' (*Ibid.*, 307). After an initial period following 1953 in which his reputation was very much in the ascendant, his influence was already on the decline by the time that *On Certainty* appeared, largely through the challenge issued by 'the scientific naturalism of Quine and Davidson' (*Ibid.*, 308). This fairly conventional historical account, one which pictures a current Anglo-American epistemology that follows a 'non-Wittgensteinian, more scientific paradigm', is clearly at odds with the conception of philosophy as a humanistic discipline that Andy Hamilton favours. What he refers to as *Analytic Purism* sees philosophy as an ahistorical and autonomous discipline that regards philosophical problems and philosophy's 'canonical authors' as inhabitants of a timeless medium into which commentators can enter without considering the historical and cultural contexts in which philosophical problems and concepts often arise and develop.

Many of his readers will be sympathetic to this approach, which Hamilton describes in bringing the Chapter to a close, and it is at this point that we are inevitably drawn to ask how successful he is in bringing his reader to appreciate *On Certainty*. The book's best feature is that it is packed with argument. It adopts interpretational stances, on the acceptance of a therapeutic outlook by Wittgenstein, for example, and on the rejection of a distinct final period, that are for the most part competent even although they will inevitably invite criticism over specific points. Yet no matter how

sympathetic the reader is to Hamilton's claim that this was a 'very difficult *Guidebook* to organise' (as already quoted, *Ibid.*, Preface iv), they will find themselves mystified and most probably annoyed at the amount of duplication and repetition that the book contains, much of it fairly obvious from the outlines of the Chapter contents already described, and this will seem even more puzzling given the sheer number of people who have commented upon the work before publication (*Ibid.*, xviii *et seq.*) Perhaps they did not see this as a matter worth making a fuss about.

Yet one has to ask, for example, why the content of Chapters 5 & 6, together with that of 9 & 10, all of which are concerned with Moore's common sense vision, Wittgenstein's response to it, and to his account of Moorean propositions, could not have been combined and suitably pruned to include their relevance to scepticism. Chapters 6 & 10 actually begin in a very similar way by asking about the nature of those Moorean propositions, even if they rightly develop differently thereafter. Several different paragraphs are used to list the essential features of *On Certainty* on pages 131, 147, and 306, but these contain enough shared content to justify combining them into one account that succinctly captures what Hamilton believes these features to be. Sometimes he is careless when appearing to accept a claim which he later repudiates (*e.g.*, *Ibid.* 292 & 295), and sometimes he says things that with a little more thought could have been improved (*e.g.*, 29 & 45). Often the reader is in danger of losing his way, overwhelmed by a barrage of claims from all directions that could have been pruned and made more concise. It may be that interpretation of a classic text is, as Hamilton puts it, 'necessarily inexhaustible' (*Ibid.*, 313), but readers may fail to appreciate authors who appear to be using this claim to justify retracing the same steps once too often. On the other hand, Hamilton does cover a considerable amount of ground, and there can be few questions raised by *On Certainty* that he leaves untouched. Consequently, it may seem churlish to overstate one's misgivings about a work that in the final analysis performs a very useful role as a *Guidebook* to *On Certainty*. As this assessment reveals, Andy Hamilton has given us a very welcome addition to the literature.

ENDNOTES

- (1) Ludwig Wittgenstein: *On Certainty*, ed. G.E.M. Anscombe & G.H. von Wright, trans. Denis Paul & G.E.M. Anscombe (Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1969).
- (2) G.H. von Wright: 'Wittgenstein on Certainty', Lecture from 1970 revised in *Wittgenstein* (Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1982).
- (3) Daniel Moyal-Sharrock: 'Unravelling Certainty' in *Readings of Wittgenstein's On Certainty*, ed. Daniele Moyal-Sharrock & William H. Brenner (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).
- (4) Anthony Kenny: 'Of Scepticism and Certainty' Chap.11, *Wittgenstein*, Revised Edition (Oxford, Blackwell Publishing, 2006).
- (5) Norman Malcolm: 'Certainty', Chap. 11, *Nothing is Hidden - Wittgenstein's Criticism of His Early Thought* (Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1986).
- (6) A.J. Ayer: 'Knowledge and Certainty' Chap.9, *Wittgenstein* (London, George Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1985). See also 'Wittgenstein on Certainty' in *Freedom and Morality and Other Essays*, (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1984), originally from 1973 R.I.P. Lecture and published in (ed. G.Vesey) *Royal Institute of Philosophy Lectures 1972/73 - Understanding Wittgenstein* (Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1974).
- (7) See for example *The Third Wittgenstein: The Post Investigations Works*, ed. Daniele Moyal-Sharrock (Aldershot, Ashgate, 2004).
- (8) Avrum Stroll, 'Why On Certainty Matters' in *Readings of Wittgenstein's On Certainty* (as above).
- (9) Although by no means exhaustive, the following list contains a number of volumes and papers dedicated to *On Certainty* that are definitely worth reading, if sometimes difficult to access :

Thomas Morawetz: *Wittgenstein and Knowledge: The Importance of On Certainty*, (Amherst, Uni. of Mass. Press, 1978).

Gunnar Svensson: *On Doubting the Reality of Reality: Moore and Wittgenstein on Sceptical Doubts* (Stockholm, Almqvist & Wiksell, 1981).

Gertrude Conway: *Wittgenstein on Foundations* (New Jersey, Humanities Press, 1982).

Marie McGinn: *Sense and Certainty: A Dissolution of Scepticism* (Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1989).

Avrum Stroll: *Moore and Wittgenstein on Certainty* (Oxford, Oxford Uni. Press, 1994).

Rush Rhees: *Wittgenstein's On Certainty There - Like our Life*, ed. D.Z. Phillips (Oxford, Blackwell Publishing, 2003).

Daniele Moyal-Sharrock: *Understanding Wittgenstein's On Certainty* (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).

Annalisa Coliva: *Moore and Wittgenstein - Scepticism, Certainty and Common Sense* (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

Robert Greenleaf Brice: *Exploring Certainty - Wittgenstein and Wide Fields of Thought* (Maryland, Lexington Books, 2014).

Joachim Schulte: *Wittgenstein on Certainty and Doubt* (London, Routledge, 2015 - forthcoming August)

Oswald Hanfling: 'Knowledge, Certainty and Doubt' *Wittgenstein's Later Philosophy* (Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1989 (Chap. 7).

Michael Kober: 'Certainties of a World-Picture: The epistemological investigations of *On Certainty*' *The Cambridge Companion To Wittgenstein*, ed. Hans Slug & David Stern (Cambridge, C.U.P., 1996).

Michael Hymers: 'Scepticism, Knowledge, and Justification' *Wittgenstein and The Practice of Philosophy*, (Ontario, Broadview Press, 2010) Chap.6.

William Child: 'Knowledge and Certainty' *Wittgenstein* (Routledge, Abingdon, 2011), Chap. 7.

John Cook: 'The Metaphysics of Wittgenstein's *On Certainty*' *Philosophical Investigations*, Vol. 8, No. 2, 1985.

Karl-Heinz Mayer: 'Wittgenstein and Moyal-Sharrock on Hinge-Certainties' (Norderstedt, GRIN Verlag, 2014).

As do most philosophers, Derek McDougall fondly remembers the publication of his very first paper. This was in MIND in 1972. He has, however, continued to worry whether Gilbert Ryle's comment that "the matter is stated well and almost interestingly" referred more to the quality of its treatment rather than to Ryle's aversion to the nature of its subject (religious belief). Other papers have appeared in various organs including PHILOSOPHY AND PHENOMENOLOGICAL RESEARCH and PHILOSOPHIA. A paper on Wittgenstein appears in the 2008 edition of JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHICAL RESEARCH, another on Ebersole / Ayer in PHILOSOPHICAL INVESTIGATIONS January 2010, a later paper on Wittgenstein in ANALYTIC PHILOSOPHY, March 2013, a further one on Ryle, PHILOSOPHICAL INVESTIGATIONS, April 2014, and one on Wittgenstein on Shakespeare in PHILOSOPHY AND LITERATURE (forthcoming 2015).