

HOW TO DEFEAT BELIEF IN THE EXTERNAL WORLD¹

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ABSTRACT:

I defend the view that there is a privileged class of propositions – that there in an external world, among other such ‘hinge propositions’ – that possess a special epistemic status: justified belief in these propositions is not defeated unless one has sufficient reason to believe their negation. Two arguments are given for this conclusion. Finally, three proposals are offered as morals of the preceding story: first, our justification for hinge propositions must be understood as defeatable, second, antiskeptics must explain our knowledge in the face of ‘actual world’ skepticism (like dreaming skepticism) as much as in the face of the usual sort (like brain-in-vat skepticism), and, finally, our justification for hinge propositions is basic (i.e. non-inferential).

I believe that there is an external world, indeed that my senses now are revealing that world to me, by which I mean that I believe that I now have hands, am seated before a desk, upon which are piled books and photocopied journal articles, and these beliefs I get from my senses. I believe that I am not dreaming, that I am not a brain in a vat, that I am not deceived by an evil demon, that I am not a duplicate of myself, and that the world did not come into being only 5 minutes ago. I also believe that Wakefield will pitch in tonight’s Red Sox game.

This last belief, that Wakefield will pitch, can be easily overturned. I formed this belief on the basis of a television report yesterday that claimed Wakefield would likely pitch, and I can easily imagine reading in the newspaper this morning that Wakefield is not going to pitch. I would give up my belief that he will pitch because of the presence of a *defeater*. It’s very hard, however, to come up with an easily imaginable story of how

I might come to give up my belief in the external world, or indeed in any of the other beliefs canvassed above.

What I want to show in this paper is that coming up with such a story is far harder than epistemologists and other philosophers, both skeptical and anti-skeptical, have thought, and that there are good reasons why it's hard to defeat such beliefs.

Let's fix a few things. A *defeater of belief that p for S* is a reason state r such that belief that p is or would be unjustified for S in virtue of S 's possessing r . In many of the cases we're considering here, r is a belief (or set of beliefs) of S 's. A *reason r defeats S 's belief that p* just in case S possesses r , r is a defeater for belief that p for S , and S in fact fails to believe p on the basis of r . I will also speak of a *justified belief of S 's being defeated by some reason r* and by this I will just mean that S 's belief is defeated by r , but would have been justified were it not for S 's possessing r .

So my belief that Wakefield will pitch would be defeated by a justified belief that Lowe will pitch; if I came to believe that Lowe will pitch by reading such a report in the paper this morning, my belief (now abandoned) that Wakefield will pitch would be defeated by my belief that Lowe will pitch, because this belief would be a defeater for my previous belief. This is all oversimplified, of course; it's not just my belief that Lowe will pitch that defeats, but that belief in concert with my belief that I read about Lowe in the newspaper today and heard about Wakefield on television last night, i.e. my knowledge that the Lowe information was more current. But I think nothing bad results from such an oversimplification, and I'll do similar things below, when nothing bad will result.

This is *not* a theory of defeaters, where they come from, and how they figure in our accounts of knowledge and justification generally. But I am assuming that there are

such things as defeaters and that sometimes beliefs are defeated by them. I am also assuming that a belief can be unjustified in virtue of my holding some other beliefs, which is to say that I am helping myself to a notion of justification. But I don't think I'm assuming too much about what justification is here – both internalists and externalists should be happy to concede that sometimes a belief is unjustified in virtue of some other justified beliefs I have. Suppose I believe that lima beans are good for you because my usually trustworthy mother told me so. But I read in an almost always trustworthy medical journal that lima beans contain a carcinogenic toxin. Internalists and externalists can agree, I think, that my belief that lima beans are healthy is here defeated by some other beliefs that I form. Internalists may want to say that beliefs about the trustworthiness of the medical journal matter, and they can say that. The point is that beliefs sometimes defeat other beliefs in virtue of making the other beliefs unjustified, and I don't think I'm begging any questions in assuming this is so.

So, as I mentioned, my main purpose here is to argue that it's very hard to defeat belief in the external world – below I'll formulate what exactly I mean by this. I argue for my central thesis – a version of a view recently proposed by Crispin Wright – with two arguments, and conclude with three proposals for anti-skepticism that encapsulate the lessons that I think should be learned from the preceding discussion. The first says that our justification for such beliefs as that there is an external world must be understood as defeatable. The second says that epistemologists must not neglect the resistance of our knowledge to *actual* deception in their efforts to show that our knowledge is resistant to *possible* deception. The third says that my justification for my belief that there is an external world, for example, is not inferential.

Basic beliefs, hinge propositions, and security

Above I said that it was harder than philosophers usually think to defeat a certain class of beliefs. Here I want to get a bit clearer on that class, and just what I mean when I say that it is 'harder than philosophers think' to defeat them. First consider *basic beliefs* – beliefs that are not justified in virtue of their logical or inferential relations to any other of a subject's beliefs. The beliefs I have in mind are a subset of the basic beliefs: those that are justified in virtue of being beliefs in propositions of a certain sort, viz the sort called by Crispin Wright "hinge propositions."² Let me set aside the characterization of hinge propositions (discussion is below); Wright and I disagree on precisely what propositions should be included. But it is uncontroversial that such beliefs as my beliefs that there is an external world, that I am not the victim of some massive deception, and that my name is Allan Hazlett are beliefs in hinge propositions (or *hinge beliefs* as I will call them). I want to defend here:

(Security) *S*'s justified hinge belief that *p* is defeated only if *S* has sufficient reason to believe $\sim p$.

Some epistemologists and other philosophers deny this. Two cases worth noting:

Underdetermination principles: Many epistemologists (both skeptical and anti-skeptical) think that something like this principle is plausible:

(UP) If h_1 and h_2 are hypotheses and *e* is all *S*'s evidence, *S* is justified in believing h_1 only if $P(h_1/e) > P(h_2/e)$.³

Another way of putting this is that if *S*'s evidence doesn't favor h_1 over h_2 , then believing h_1 is unjustified. (UP) figures in some form in a variety of skeptical arguments – those that suggest that our perceptual experience is in some way 'neutral' as between

the hypothesis that there is an external world and that we are deceived by an evil demon, say. All I want to note here is that UP contradicts Security when h_1 is a hinge proposition, since that UP is true and that $P(h_1/e)$ is not greater than $P(h_2/e)$ is not a reason to believe that $\sim h_1$. If Security is plausible, UP is not.

Indifference principles: Adam Elga and Nick Bostrom⁴ have argued for startling conclusions from indifference principles that state that we should believe in the following fashion (as in Elga's paper): I should divide my credence between the proposition that I am Allan Hazlett and that I am a duplicate of Allan Hazlett with false memory implants if I come to believe that such a duplicate exists and is in circumstances subjectively indistinguishable from those that I am in right now. Both claim that belief in a hinge proposition p is defeated by much less than reason to believe p 's negation; on their view if some actual subject S is in a state subjectively indistinguishable from yours, your belief that you are not S is defeated.

In what follows I will focus on our ordinary hinge belief that there is an external world.⁵ I give two arguments that this belief is not defeated unless one has a reason to believe its negation. Below I will explain how this conclusion reflects well on Security.

The argument from norms

First I want to look at a position that is similar to mine, but that I think is ultimately unsatisfactory (or at best, incomplete). Thomas Reid's skeptic contends that Reid should "throw off" his perceptual beliefs, Reid responds:

For my part, I will never attempt to throw it off[,] Because it is not in my power: why then should I make a vain attempt? It would be agreeable to fly to the moon[,] but when I know that Nature has bound me down by the law of gravitation to this planet

which I inhabit, I rest contented[.] My belief is carried along by perception, as irresistibly as my body by the earth.⁶

We need to get clear on just what one would need to be claiming if this (the view that hinge beliefs are impossible to fail to believe) were to be a plausible anti-skepticism. For there is a sense in which it is impossible for me to believe anything I don't actually believe, in the sense that what I believe is not up to me. I believe that Wakefield will pitch, and it's impossible for me not to believe this given my current condition. But it's certainly possible that I not believe this in the sense that given the right evidence I would cease to believe it. If the Reidian contends that she believes in the external world and that it's impossible for her not to, she seems right in this sense. She cannot believe otherwise than how she does now believe, given her situation. But this will not help her to show that her belief is justified. There may be evidence that she is ignoring – the skeptic's premises, say – and whether these other reasons suffice to defeat her belief in the external world is just what is at issue.⁷

So if this response is to have any bite, the Reidian must mean that it is impossible for a human to fail to believe that there is an external world.⁸ Surely Reid is right that in our ordinary circumstances, we have no choice but to believe that perception is reliable, that the external world exists, and the like. What I want to take issue with is his claim that giving up such belief is impossible. The Reidian must say, for example, that it is impossible for a human being not to believe that perception is reliable, just as it is impossible for a human being to fly to the moon. But we can all imagine cases where it is not only reasonable for a person to believe that her perceptual faculty is functioning improperly, but cases where a person does in fact come to believe this. Imagine I distinctly remember intentionally ingesting a large dose of a drug I know to cause hallucinations. I indeed am having what appear to be hallucinations – perceptual

experiences, say, of pink elephants. It is clearly not impossible, at this point, that I come to believe that I am having hallucinations, and indeed that I come to believe that my faculty of sense perception is completely unreliable (during some interval). And it seems, too, like this belief would be justified. The same goes for other hinge beliefs, even our belief in the external world – we are familiar with such scenarios from science fiction: a mysterious figure knows way too much about us, we seem to leap from place to place, reality seems to melt away, we stare into an abyss of computer symbols or pixilated images.⁹ So it seems that the Reidian position will not work.

Here is the skeptic's question: do we *now* have enough evidence to justifiedly withhold with respect to the proposition that there is an external world? The skeptic's suggestion is that we have evidence that is neutral as between deceptive and non-deceptive hypotheses, and that therefore our belief that there is an external world is unjustified.

But I think that that belief is justified, and I think it is because our epistemic norms demand that we believe (among other things) that there is an external world unless we have sufficient reason to believe that there isn't. Since I assume it is clear that we do not have sufficient reason to believe that there isn't an external world, I think our norms demand that we believe that there is an external world (even if it is clear to us that our subjective state is 'neutral' as between that hypothesis and others inconsistent with it).

I call this the *argument from norms*, but we don't have to believe anything about the nature of epistemic norms for it to work. We just have to believe this principle:

(+) Justified belief in the external world is defeated only by sufficient reason to believe that there is not an external world.

Principle (+) codifies a norm, a norm that I think we actually believe in accordance with, and one that I think is correct. It is, of course, a consequence of Security and the fact that our ordinary belief in the external world is a justified hinge belief. But I mean here to be defending the view that our ordinary belief in the external world is justified, and (by association) to be defending Security; I do not mean to be arguing from Security to (+). Why accept (+)? The argument from norms, as I'm taking it, is silent on this question. This is a norm that actually governs our beliefs, and if I am right about that, our ordinary belief in the external world is justified. Note that all that is required here is that (+) codifies a correct norm of ours. The question "why adopt this norm?" is a non sequitor – we already have adopted it. As such, *the argument from norms does not rest on any explanation of why this norm is correct.*¹⁰

The argument from confusion

But I think consideration of several examples will support (+), and by association Security:

Lovers

I learn that 50% of people's partners cheat on them regularly, and that I'm not that different from everyone else. I'm justified in believing this, and am in spite of this justified in trusting my girlfriend to not cheat on me.

Losers

I learn that 50% of people who play pool against Chris the Shark lose, and that I'm not that different from everyone else. I'm justified in believing this, and am in spite of this justified in my confidence that I will win.

Liars

I learn that 50% of people are terrible liars, that they lie almost all the time, and about the most mundane things, and that I'm not that different from everyone else. I'm justified in believing this, and am in spite of this justified in trusting testimony.

Now what's going on in Lovers is presumably something like this. I'm not *epistemically* justified in believing that my girlfriend will not cheat on me. My justification for this belief derives from some other source. Plausibly such trust is a necessary condition on love; this would make such trust justified in as much as love is a good. What's going on in Losers is presumably similar. I'm not epistemically justified in believing that I will win. But believing that I'll win is a the only way I'll have the confidence to have a chance of winning.

What about Liars? There's at least one sense in which my justification for my beliefs had from testimony is non-epistemic. Certainly such trust is a necessary condition on social interaction, and social interaction is a good. It's plausible as well that we are morally required to trust other people.

But I think that my testimonial beliefs are *epistemically* justified in Liars, and I think this is so because trusting testimony is a necessary condition on having a lot of beliefs, and having a lot of beliefs is a necessary condition on an the *epistemic* good of having a lot of knowledge.

If we don't trust testimony, we don't even have a chance to get into the game of believing, much less to win it. If we don't trust our memories and our perceptual experiences we can't get our cognitive project off the ground, and therefore, I contend, we'd better trust these faculties as best we can. And, I submit, these reasons for trusting our memories and our friends are epistemic reasons. We trust our memories and our

friends for the sake of epistemic ends – the end of having a lot of beliefs that amount to knowledge.

Failing to believe in the external world will necessarily limit one in the beliefs that one can reasonably form, because the lack of that belief rationally requires withholding with respect to the proposition that one's perceptual faculties are reliable, and that withholding rationally requires one to stop trusting perception. If one cannot trust perception it seems that one can believe very little. And if we, from our current perspective of trust, consider the hypothesis that perception is not to be trusted, we can imagine only the poverty that our belief system would suffer from believing that our faculties are not to be trusted.

I submit that there is a justified presumption in favor of belief in the external world which is not defeated by evidence that would (if not for one's justified belief that one's perceptual beliefs are reliable) warrant only withholding with respect to the proposition that there is an external world. This presumption is justified, and justified epistemically, because failure to believe that one's perceptual faculties are reliable results in confusion and cognitive poverty; this confusion would make one incapable of forming very many beliefs at all. The fact that this confusion will follow upon failing to believe that one's faculties are reliable is reason to trust them – for cognitive poverty impairs our ability to believe, and being able to believe is a necessary condition on being able to know.

More generally, here is the *argument from confusion*: we have an epistemic goal: to know a great many things. To pursue this goal, we would need to form a great many beliefs. If not believing that p would rationally require us to form very few beliefs, we should give up belief that that p only as a last resort, only if we have sufficient reason to

believe that $\sim p$. Some propositions (in this case p) come with a presumption in their favor, such that the mere underdetermination of p by my subjective state, for example, does not warrant doubt. For belief that p will have excellent results – I will be able to form a great many beliefs, and I must do this if I am to even hope to know a great many things.¹¹ And hence belief that p is epistemically justified unless one has sufficient reason to believe $\sim p$. The proposition that there is an external world is such a p . This entails (+).

Now a defense of (+) would require only that failing to believe in the external world leads to unacceptable cognitive poverty, and I think this is right. If one failed to believe in the external world, one would be forced, if rational, to distrust perception at the very least, and this would result in the sort of confusion described. It's of course possible that one could come to realize that one is not as good a perceiver as it had seemed, and no unacceptable state would result. What sort of state do I have in mind, then, when I say that belief in the external world is justified because abandoning that belief would lead to an unacceptable state?

I have appealed above to the notion of a hinge proposition (and the related notion of a hinge belief); it is time to make those notions more precise. I mean by *hinge propositions* those propositions p such that belief that p is a necessary condition on rationally having a lot of knowledge. I think this includes a class of very general propositions such as that I am not a brain in a vat, that I am not a duplicate of Allan Hazlett with false memories, that my faculty of reasoning is reliable, and that there is an external world. I take belief in these to be epistemically justified independently of my other beliefs and experiences, defeated only by sufficient reasons that these propositions are false, and epistemically justified in virtue of the fact that the believed

propositions are hinge propositions. Because, in general, hinge beliefs are necessary to rationally have a lot of knowledge, the arguments above that belief in the external world is defeated only by sufficient reason that it is false will generalize to an argument for Security.

Now Crispin Wright calls “hinge propositions” those beliefs:

whose rejection would rationally necessitate extensive re-organization or – or more, might even just throw into confusion – our highly complex conception of what kind of thing should be taken as evidence for what kind of proposition.¹²

And P.F. Strawson notes that we might think:

[I]n order for self-conscious thought and experience to be possible, we must take it, or *believe*, that we have knowledge of external physical objects or other minds.¹³

Similar remarks sympathetic (to certain kinds of) transcendental arguments are made by Barry Stroud.¹⁴ Wittgenstein contends not only that doubting that one’s faculties are reliable would have bad consequences, but that it would be absurd, crazy, some kind of category mistake.¹⁵ Reid points to a different sort of confusion:

I resolve not to believe my senses. I break my nose against a post that comes in my way; I step into a dirty kennel; and, after twenty such wise and rational actions, I am taken up and clapt into a mad-house.¹⁶

The common theme here is, again, the bad consequences that would result from failing to trust one’s faculties: an extensive reorganization of one’s cognitive system, the inability to believe, or madness. I think that Strawson is exaggerating the importance of believing in the external world, and Reid is of course joking. But what seems right is that one can’t successfully get into the game of believing without trusting one’s faculties – and this goes as well for believing that one isn’t in a vat, believing that one is who one remembers being, believing that there is an external world, and the like.

Now if this is right, it would explain why we have epistemic justification for hinge propositions, and further it would explain why such justification does not rest on

any other beliefs or experiences we have. The argument from confusion is a way to highlight why (+) is a correct norm, and in general it suffices as a defense of Security.

One concern with this approach, of course, is with the truth of hinge propositions. My explanation of the epistemic justification we have for hinge propositions made no mention of the truth of these propositions; even were our faculties unreliable it would continue to be the case that confusion and cognitive poverty result from failing to trust them. How can hinges be epistemically justified when their justification does not depend on their truth? Should we not rather say that their status is that of being merely *pragmatically* justified?

I think we should not. One way to maintain that hinges propositions are epistemically justified despite the fact that their justification does not depend on their truth is to adopt an internalism about justification. On such a view, epistemic justification is just not concerned with truth. This view, in connection with hinge propositions, overlooks the fact that the justification that hinges enjoy is not without connection to the truth of my beliefs. It is conceded that the justification hinges enjoy is not related to the truth of the hinges themselves. But the only reason we think hinges are justified is because belief in them is a necessary condition on having lots of beliefs that amount to knowledge (i.e. beliefs that are at least *true*). If not for *this* end, our intuition that hinges are justified without argument would disappear. Just as in Lovers my belief that my wife is not cheating on me is justified with the good of love in view, and in Losers my beliefs that I will win is justified with the good of winning in view, so in the case of hinges our belief that our faculties are reliable is justified with the good of knowledge in view. And this, I submit, is sufficient for such justification to be called “epistemic.”¹⁷

But certainly the view that hinges are epistemically justified in virtue of being hinges runs afoul of a plausible constraint: *S*'s belief that *p* is epistemically justified only if *S*'s belief that *p* is reliably connected with the truth of *p*. If this constraint is correct, hinges are not epistemically justified.¹⁸ Should we accept it? It seems that we can distinguish two senses in which a belief might be justified with respect to the end of having a lot of knowledge. The first is the usual sense on which we call a belief justified when that belief comes from a reliable faculty like perception, memory, intuition, etc. The second is the sense considered here, the sense in which we call a belief justified just in case having that belief is a necessary condition on having a lot of beliefs (and hence a lot of knowledge). (Wright calls this second notion "entitlement," as opposed to the usual species of justification). Having a lot of knowledge is an epistemic goal. A belief can be justified with regard to this goal in either of these two ways (and probably others). Should we call a belief that is justified in this second sense *epistemically* justified? It seems like what matters is that *the reason that it is a good thing to believe hinge propositions is that such belief will further our epistemic project*, and whether justification for hinges gets the honorific title "epistemic" matters not. However, something that does matter is that this second kind of justification is understood as being sufficient, other things being equal, for knowledge – and this view is I take it vindicated by the fact that hinges are *beliefs* that are *justified with respect to our epistemic project*.¹⁹ In other words, the skeptic is wrong that we epistemically ought to withhold with respect to the believed propositions.²⁰

Three proposals for anti-skepticism

I think three lessons can be drawn from the discussion so far. First, recall that I rejected Reid's view – that hinge beliefs are impossible to fail to believe – on the basis of the example of the hallucinogenic drug. In a recent paper²¹ Wright seems to have in mind something like the following claim:

(#) One is always entitled to believe hinge propositions; failing to believe hinge propositions is always unwarranted.²²

This is not plausible, given the example of the hallucinogenic drug and the familiar scenarios from science fiction. Failing to believe some hinge propositions is warranted when one has sufficient reason to believe their denial (but only then). The lesson to be learned from this is:

(Proposal I) Our justification for hinge beliefs is defeatable.

Second, it is important not only to take note (as was just done) of the structure of justification in the face of actual unreliability when such unreliability provides grounds for a defeater for a hinge belief, but also to take note of the structure of justification in the face of actual unreliability when such unreliability does not succeed in defeating hinge beliefs. Our theory of justification must respect the fact that hinge beliefs are defeatable, but it must also respect the fact that they are quite hard to defeat, even when it seems they might easily have been false.

Consider the fact that we dream. Every night we for fairly long periods of time become convinced that we are awake, having various adventures either mundane or bizarre, when in fact we are not awake, and are doing nothing but lying asleep in bed. The proposition that our faculty of perception is reliable is false with respect to these intervals, and yet (I have argued) justified unless one has sufficient reason to believe its negation. When I am not dreaming, I can know I am not dreaming despite the fact that

my perceptual evidence is (as the skeptic might put it) ambivalent between the hypothesis that I am dreaming and the hypothesis that I am not. How can this be?

Compare dreaming skepticism to skepticism which appeals to the *possibility* that we are massively deceived by an evil demon, or whatever. Such a skeptic either argues with this possibility as a premise that we do not know or with justification believe much of what we think we know or with justification believe, or challenges us to show that her possibility is not actual. Responses to this kind of skepticism take various forms. Some argue that the skeptic's possibility is not a "relevant alternative" that we should be considering when we form our beliefs. Others argue that massive deception of the sort the skeptic appeals to is impossible. Still others argue that since worlds where we are so deceived are distant, our beliefs are safe – in nearby worlds where we believe what we believe here, we believe truly.

But none of these familiar anti-skepticisms will work if the possibility the skeptic appeals to is not a mere possibility but an actuality. My belief that I am not dreaming is not safe (or sensitive)²³ – the world where I am deceived is not distant, but rather is the actual world. The possibility that I am dreaming cannot be dismissed as irrelevant because of rarity, or on the grounds that it is merely a crazy skeptical scenario cooked up by epistemologists, indeed our occasional unreliability seems quite relevant to the epistemic status of my beliefs about the reliability of my faculties. And, finally, the impossibility of massive deception is certainly consistent with occasional deception of the sort the dreaming skeptic appeals to. I think that the fact that these anti-skepticisms can't explain our justification for our belief that we're not dreaming shows that they can't explain our justification for our belief in the external world either; our theory needs a uniform account of skepticism and how hinge propositions are resistant to it.

Actual world skepticism (for S) is skepticism where the possibility mentioned above is either an actual instance of S being deceived, or an actual instance of someone subjectively very similar to S being deceived.²⁴ This sort of skepticism may be overlooked (consider how the anti-skeptisms above cannot deal with it). As well, it should be clear that given that we can and do sometimes with justification come to believe the negation of hinge propositions (as when we remember taking the hallucinogenic drug), and given the fact that the proposition that I am not dreaming is a hinge proposition if anything is (and so the arguments of this paper will apply to it as much as to that there is an external world), I submit a second proposal:

(Proposal II) Our theory of justification must uniformly account for our justification in the face of actual world skepticisms as well as other skepticisms.

Third, consider Security, which states that one is always justified in believing hinge propositions unless one has sufficient reason to believe their negation. This principle is true at least in part because hinge propositions are needed to get one's system of beliefs "off the ground," and that without them cognitive confusion would result. Hinge beliefs have this special status because of these good epistemic consequences, and unlike other beliefs are not undermined so easily. That these beliefs don't get their justification from other beliefs or experiences is not here proven. But it is strongly suggested, first, by the "default" status that hinge propositions have, and, second, by the fact that the *reason* we believe hinge propositions (if it even makes sense here to talk about a reason) need never be any kind of inference or reasoning (because Security ensures us justification, regardless of whether we have a reason to believe). As Strawson notes:

[N]o one accepts the existence of the physical world *because* it supplies the best available explanation etc. That is no one's reason for accepting it. Anyone who claimed it was his reason would be pretending.²⁵

I submit a third constraint:

(Proposal III) Any plausible theory of knowledge and justification must hold that hinge beliefs are basic beliefs (i.e. that their justification is non-inferential).

Or in Wright's terminology, my warrants for my beliefs in hinge propositions are not achieved, earned, or acquired (or at least, they need not be). Rather these are *entitlement* warrants. (Proposal III) casts doubt on the relevance of many anti-skeptical arguments; indeed it casts doubt on the idea of an anti-skeptical *argument* altogether. As above, it remains to be spelled out precisely what sort of theory of knowledge and justification would best incorporate Security. Skepticism *qua* argument that we don't know or have justification is still on the table, but Security may show us which premise to deny.

This is, of course, consistent with my claim that the explanation for *why* hinge propositions are justified is the argument from confusion. The justification for hinge propositions is independent of other beliefs and experiences because I need not have any particular experiences and beliefs to be justified in believing a hinge proposition. Take my belief, each morning in bed, that I am awake. I have this belief even before opening my eyes, even before, it would seem, I form any new beliefs at all. If I am right, this is the case for hinge beliefs in general – we may come to understand the reasonableness of believing these propositions by defending them with argument and inference, but our justification for them comes for free, and comes with a strong presumption in their favor – only reason to deny is reason to withhold.

¹ Thanks, for valuable comments and criticisms, to Derek Ettinger, Michael Pace, Ernest Sosa, John Turri, and an anonymous referee for this journal.

² In "Wittgensteinian Certainties," in McManus, D. (ed.), *Wittgenstein and Scepticism*, Routledge (2002), [pp.]. The notion gets its start in "Facts and Certainty," *Proceedings of the British Academy* 71 (1985), pp. 429-72 and "Cogency and Question-Begging: Some Reflections on McKinsey's Paradox and Putnam's Proof," *Philosophical Issues* 10 (2000), pp. 140-63, and receives further defense in "Warrant for Nothing (And Foundations for Free?)," *Aristotleian Society Supplement* 78 (2004), pp. 167-212.

³ See Bruckner, A., "The Structure of the Skeptical Arguments," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 54 (1994), pp. 827-35, Vogel, J., "Varieties of Skepticism," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 68 (2004), pp. 1-37 and "Skeptical Arguments," *Philosophical Issues* 14 (2004), pp. 426-55, and Pritchard, D., "The Structure of Sceptical Arguments," *Philosophical Quarterly* 55 (2005), pp. 37-52.

⁴ In Elga, A., "How to Defeat Dr. Evil with Self-Locating Belief," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 69 (2004), pp. 383-96 and in Bostrom, N., "Are You Living in a Computer Simulation?," *Philosophical Quarterly* 53 (2003), pp. 243-255.

⁵ The ordinary belief I have in mind commits the believer to something stronger than what Michael Devitt calls 'fig-leaf' realism (in *Realism and Truth*, second edition, Princeton, 1996, p. 23) – the very weak Kantian view that there is at least *something* independent of the mental. Rather, I have in mind a belief that might better be called the belief that the external world is *real*, or the belief that there is an external world *of this sort* (gesturing to the world surrounding one). Cf. Moore's discussion of the meaning of the phrase 'external things' in "Proof of an External World" (reprinted in *Selected Papers*, Routledge, 1993, pp. 147-70).

⁶ Reid, T., *An Inquiry into the Human Mind on the Principles of Common Sense* (Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997), p. 169

⁷ Note this is not the familiar criticism of Moore that says he begs the question by assuming what is 'up for grabs' in dialectic with the skeptic. The Reidian does not dogmatically claim that she knows or is justified (as some say Moore does), she claims that she cannot believe otherwise that she does – which leaves open and does not speak to the issue of whether her beliefs are justified. (Moore does speak to that point, perhaps, as some say, dogmatically.)

⁸ I am, of course, using remembers here in a non-factive sense; the scrupulous reader may read "seems to remember" in place of "remembers," and also below "apparent memories" for "memories."

⁹ Especially plausible are some inferences drawn by characters in *The Thirteenth Floor* (1999) and *Blade Runner* (1982), the former with respect to several characters' beliefs that the external world is not real, the latter with respect to several characters beliefs that they have false memories.

¹⁰ Compare the argument from norms to Moore's strategy in "Four Forms of Scepticism" (in *Philosophical Papers*, Allen and Unwin, 1959, pp. 196-226), "Some Judgements of Perception" (reprinted in *Philosophical Studies*, Routledge, 1958, pp. 220-52, and "Hume's Theory Examined" (in *Some Main Problems of Philosophy*, Allan and Unwin, 1953, pp. 108-26).

¹¹ Cf. Wright, "Wittgensteinian Certainties"

¹² Ibid. [p. 26]

¹³ Strawson, P.F., *Skepticism and Naturalism: Some Varieties* (Columbia University Press, 1983), p. 21

¹⁴ See especially chapters 2, 12, and 13 of his *Understanding Human Knowledge* (Oxford, 2000)

¹⁵ In *On Certainty* (Harper and Row, 1969)

¹⁶ Reid, op cit, p. 170

¹⁷ Richard Foley prefers to call this sort of justification "intellectual" (while still rightly distinguishing it from the pragmatic), because belief in hinges is not directly related to my evidence. Whether we call our entitlement to believe hinge propositions "epistemic" or "intellectual" is not important to me; it is important that we see that the justification is *not* pragmatic. (See Foley, R., *Working Without a Net*, Oxford, 1993, pp. 19-21). Thanks to John Turri for pointing this out.

¹⁸ Wittgenstein and Strawson seem to think that hinge propositions aren't bearers of truth-values. This seems wrong, but it is a way to avoid these worries about epistemic justification. The view that hinges aren't true is mistake in as much as knowledge that *p* entails the truth of *p*. If hinge propositions aren't true, they can't be known, and that is unacceptable. See footnote 22 below.

¹⁹ Thanks to an anonymous referee from this journal for pressing me on the importance of knowledge, in addition to justification, here.

²⁰ See footnote 18 above.

²¹ "Wittgensteinian Certainties," cited above

²² I am here leaving aside a number of issues that are central in understanding Wright's epistemology, as well as Wittgenstein's. In particular, it seems to be that on Wittgenstein's view hinges are not genuine propositions, and hence are not believed, and not true. Wright's worries over this are justified; I won't here assess his attempt to square Wittgenstein's view of hinges with a view on which they are fact-expressing propositions capable of bearing a truth value.

²³ At least in simple formulations.

²⁴ See Elga, op. cit. and Bostrom, op. cit.

²⁵ Strawson, op cit, p. 20