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Citation for published version:

Pritchard, D 2016, 'Epistemic Angst', *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/phpr.12280>

Digital Object Identifier (DOI):

[10.1111/phpr.12280](https://doi.org/10.1111/phpr.12280)

Link:

[Link to publication record in Edinburgh Research Explorer](#)

Document Version:

Peer reviewed version

Published In:

Philosophy and Phenomenological Research

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EPISTEMIC *ANGST*

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ABSTRACT. Support is canvassed for a novel solution to the sceptical problem regarding our knowledge of the external world. Key to this solution is the claim that what initially looks like a single problem is in fact two logically distinct problems. In particular, there are two putative sceptical *paradoxes* in play here, which each trade on distinctive epistemological theses. It is argued that the ideal solution to radical scepticism would thus be a *biscopic* proposal—*viz.*, a two-pronged, integrated, undercutting treatment of both putative sceptical paradoxes. A particular biscopic proposal is then explored which brings together two apparently opposing anti-sceptical theses: the Wittgensteinian account of the structure of rational evaluation and epistemological disjunctivism. It is argued that each proposal enables us to gain a purchase on one, but only one, aspect of the two-sided sceptical problem. Furthermore, it is argued that these proposals are not only compatible positions, but also mutually supporting and advanced in the same undercutting spirit. A potential cure is thus offered for epistemic *angst*.

“He woke with the sense of complete despair
that a man might feel finding the only money he possessed was counterfeit.”
Graham Greene, *The Power and the Glory*

1. EPISTEMIC *ANGST*

Why does the problem of radical scepticism—where by this I mean the broadly Cartesian problem regarding our knowledge of the external world—endure, despite our best efforts at resolution? I think the answer to this question lies in the fact that a proper resolution of a philosophical problem demands an accurate account of what the problem is, and that we have as yet failed to properly understand the true nature of the challenge posed by radical scepticism. I have two points in mind here. The first is that we have failed to fully appreciate that the sceptical problem purports to be a *paradox*, and that this imposes constraints on what would count as an intellectually

satisfying response to this problem. The second is that we have failed to recognise that there are in fact *two* sceptical problems in play—inter-related, but ultimately distinct, and trading on discrete epistemological claims.

Consider a familiar way of expressing this form of radical scepticism. We will focus our attention on rationally grounded knowledge, in order to side-step issues that might arise with knowledge which lacks a rational grounding.¹ Here is how the argument goes:

Closure-Based Radical Scepticism

- (S₁1) One cannot have rationally grounded knowledge that one is not the victim of a radical sceptical hypothesis.
- (S₁2) If one cannot have rationally grounded knowledge that one is not the victim of a radical sceptical hypothesis, then one has little, if any, rationally grounded knowledge of an external world.
- (S₁C) One has little, if any, rationally grounded knowledge of an external world.²

(S₁1) is motivated by the general thought that one cannot have rationally grounded knowledge that one is not the victim of a radical sceptical hypothesis, such as the notorious brain-in-a-vat (BIV) hypothesis. Given that, *ex hypothesi*, one cannot distinguish between one's ordinary experiences and the corresponding experiences that one would have if one were a BIV, then how could one have a rational basis for knowing that one is not a BIV?³

The combination of (S₁1) and (S₁2) obviously entail the sceptical conclusion, (S₁C). But what motivates the second claim, (S₁2)? Consider the following principle:

The Closure Principle

If *S* has rationally grounded knowledge that *p*, and *S* competently deduces from *p* that *q*, thereby forming a belief that *q* on this basis while retaining her rationally grounded knowledge that *p*, then *S* has rationally grounded knowledge that *q*.

With the closure principle in play, imagine that one does have the widespread rationally grounded knowledge of the external world that is being denied in (S₁C). Suppose, for example, that one knows that one is sitting at one's desk in one's office. This proposition is inconsistent with a range of radical sceptical hypotheses, including the sceptical hypothesis that one is a BIV (BIVs, after all, don't *sit* anywhere, but rather float). If one is aware of this fact, one could thus employ the closure principle and in this way acquire rationally grounded knowledge that one is not a BIV. Conversely, if we grant to the sceptic that it is simply impossible to have rationally grounded knowledge of the denials of radical sceptical hypotheses, then it follows that one must lack knowledge of such everyday propositions as that one is sitting at one's office desk. We thus get the bridging premise in the sceptical argument, (S₁2).

The guiding thought behind the closure principle is that competent deduction is a paradigm instance of a rational process. Accordingly, any belief which is grounded on a competent

deduction from rationally grounded knowledge—and where the original rationally grounded knowledge is preserved throughout the deduction—cannot be itself any less rationally grounded. There are, of course, weaker formulations of closure-style principles in this general vein in the literature, many of them synchronic rather than diachronic formulations, and some of them have been rejected for various reasons.⁴ But it is hard to see how one could motivate a rejection of the principle as just formulated. How could one have rationally grounded knowledge, competently deduce a belief on this basis (while retaining the original rationally grounded knowledge), and yet lack rationally grounded knowledge of the proposition deduced? At the very least, any anti-sceptical strategy which proceeds by rejecting this principle will face a steep up-hill task.

So we have a radical sceptical argument which proceeds towards a radical conclusion, in the form of (S₁C). But we can get a better grip on the problem that confronts us by representing radical scepticism not as an argument to a sceptical conclusion, but rather as a putative *paradox* that presents us with a trilemma. That is, the radical sceptic seems to be exposing the fact that we have the following three fundamental epistemological commitments, which turn out to be jointly inconsistent:

Closure-Based Radical Scepticism Qua Paradox

- (I) One cannot have rationally grounded knowledge of the denials of radical sceptical hypotheses.
- (II) The closure principle.
- (III) One has a large body of rationally grounded knowledge of the external world.

Rejecting (III) would thus be one route out of this paradox, a route that would involve embracing radical scepticism *qua* position. This would mean resigning ourselves to the thought that the epistemic currency we standardly trade in is essentially counterfeit. So long as one finds this option unpalatable, the alternative is to find a way of rejecting either (I) or (II) (or both). Crucially, however, if the point made earlier that (I) and (II) constitute highly intuitive claims is right, then it follows that rejecting one of these claims will not be without its costs.⁵

Recognising that the sceptical problem purports to be a paradox in this way has an important bearing on how might go about resolving this problem. In particular, responses to radical scepticism can be *undercutting* or *overriding* depending on whether they grant that the sceptic has presented us with a genuine paradox. Overriding anti-sceptical strategies are essentially revisionist. They grant that the sceptical problem is arising out of a genuine conflict within our fundamental epistemological commitments, but argue in response that we have an independent theoretical basis to reject one of these commitments and thereby block the sceptical argument. For example, a broadly neo-Moorean anti-sceptical strategy that was cast along epistemic externalist

lines might take this approach by arguing that our commitment to (I) rests on an epistemic internalism that we would be wise to abandon.⁶

Undercutting anti-sceptical strategies, in contrast, are more ambitious. They try to demonstrate, in a broadly Wittgensteinian spirit, that what appears to be a paradox is in fact nothing of the sort. In particular, such strategies aim to show that the sceptical puzzle illicitly trades upon a contentious theoretical claim that is masquerading as pre-theoretical commonsense. Undercutting anti-sceptical strategies are generally to be preferred to overriding ones, since if successful they will offer a more powerful philosophical resolution of the sceptical problem as one would not be obliged to revise one's fundamental epistemological commitments after all. But by the same token, such strategies are also harder to successfully mount, as it is difficult to see how there could be any contentious theoretical claims driving the sceptical paradox.⁷

Our dealings with the sceptical problem are further complicated by the fact that there is a second version of the sceptical paradox in the vicinity, one that, while being superficially very similar to closure-based radical scepticism, in fact trades on a logically distinct principle. Here it is:

Underdetermination-Based Radical Scepticism

- (S₂1) One cannot have a rational basis that favours one's everyday beliefs about the external world over radical sceptical scenarios.
- (S₂2) If one cannot have a rational basis that favours one's everyday beliefs about the external world over radical sceptical scenarios, then one has little, if any, rationally grounded knowledge of an external world.
- (S₂C) One has little, if any, rationally grounded knowledge of an external world.⁸

The first claim, (S₂1), is closely related to a widely held commitment in epistemology, known as the *new evil demon intuition*. Consider two agents. The first is in normal good epistemic conditions—call this the *good case*. The second, in contrast, is an identical counterpart of the first but unfortunately the victim of a radical sceptical hypothesis (such as the BIV hypothesis)—call this the *bad case*. It is by stipulation impossible for either subject to distinguish between their experiences and those had by their counterpart. The new evil demon intuition is the claim that the first agent in the good case cannot have a better rational basis for her beliefs about the external world than her counterpart in the bad case does for her corresponding beliefs. After all, given that the good and bad cases are indistinguishable to the subjects concerned, how could the agent in the good case have a better rational standing for her beliefs about the external world than her counterpart in the bad case?⁹

With the new evil demon intuition in play, however, the case for (S₂1) looks irresistible. If one's rational basis for belief in the good case can be no better than one's counterpart's rational basis for belief in the (sceptical) bad case, then it is hard to see how one could ever have a rational basis which favours one's everyday beliefs over radical sceptical scenarios. Instead, one's rational

basis is rather completely *indifferent* when it comes to determining whether one is in the good case or the bad case.

This formulation shares its conclusion with closure-based radical scepticism. Moreover, the second claim is, as before, merely a ‘bridging’ premise that derives the radical sceptical conclusion from the first premise. The motivation for this bridging premise is meant to originate from the following *underdetermination principle*:

The Underdetermination Principle

If S knows that p and q describe incompatible scenarios, and yet S lacks a rational basis that favours belief that p over q , then S lacks rationally grounded knowledge that p .

With this principle in play, it follows that if one lacks a rational basis which favours one’s everyday beliefs about the external world over (known to be incompatible) radically sceptical alternatives, then one lacks rationally grounded knowledge about the external world. We thus get (S₂2).

The underdetermination principle is meant to be entirely uncontentious. Consider what it would mean for it to be false. This would entail that one could have rationally grounded knowledge of a proposition even while recognising that the proposition believed was incompatible with an alternative scenario and that one’s rational basis for one’s belief didn’t favour it over the alternative scenario. An example might be having rationally grounded knowledge that one is seated even while recognising that one has no better reason for thinking that one is seated than that one is standing (a known to be incompatible alternative). Although there might be some dispute over what is involved in having rationally grounded knowledge, we would surely want a conception of this kind of knowledge such that it excluded this possibility.

As with closure-based radical scepticism, we can conceive of this sceptical problem as posing a putative paradox in the form of a trilemma, where each component of the trilemma is meant to be rooted in our fundamental epistemological commitments:

Underdetermination-Based Radical Scepticism Qua Paradox

- (I*) One cannot have a rational basis that favours one’s everyday beliefs about the external world over radical sceptical hypotheses.
- (II*) The underdetermination principle.
- (III*) One has a large body of rationally grounded knowledge of the external world.

As before, radical scepticism *qua* position would involve denying the third horn of the trilemma. Failing that, the alternatives would be denying at least one of (I*) or (II*), both of which we have seen to be highly intuitive.

These two formulations of the radical sceptical paradox are clearly very similar. The ultimate sceptical challenge posed in each case is the same. Moreover, they both essentially trade on appeal to radical sceptical hypotheses. There is, however, a crucial logical difference between the

epistemic demands imposed by the two principles in play in these arguments. The closure principle effectively demands that one can derive from one's rationally grounded knowledge about the external world rationally grounded knowledge of the denials of sceptical hypotheses. In contrast, the underdetermination principle only demands that from the same antecedent one can derive the consequent that one's everyday beliefs about the external world enjoy rational support which favours these beliefs over radical sceptical alternatives. This is a weaker demand to extract. In particular, one might have rational support that favours one's everyday beliefs over sceptical alternatives even while lacking rationally grounded knowledge of the denials of sceptical hypotheses. In contrast, if one has rationally grounded knowledge of the external world and rationally grounded knowledge of the denials of sceptical hypotheses (and one knows the relevant entailments), then surely one must have a rational basis which favours one's everyday beliefs about the external world over sceptical alternatives. From a common antecedent (rationally grounded knowledge of the external world), closure thus allows us to extract a logically stronger consequent than underdetermination, in that it entails, but is not entailed by, the corresponding consequent of the underdetermination-based inference.

Given the logical differences between these two ways of arguing for radical scepticism, we cannot take it as given that a response to the one formulation of the sceptical problem is thereby a response to the other formulation of the problem. Indeed, we cannot even take it as given that any adequate response to the underdetermination-based sceptical paradox is thereby an adequate response to the closure-based radical sceptical paradox. True, if one's way of dealing with underdetermination-based radical scepticism is to reject the underdetermination principle, then one will surely want to respond to closure-based radical scepticism by rejecting the closure principle too, given that it is a much more demanding principle. But rejecting the underdetermination principle is not the only way of responding to underdetermination-based radical scepticism, so the more general thesis doesn't hold. The point thus remains that these two formulations of radical scepticism might be amenable to very different anti-sceptical resolutions.¹⁰

Indeed, I think the logical differences between these two formulations are important, in that they reveal two different sources of radical scepticism. Consider first closure-based radical scepticism. This form of scepticism exposes the apparent sceptical consequences of what we might naturally refer to as the 'universality' of rational evaluation, where this concerns the manner in which there are no *in principle* constraints on the extent of one's rational evaluations (this is in contrast to *practical* constraints, of which there are usually many: time, imagination, opportunity-cost, and so on). Call this the *universality of rational evaluation thesis*. Such an idea underlies closure-based radical scepticism in virtue of how there seems no inherent problem with extending the scope of a rational evaluation indefinitely by undertaking competent deductions from one's

current stock of rationally grounded knowledge. In this way, one moves from rational evaluations of one's everyday beliefs to rational evaluations of one's explicitly anti-sceptical commitments. In so doing, one is in effect shifting from a local rational evaluation to a global one, where the latter involves a wholesale rational assessment of one's epistemic situation. That such a shift in epistemic focus is thought harmless reflects an implicit commitment to the universality of rational evaluation thesis, since without this in play we would not be so inclined to allow such closure-based inferences. In particular, if we antecedently held that there were in principle constraints on rational evaluation, then we would be inclined to limit such inferences so that they did not enable subjects to extend the scope of their rational evaluation beyond these limits.

In contrast, underdetermination-based radical scepticism is concerned with how the rational support we have for our everyday external world beliefs is troublingly weak, in that it is entirely compatible with those beliefs being radically in error, as in a radical sceptical scenario. In this way, underdetermination-based radical scepticism exposes the 'insularity' of our rational support for these beliefs. Accordingly, call this claim the *insularity of reasons* thesis. It is this thesis that is driving our acceptance of the opening premise of this argument, and which renders the underdetermination principle so potentially epistemically devastating. Whereas the universality of rational evaluation thesis is concerned with the lack of in principle constraints on rational evaluation, the insularity of reasons thesis is concerned with a certain limitation on rational support itself, at least as regards our external world beliefs.¹¹

Although the ultimate sceptical import of the universality of rational evaluation thesis and the insularity of reasons thesis is the same, it is important to note that they pose distinct epistemological challenges. Suppose, for example, that one rejected the universality of rational evaluation thesis and therefore argued that there are in principle limitations on the scope of rational evaluation. In this way, one could argue that closure-based inferences need to be restricted in some way to prevent them taking the subject from local to global rational evaluations. One could thus undermine the closure-based radical sceptical paradox. In particular, one could hold that one's rationally grounded knowledge of the external world is entirely compatible with a lack of rationally grounded knowledge of the denials of radical sceptical hypotheses (on account of the fact that one cannot employ a closure-based inference in order to claim that one's rationally grounded knowledge of everyday propositions, if genuine, would entail the contested rationally grounded anti-sceptical knowledge).

It is far from obvious how that would help one resolve the problem posed by the insularity of reasons thesis, however. That one can have rationally grounded knowledge of mundane empirical propositions while lacking rationally grounded knowledge of the denials of radical sceptical hypotheses is one thing. That one can have adequately rationally grounded knowledge of

mundane empirical propositions when that rational basis (one is aware) does not favour one's everyday empirical beliefs over sceptical alternatives quite another. As one might put the point, if one's everyday empirical beliefs do not satisfy the underdetermination principle, then in virtue of what, exactly, do they amount to rationally grounded knowledge? Thus, even with the closure principle out of action, one can still employ the underdetermination principle in concert with the insularity of reasons thesis to motivate a radical sceptical conclusion.

The same is true in the other logical direction, in that merely denying the insularity of reasons thesis does not in itself deliver a satisfactory response to the sceptical problem posed by the universality of rational evaluation thesis. For suppose that one argues that one's rational support can, in optimal cases say, epistemically favour one's everyday external world beliefs over radical sceptical alternatives. The insularity of reasons thesis would thus be rejected, and the underdetermination principle—while still standing—would be deprived of its sceptical ramifications. As we noted above, however, the claim that one's rational support favours one's everyday external world beliefs over radical sceptical alternatives is consistent with one nonetheless lacking rationally grounded knowledge of the denials of these radical sceptical alternatives. The extent to which one has better rational support for one's everyday empirical beliefs over radical sceptical alternatives could, after all, be merely marginal, and not of a kind that could underpin rationally grounded knowledge of the denials of these sceptical alternatives. It follows that one could have better rational support for one's everyday empirical beliefs over radical sceptical alternatives and yet nonetheless lack rationally grounded knowledge of the denials of these radical sceptical alternatives. And note that this could be so even if one further supposes that one has rationally grounded knowledge of these everyday propositions.

But insofar as the rejection of the insularity of reasons thesis is compatible with a lack of rationally grounded knowledge of the denials of sceptical hypotheses, then the radical sceptic can appeal to the closure principle—and, thereby, the universality of rational evaluation thesis—in order to call the possibility of rationally grounded knowledge of the external world into question. Thus, the mere fact that one has a better rational basis for one's everyday external world beliefs over radical sceptical alternatives will not suffice to block the closure-based radical sceptical argument.

The upshot of the foregoing is that a fully adequate response to the problem of radical scepticism may well need to be sensitive to the particular challenges posed by *both* of the articulations of this problem that we have examined. As we will see below, this conclusion is potentially important in terms of our understanding of two prominent styles of anti-scepticism that can appear to be in competition with one another. In particular, it invites the thought that

these two responses to the problem of radical scepticism may well be responding to different versions of the radical sceptical challenge, such that on closer inspection they are not competing anti-sceptical proposals at all, but rather mutually supporting. Moreover, going back to our distinction between undercutting and overriding anti-sceptical strategies from earlier, we would ideally want this dual response to the two variants of the sceptical paradox to be in addition part of a general undercutting response to the sceptical problem. I call such an anti-sceptical response—i.e., one that offers a two-pronged, integrated, undercutting treatment of both putative sceptical paradoxes—a *biscopeic* proposal.

2. HINGE EPISTEMOLOGY

So we are now looking for two silver bullets rather than just the one. We begin with the closure-based radical sceptical paradox. I contend that the antidote to this problem lies in a distinctive conception of the structure of rational evaluation that is offered by Wittgenstein in his final notebooks, published as *On Certainty* (OC).¹² What is common to the rational evaluations undertaken by both radical sceptics and traditional anti-sceptics (such as Descartes or G. E. Moore) is that they each attempt a universal rational evaluation of our beliefs. While the sceptics conclude from this evaluation that the rational standing of our beliefs is insecure, the classical anti-sceptics in contrast argue that a solid rational basis for our beliefs is available. Where Wittgenstein diverges from both sceptical and traditional anti-sceptical proposals is in his contention that the very idea of a fully general rational evaluation—whether positive (i.e., anti-sceptical) or negative (i.e., sceptical)—is simply incoherent. He thus offers a conception of the structure of rational evaluation which is essentially local, and which is thus directly at odds with the universality of rational evaluation thesis.

Key to Wittgenstein's account of the structure of rational evaluation is the idea of *hinge commitments*. These concern that which we are optimally certain of, the so-called 'Moorean' propositions, such as (in normal circumstances) 'I have two hands'. Moore (1925; 1939) noted that the optimal certainty that we accord to such propositions seems to allow them to play an important epistemic role our practices of epistemic evaluation. But while Moore thought that this optimal certainty revealed a special kind of epistemic status, Wittgenstein instead argues that the exact opposite is the case, in that our hinge commitments are essentially groundless. Indeed, not only are they essentially groundless, but they cannot be subject to rational doubt either. This is because they form the framework relative to which any rational evaluation occurs, whether

positive or negative.

As we might expect from unedited notebooks containing impressionistic remarks, Wittgenstein doesn't offer a straightforward argument for this account of our hinge commitments. Rather he offers a series of examples that highlight the implausibility both of doubt of a hinge commitment being rational and of the idea that we could regard such commitments as rationally grounded. Consider the following passage:

If a blind man were to ask me "Have you got two hands?" I should not make sure by looking. If I were to have any doubt of it, then I don't know why I should trust my eyes. For why shouldn't I test my *eyes* by looking to find out whether I see my two hands? *What* is to be tested by *what*? (OC, §125)

Wittgenstein is suggesting that doubt of that which is optimally certain cannot be rational because it throws into question one's entire system of beliefs, and thus the very putative rational basis of the doubt itself. Such a doubt, he writes, would "drag everything with it and plunge it into chaos." (OC, §613) Doubt of a Moorean certainty is deemed akin to doubting everything, but Wittgenstein cautions that:

If you tried to doubt everything you would not get as far as doubting anything. The game of doubting itself presupposes certainty. (OC, §115)¹³

And elsewhere, "A doubt that doubted everything would not be a doubt." (OC, §450; cf. OC, §§370; 490; 613)

Something must thus stand fast for rational doubt to occur, and this is our bedrock of hinge commitments. But, crucially, Wittgenstein further argues—contrary to a certain brand of broadly Moorean anti-scepticism—that it does not follow that these hinge commitments have a special rational grounding, but rather that just as they cannot be rationally doubted, so they cannot be coherently thought of as rationally grounded either. Consider the following passage:

My having two hands is, in normal circumstances, as certain as anything that I could produce in evidence for it.

That is why I am not in a position to take the sight of my hand as evidence for it. (OC, §250)

That is, just as one cannot make sense of a rational basis for doubt of a hinge commitment, for the very same reason one cannot make sense of a rational basis for belief of a hinge commitment either. They provide, rather, the framework relative to which a rational evaluation, whether positive or negative, takes place. Such commitments are thus essentially arational.

Relatedly, Wittgenstein also emphasises the point that our hinge commitments are neither acquired via rational processes nor directly responsive to rational considerations in the way that normal beliefs are. We've already noted the latter point, in that we've seen how our hinge

commitments are simply not directly responsive to rational considerations in the usual way—e.g., they are not susceptible to being undermined by rational doubt. Wittgenstein further emphasises the visceral, “animal” (OC, §359) nature of these commitments. Despite the metaphor of the hinge (which implies optionality, in that one can usually move hinges at will), Wittgenstein clearly regards these commitments as completely non-optional.

On the point about how our hinge commitments are not acquired via rational processes, Wittgenstein notes that we are never explicitly taught our hinge commitments, but we rather “swallow them down” (OC, §143) in other things that we are taught. No one teaches you that you have two hands, for example, but lots of things that you are taught presuppose this commitment. In a similar vein, Wittgenstein notes that it takes a very special kind of inquiry—one that is specifically philosophical in nature—to bring our hinge commitments to the fore. In the normal run of things, they “lie apart from the route travelled by inquiry.” (OC, §88)

Putting all these points together, Wittgenstein argues for the necessity of hinge commitments for there to be rational evaluation, and thus he contends that—as a ‘matter of logic’—all rational evaluation is essentially local. Consider these famous remarks:

[...] the *questions* that we raise and our *doubts* depend upon the fact that some propositions are exempt from doubt, are as it were like hinges on which those turn.

That is to say, it belongs to the logic of our scientific investigations that certain things are *in deed* not doubted.

But it isn’t that the situation is like this: We just *can’t* investigate everything, and for that reason we are forced to rest content with assumption. If I want the door to turn, the hinges must stay put. (OC, §§341-3)¹⁴

This point about how rational evaluation must be this way is very important to Wittgenstein’s anti-scepticism, but it is often overlooked. Wittgenstein is quite emphatic that it is not a mere practical limitation on rational evaluation that he has in mind, such that if only we were cleverer, more imaginative, more conscientious, and so forth, then we would be able to undertake fully general rational evaluations. That these hinges stand fast for me, Wittgenstein writes, is not “grounded in my stupidity or credulity.” (OC, §235)¹⁵ Rather his point is that the very idea of a fully general rational evaluation—i.e., a rational evaluation that takes in even one’s hinge commitments—simply doesn’t make sense.¹⁶

How does this help us with the sceptical paradoxes that we encountered above? As I’ve argued elsewhere, the import of Wittgenstein’s account of the structure of rational evaluation to these paradoxes is moot, in that one needs to develop the proposal in very specific ways in order for it to get the required grip on the problem in hand. We will ignore the twists and turns in this discussion here, however, and go straight for what I believe is the concluding thought.¹⁷ This is

that Wittgenstein's proposal has direct application to the closure-based sceptical paradox in virtue of how it demonstrates how closure-based inferences are simply not applicable to our hinge commitments.

As noted above, in the first instance Wittgenstein's proposal applies to the closure-based sceptical paradox in virtue of rejecting the universality of reasons thesis that we saw underpinned this formulation of the problem. If Wittgenstein is right, then there are in principle limitations on the extent to which one can rationally evaluate one's propositional commitments. In particular, the scope of rational evaluation is constrained by the fact that all rational evaluations presuppose prior hinge commitments, and these cannot themselves be rationally evaluated. We should thus be very suspicious of the kind of closure-style inference in play in this formulation of scepticism, such that it takes us from treating a normal non-hinge claim as rationally grounded knowledge to treating a hinge commitment—concerning the denial of a radical sceptical hypothesis—as rationally grounded knowledge too.¹⁸

But does that mean that Wittgenstein is rejecting the closure principle? That would at least seem to be the implication of his rejection of the universality of reasons thesis, since one can surely recognise that one's (rationally grounded) non-hinge commitments sometimes entail one's hinge commitments. If the closure principle is allowed, then how is one to resist the conclusion that one can gain rationally grounded knowledge of one's hinge commitments in this case, *contra* what Wittgenstein proposes? Conversely, insofar as we grant that rationally grounded knowledge of one's hinge commitments is impossible, then one seems forced to admit that there is a standing challenge to the idea that any of one's normal non-hinge beliefs amount to rationally grounded knowledge. The trouble is, didn't we note above that the closure principle looked entirely uncontentious, such that denying it would be highly revisionary?¹⁹

The key to resolving this issue is to realise that the closure principle is simply inapplicable to our hinge commitments, and hence that it cannot be used to motivate the sceptical challenge in play. The reason for this is that the Wittgensteinian conception of our hinge commitments entails that these commitments cannot be beliefs, at least not in the sense of belief that is relevant for epistemologists. In particular, whatever notion of belief is in play here (if any), it is not that notion which is held to be a constituent of knowledge (call this notion, *knowledge-apt belief*). A knowledge-apt believing, after all, is a believing a proposition *to be true*, and as such it bears certain essential conceptual connections to truth and to reasons. In particular, while one can obviously have an irrational or groundless knowledge-apt belief, one cannot, for instance, recognise that one has no reason for believing *p* to be true and yet still count as believing *p* (at least not in the knowledge-apt sense of belief anyway). One's propositional attitude toward *p* would instead amount to something else entirely, such as a wishful thinking. Thus insofar as we take seriously Wittgenstein's claim that

our ‘animal’ hinge commitments are neither acquired via rational processes nor directly responsive to rational considerations, then they cannot plausibly be thought of as knowledge-apt beliefs at all.²⁰

It is, however, crucial to the formulation of the closure principle that it involves the acquisition of a (knowledge-apt) *belief* in the entailed proposition via the paradigmatically *rational process* of competent deduction. As we noted earlier, it is only if closure is understood in this diachronic way that it captures the idea that competent deductions from rationally grounded knowledge (where rationally grounded knowledge of the antecedent is maintained throughout) cannot lead to anything less than rationally grounded knowledge of the consequent. But if Wittgenstein is right, then it is simply not possible to acquire a (knowledge-apt) belief in a hinge proposition, much less via a rational process, and hence the sceptic cannot employ the closure principle to motivate their sceptical conclusion. The Wittgensteinian response to radical scepticism thus proceeds by rejecting the universality of reasons thesis and then further noting that the rationale for rejecting this thesis also undermines the sceptical application of the closure principle.²¹

In particular, in terms of our formulation of closure-based radical scepticism above, it is the second bridging claim, (S₁2), that is denied. More specifically, it is maintained that one can accept the closure principle and yet nonetheless deny (S₁2), on the grounds that closure doesn’t apply to our hinge commitments and hence cannot be employed to generate this claim. The closure-based radical sceptical paradox as set out above is thus undercut. This is because it doesn’t present the trilemma it purports to present as one can consistently endorse all three claims in question, including the closure principle. Our fundamental epistemic commitments are thus not in tension as the sceptic proposed, and the idea that they are in tension is shown to trade on an illicit commitment to dubious theoretical claims.

While the Wittgensteinian response to radical scepticism fares well when it comes to closure-based radical scepticism, it struggles with underdetermination-based radical scepticism. That all rational evaluation is essentially local is entirely compatible, after all, with the rational support enjoyed by one’s external world beliefs also being ‘insular’ in the manner set out above. But with the insularity of reasons thesis in play, underdetermination-based radical scepticism seems inevitable. In short, it could *both* be true that all rational evaluation is essentially local *and* that the rational support which our external world beliefs enjoy is also insular. Is there anything in Wittgenstein’s account of the structure of reasons that could block this move?

Now one might be tempted to respond to this point by arguing that Wittgenstein’s account has at least *indirect* relevance to the underdetermination-based sceptical problem. For doesn’t this view rule sceptical scenarios out of the epistemic court, in virtue of the fact that their

denials aren't in the market for knowledge? If that's right, then while there is nothing in Wittgenstein's proposal which would suffice to show that we have the relevant favouring rational support for our beliefs, nonetheless there is enough to make the putative negative epistemic import of sceptical scenarios inherently suspect. Given that underdetermination-based scepticism trades on these scenarios just as much as closure-based scepticism, this would surely be bad news for both variants of the sceptical problem.

But a moment's reflection reveals that this train of reasoning, while superficially appealing, is far too quick. For while it's true that closure-based scepticism and underdetermination-based radical scepticism both appeal to radical sceptical hypotheses, we need to bear in mind that the manner in which they appeal to them is very different. The closure-based sceptical argument demands that we must be able to have rationally grounded knowledge of the denials of radical sceptical hypotheses if we are to have widespread rationally grounded knowledge of everyday empirical propositions. The Wittgensteinian proposal we have considered deals with this form of scepticism by showing that our everyday rationally grounded knowledge is compatible with a failure to have rationally grounded knowledge of the denials of sceptical hypotheses.

In contrast, the underdetermination-based sceptical argument doesn't demand that we must be able to have rationally grounded knowledge of the denials of sceptical hypotheses at all, and hence the Wittgensteinian proposal doesn't gain a purchase here. Instead, this form of scepticism makes the demand that we must have better rational support for our empirical beliefs over sceptical alternatives if the former is to amount to rationally grounded knowledge. As we saw above, this is a logically weaker demand to make, in that one could have such favouring supporting for one's everyday empirical beliefs over sceptical alternatives even while failing to have rationally grounded knowledge of the denials of sceptical alternatives. And therein lies the crux of the matter. The Wittgensteinian proposal is that our everyday rationally grounded knowledge is fine even despite the fact that our commitments to the denials of radical sceptical hypotheses are not in the market for rationally grounded knowledge. But this is irrelevant to underdetermination-based radical scepticism on account of the fact that this form of scepticism *never demanded* that we should have this kind of anti-sceptical knowledge if we are to have everyday rationally grounded knowledge.

The Wittgensteinian treatment of radical scepticism thus fails to engage with the underdetermination-based formulation of this problem. The worry that the rational support for our beliefs might be both local and insular is thus very real indeed. Worse, with the underdetermination-based formulation of the sceptical problem in play, it is surely even harder to be comfortable with the idea—which even Wittgenstein held took some getting used to (e.g., OC,

§166)—of essentially local rational support. For remember what this idea means in practice—*viz.*, that the hinge commitments which underpin our system of rational evaluation are lacking a rational basis and hence cannot amount to rationally grounded knowledge. Wittgenstein offers us a compelling story as to why we should accept such a claim, despite it being in tension with a certain widely held philosophical picture (as encapsulated in the universality of rational evaluation thesis). In short, they are not even in the market for rationally grounded knowledge, and so in an important sense they are neither known nor unknown. But once we recognise the danger posed by underdetermination-based scepticism, this story starts to look much less compelling. The idea that rational evaluation is essentially local is acceptable only so long as we can retain our conviction that this rational support is nonetheless *bona fide* rather than counterfeit. But with the underdetermination-based sceptical problem in play, there is no assurance that such local rational support is genuine at all.²²

3. EPISTEMOLOGICAL DISJUNCTIVISM

We saw above that the closure-based and underdetermination-based sceptical arguments are logically distinct, and hence it shouldn't come as much of a surprise that an adequate answer to the former is not thereby an adequate answer to the latter. So where does the proper response to underdetermination-based scepticism lie? My proposal is that we need to appeal to a thesis known as *epistemological disjunctivism*. Moreover, I will be claiming that since epistemological disjunctivism struggles as much with closure-based radical scepticism as Wittgensteinian anti-scepticism struggles with underdetermination-based radical scepticism, so we should combine these proposals to offer a complete response to both formulations of the sceptical problem. Indeed, I will be suggesting that these two anti-sceptical approaches, though superficially in conflict, are in fact mutually supportive.

Epistemological disjunctivism is the view that in paradigm cases of perceptual knowledge the rational support one's belief enjoys can be both factive and reflectively accessible. More specifically, epistemological disjunctivists claim that paradigmatically a subject's rational basis for perceptually knowing that *p* is that she *sees that p*, where seeing that *p* is rational support which is both reflectively accessible and which entails *p*. So, in the good case where epistemic conditions are splendid, one can perceptually know that *p* in virtue of the reflectively accessible factive reason that one sees that *p*, even though, in the bad case where epistemic conditions are far from splendid (such as in the BIV sceptical scenario), one clearly lacks such a factive rational basis (since, apart from anything else, *p* is usually no longer true). Epistemological disjunctivism is thus in direct

opposition to the insularity of reasons thesis (and hence also the new evil demon intuition too). Factive rational support is, after all, a particularly robust kind of favouring epistemic support—indeed, in the standard case it will entail the denial of the target radical sceptical hypothesis.²³

Epistemological disjunctivism is a position that is standardly held to be unavailable, and yet it corresponds with a natural way of describing one's epistemic position with regard to one's perceptual beliefs in good epistemic conditions. Indeed, it would be odd in normal conversational contexts to characterise the epistemic support one has for one's perceptual beliefs in these conditions in a weaker fashion. If epistemic conditions are good, would one naturally offer as support for one's perceptual knowledge that p that it *seems to one as if* p , for example (where, note, its seeming to one as if p *doesn't* entail p)? This highlights the point that the basis for rejecting epistemological disjunctivism is specifically theoretical, in that we feel theoretically compelled to not take our ordinary epistemic practices on this score at face value.

What is driving this theoretical revisionism? We can identify two related core sources. The first is the apparent plausibility of the insularity of the reasons thesis (and thus the closely related new evil demon intuition). Once we grant that the rational support that our worldly beliefs enjoy, even in the best case, is consistent with their widespread falsity, then it follows that the rational support we have for our perceptual beliefs can never be factive. Such factive grounds would, after all, entail the falsity of those radical sceptical hypotheses which are in conflict with one's everyday perceptual beliefs, and hence one would be in possession of a particularly strong form of favouring support.

The second reason for this revisionism is the idea that the natural picture of our rational support for perceptual beliefs in paradigmatic conditions—as encapsulated by epistemological disjunctivism—cannot be right since it leads to some fairly immediate, and fatal, difficulties. For example, if one has reflective access to factive reasons regarding specific empirical facts, and one also has *a priori* knowledge that these reasons are factive, then doesn't that mean that one has reflective access to specific empirical facts? These two sources of disquiet regarding epistemological disjunctivism are related in that often the fatal problems advertised for this view will implicitly or explicitly appeal to the insularity of reasons thesis (or some claim in the vicinity of this thesis, like the new evil demon intuition).

As I have argued at length elsewhere, however, epistemological disjunctivism is simply not susceptible to the putatively 'fatal' problems that have been levelled against it.²⁴ I don't have the space to rehearse these arguments in full here, but let me at least dispose of the superficially appealing objection just raised against epistemological disjunctivism. The appeal of this objection

is due to a failure to make clear from the off that seeing that p is an *empirical reason* for believing that p , in that it is perceptually gained. Accordingly, while it is true that epistemological disjunctivism allows that a subject who possesses this factive rational support for believing that p can on this basis infer that p (at least if she recognises the entailment in question), it does not follow that her rational basis for believing that p is now non-empirical. Indeed, quite the contrary, the subject's rational basis for believing that p is derived from her original empirical reason for believing that p —*viz.*, that she sees that p . There is thus no purely reflective route to knowledge of specific empirical facts on the epistemological disjunctivist proposal.²⁵

In any case, suppose one grants for the sake of argument that these 'fatal' problems for epistemological disjunctivism are in fact illusory. Notice what a dramatic effect this has on the dialectical state-of-play. Since epistemological disjunctivism is rooted in our ordinary epistemic practices, and is only rejected because of these supposedly deadly objections, then realising that these objections are illusory enables us to embrace our ordinary epistemic practices. In particular, it enables us to resist the theoretical reconstructions of our ordinary epistemic practices that are proposed in the light of the rejection of epistemological disjunctivism.

This point is very important when it comes to assessing the plausibility of the insularity of reasons thesis (and hence the closely related new evil demon intuition), where this is a thesis which (as noted above) is in direct conflict with epistemological disjunctivism. For it highlights that the insularity of reasons thesis is not underwritten by our ordinary epistemic practices, but is rather a theoretical conclusion that is reached in the light of the fact that these ordinary epistemic practices (which involve factive reasons), when philosophically reflected upon, seem to generate insurmountable puzzles. If these philosophical puzzles are illusory, then we can embrace these ordinary epistemic practices and hence reject the theoretical basis for the insularity of reasons thesis. The crux of the matter is that with the dialectical state-of-play so described, it is epistemological disjunctivism which occupies the default commonsense position, with the insularity of reasons thesis exposed as dubious philosophical revisionism masquerading as commonsense.

In any case, given the way in which underdetermination-based radical scepticism trades on the insularity of reasons thesis, it should be straightforward to see how epistemological disjunctivism would block this sceptical argument. As with our Wittgensteinian treatment of closure-based radical scepticism above, the problem is not the epistemic principle in play, in this case the underdetermination principle. It is instead the very first claim that makes up this formulation of the paradox, (S₂1). Recall that this maintains, in line with the insularity of reasons thesis, that one lacks a rational basis for one's belief that E which favours that belief over the BIV sceptical alternative. But with epistemological disjunctivism in hand one has a basis for rejecting

this claim. After all, if one is in the good case then one *does* possess the relevant favouring rational basis for one's belief that E, in that one possesses factive rational support for this belief (which entails both E and the falsity of the BIV hypothesis). Thus it simply isn't true that such a favouring basis is in general lacking.

While epistemological disjunctivism offers us a very compelling and direct way of dealing with underdetermination-based radical scepticism, it struggles with the challenge posed by closure-based radical scepticism. If one followed through on the line taken with underdetermination-based scepticism, then one might be tempted to respond to closure-based scepticism by maintaining that one can, via the closure principle, come to have rationally grounded knowledge of the denials of radical sceptical hypotheses in virtue of the factive rational support that one has for one's perceptual beliefs in the good case. This would thus constitute a particularly heroic version of Mooreanism.²⁶ As such, however, it will struggle to explain why we have such a strong antipathy to the idea that we can have rationally grounded knowledge of the denials of radical sceptical hypotheses.

Moreover, notice that this anti-sceptical proposal is much stronger than what is required to undermine underdetermination-based radical scepticism. That one has rational support which favours one's everyday empirical beliefs over sceptical alternatives does not itself entail that one is able to have rationally grounded knowledge of the denials of radical sceptical hypotheses. (Indeed, this was a point that we noted above when we highlighted the logical differences between underdetermination-based and closure-based radical scepticism). Thus, one isn't committed to holding that one can have rationally grounded knowledge of the denials of radical sceptical hypotheses simply in virtue of endorsing a view which allows favouring rational support for one's everyday empirical beliefs. There is therefore the logical space available to the epistemological disjunctivist to draw back from their heroic response to closure-based radical scepticism. The crux, however, is whether the epistemological disjunctivist can tell a plausible alternative anti-sceptical story that doesn't incorporate this radical response to closure-based radical scepticism.

4. FAREWELL TO EPISTEMIC *ANGST*

The canny reader will suspect that there is a synthesis in the offing, and she would be absolutely right. We have observed that closure-based radical scepticism and underdetermination-based radical scepticism pose logically distinct sceptical challenges. We have seen that while the Wittgensteinian account of the structure of rational evaluation offers a powerful response to closure-based radical scepticism, it fails to gain a purchase on closure-based radical scepticism.

And we have witnessed the epistemological disjunctivist response to underdetermination-based radical scepticism, but noted how this proposal when applied to closure-based radical scepticism seems unduly heroic. What is to prevent us from combining these two anti-sceptical proposals, and thereby offering a unified answer to the problem of radical scepticism?

The answer is ‘nothing at all’. To begin with, notice that these proposals are entirely compatible with one another. That it is in the nature of rational evaluation that it is essentially local does not preclude the possibility that in the right epistemic conditions one’s everyday empirical beliefs could be grounded by reflectively accessible rational support. Conversely, that one’s everyday empirical beliefs could be grounded by reflectively accessible rational support doesn’t preclude the possibility that all rational evaluation is essentially local. There’s thus nothing to prevent the combination of these views.

But, more than this, these two proposals are not just compatible but also mutually supportive. By combining them, after all, each proposal removes a ‘blind spot’ in its account regarding the radical sceptical problem. The proponent of Wittgensteinian anti-scepticism can now deal with underdetermination-based radical scepticism by appealing to the factive reflectively accessible rational support for our everyday empirical beliefs. Moreover, it is easier to live with the idea that rational evaluation is essentially local if the rational support available for our beliefs can sometimes be factive.

Going in the other direction, the epistemological disjunctivist can now deal with closure-based radical scepticism without having to go down the implausibly heroic route of maintaining that we can have rationally grounded knowledge of the denials of radical sceptical hypotheses. Instead, they can take the Wittgensteinian line of maintaining that our hinge commitments are immune to rational evaluation, and hence not subject to closure-style inferences. Being in possession of favouring rational support for one’s everyday empirical beliefs thus need not require one to claim that one can have rationally grounded knowledge of the denials of radical sceptical hypotheses. More generally, it is easier to live with the idea of reflectively accessible factive rational support if rational evaluation is essentially local.

Not too that these two anti-sceptical proposals are also very much in the same spirit, in that they are both undercutting proposals. In both cases they are highlighting features of our everyday epistemic practices and using this as a basis from which to expose the theoretical underpinnings of the sceptical problem. Radical scepticism may look like a paradox—i.e., as a puzzle that arises out of our pre-theoretical epistemic commitments—but in fact hidden within the formulation of the problem (on either construal) are dubious theoretical claims which should be rejected, and which are masquerading as pre-theoretical commonsense. Our ordinary epistemic

practices are thus in order as they are.

In terms of the Wittgensteinian proposal, for example, the claim is that the universality of reasons thesis is not rooted in our everyday practices at all. In fact, by paying close attention to our everyday epistemic practices Wittgenstein exposes that this thesis presupposes a conception of rational evaluation which is both theoretical (i.e., the result of a faulty philosophical picture, rather than commonsense) and also incoherent. Epistemological disjunctivism makes a similar case as regards the insularity of reasons thesis. Not only is the latter not part of the commonsense account of our epistemic practices, but it is moreover a philosophical thesis that one would endorse only if one already mistakenly thought that epistemological disjunctivism, which does adhere to our everyday epistemic practices, was theoretically unavailable.

There is thus a unifying vision behind these two anti-sceptical proposals. Radical scepticism, we have discovered, has a dual nature. Fortunately, we have also found that anti-scepticism has a dual nature too, where both parts of the solution are mutually supporting and offered in the same spirit. It is thus only by understanding the sources of scepticism that we are able to recognise its proper resolution. This is why I refer to this unified anti-sceptical account as a *biscopic* proposal, since it is only by recognising the dual nature both of the sceptical problem and of its solution that we see the issues aright. I submit that this biscopic proposal offers us a cure for epistemic *angst*.²⁷

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NOTES

¹ For further discussion of why the sceptical problem is best understood in terms of rationally grounded knowledge, see Pritchard (2015a, part one).

² Note that this formulation of radical scepticism is in fact much stronger than we need to generate the sceptical paradox. In particular, in terms of (S₁1), it would suffice, for example, that one *does not*—as opposed to the stronger *cannot*—have rationally grounded knowledge that one is not the victim of a radical sceptical hypothesis. Relatedly, it would suffice for (S₁2) that it follows from one’s lack of rationally grounded knowledge that one is not the victim of a radical sceptical hypothesis that one lacks rationally grounded knowledge of an external world.

³ Note that in order to keep matters simple I am setting to one side those responses to radical scepticism—e.g., Vogel (1990)—which claim that we have an *abductive* rational basis for preferring our everyday beliefs over sceptical alternatives. I critically discuss such proposals in Pritchard (2015a, ch. 1).

⁴ In particular, the most famous rejections of closure-style principles as a means of blocking radical scepticism—due to Dretske (1970) and Nozick (1981)—have been concerned with much weaker formulations of the closure principle, and hence do not straightforwardly apply to the closure principle as we have formulated it here. For a useful recent exchange on the status of closure-style principles, see Dretske (2005a; 2005b) and Hawthorne (2005).

⁵ As Schiffer (1996, 330) has rather nicely put the point, if radical scepticism poses a genuine paradox then there is no ‘happy face’ solution to this problem, only a ‘sad face’ solution, because it would mean that there is indeed a “deep-seated incoherence” within our pre-theoretical epistemological commitments.

⁶ I develop a version of this kind of anti-sceptical strategy in Pritchard (2005a). See also Sosa (1999).

⁷ I don’t claim that the distinction between undercutting and overriding anti-sceptical strategies is a sharp one; indeed, there are likely to be anti-sceptical proposals that are hard to classify either way. The important point for present purposes is just that some anti-sceptical proposals are clearly undercutting and some are clearly overriding. I explore this distinction further in Pritchard (2014; 2015a). For some important and related discussions of how to classify different kinds of anti-sceptical proposals, see Williams (1991, ch. 1) and Cassam (2007).

⁸ As with our formulation of the closure-based radical sceptical paradox above—see endnote 2—note that this formulation of radical scepticism is in fact much stronger than we need to generate the sceptical paradox. In particular, in terms of (S₂1), it would suffice, for example, that one *does not*—as opposed to the stronger *cannot*—have a rational basis that favours one’s everyday beliefs about the external world over radical sceptical scenarios. Relatedly, it would suffice for (S₂2) that it follows from one’s lack of such a favouring rational basis that one has little, if any, rationally grounded knowledge of an external world.

⁹ The *loci classici* as regards the new evil demon intuition are Lehrer & Cohen (1983) and Cohen (1984). For a helpful general discussion of the new evil demon intuition and its epistemological significance, see Littlejohn (2009). See also Bach (1985) and Engel (1992).

¹⁰ For further discussion of the logical structure of sceptical arguments, with a particular emphasis on closure-based and underdetermination-based formulations of radical scepticism and how they relate to one another, see Yalçın (1992), Brueckner (1994), Cohen (1998), Byrne (2004), Vogel (2004), and Pritchard (2005a, part one; 2005b; 2015a, part one).

¹¹ It is an interesting question how the insularity of reasons thesis relates to the ‘veil of perception’, where the latter is usually expressed as a metaphysical claim about the nature of perceptual experience (i.e., that one never directly experiences an external world). While I think these two theses are related, it would take me too far afield to explore this issue here.

¹² Though as I’ve argued elsewhere—see Pritchard (2015c)—the ultimate source of this distinctive proposal may well be Newman (1870).

¹³ Note that Wittgenstein would also endorse the idea that the game of *believing* presupposes certainty, as will become clear.

¹⁴ Although the “hinge” metaphor is the dominant symbolism in the book, it is accompanied by various other metaphors, such as the following: that these propositions constitute the “scaffolding” of our thoughts (OC, §211); that they form the “foundations of our language-games” (OC, §§401-3); and also that they represent the implicit “world-picture” from within which we inquire, the “inherited background against which [we] distinguish between true and false” (OC, §§94-5). As noted earlier, the metaphor of the hinge is probably not ideal, in that it conveys an optionality that Wittgenstein clearly didn’t want. But this is the metaphor that has stuck.

¹⁵ It would thus be misleading to say, without any qualification, that our hinge commitments do *not* amount to rationally grounded knowledge, since this falsely suggests that they are the kinds of commitments that are in the market for rationally grounded knowledge in the first place. (It is not as if one is *ignorant* of them). As Ram Neta has helpfully suggested to me, a useful analogy here are statements about the present King of France. That one rejects a statement about the baldness of the present King of France does not mean that one would endorse a statement to the effect that he isn’t bald. Rather, baldness simply doesn’t apply to this non-existent person. Similarly, the Wittgensteinian line that our hinge commitments do not amount to rationally grounded knowledge is not tantamount to admitting to some sort of epistemic limitation on our parts, as if these commitments could potentially be instances of rationally grounded knowledge.

¹⁶ This point marks an important contrast between Wittgenstein's anti-scepticism and the superficially similar response to scepticism offered by Austin (1961). They are similar in that both emphasize the differences between sceptical doubt and everyday doubt. As Stroud (1984) so persuasively argued, however, it is open to the proponent of radical scepticism to embrace these differences while nonetheless maintaining that sceptical doubt is a *purified* version of everyday doubt (i.e., once the latter is stripped of purely pragmatic limitations, such as imagination, time, opportunity, ingenuity, and so on). Unlike Austin, however, Wittgenstein blocks even this move by demonstrating that the difference between sceptical doubt and everyday doubt is not a difference of degree but rather of kind, where one moves from a style of rational evaluation which is coherent to one which is simply incoherent. For further discussion of this point, see Pritchard (2011, §1; 2014; 2015*a*, part two). For a more sympathetic reading of Austin on this score, see Lawlor (2013).

¹⁷ The twists and turns are important, though. In particular, as I argue at length in Pritchard (2015*a*, part two), it is very important that we understand what a hinge commitment involves correctly, where competing OC-inspired anti-sceptical proposals are identified in terms of the (mis-)construal they offer of this notion. See also endnote 22.

¹⁸ Proponents of a popular reading of OC—which I've elsewhere dubbed the 'non-propositional reading' (e.g., Pritchard 2011; 2015*b*)—will dispute that the denials of radical sceptical hypotheses count as hinge commitments, since they will claim that such hypotheses fail to express a proposition at all. For an influential defence of such a reading, see Moyal-Sharrock (2004). For a helpful critical discussion, see Coliva (2010).

¹⁹ Wittgenstein recognised this problem himself—see, e.g., OC, §185—though obviously he didn't express the point in terms of the closure principle. See Pritchard (2011, §1; 2012*c*, §2; 2015*b*, §2).

²⁰ For a useful discussion of the various ways in which belief is understood, see Stevenson (2002).

²¹ An alternative way of describing the Wittgensteinian position is that while it allows that one can rationally evaluate all of one's (knowledge-apt) beliefs, one can't rationally evaluate all of one's commitments. Thus, insofar as the universality of rational evaluation thesis is specifically understood so that it only applies to the former, then even this claim can be embraced by a Wittgensteinian anti-scepticism.

²² For further discussion of the different ways of interpreting Wittgenstein's proposal in OC—of which there are many—see Pritchard (2005*c*; 2011; 2015*b*). In particular, note that in these works I offer a very specific rendering of what a hinge commitment is (something which is often omitted in interpretations of OC, in that it is either taken as obvious, or else it is equated with what Moore had in mind with his 'Moorean certainties'). If one wants a very rough overview of the main competing proposals and their drawbacks: *entitlement* proposals (e.g., Wright 2004) go awry by treating these commitments as something akin to optional assumptions that one might adopt, thereby ignoring their visceral, non-optional, nature; *naturalistic* readings of OC (e.g., Strawson 1985), in contrast, go awry by thinking that it is visceral quality of these commitments which underwrites the anti-scepticism, thereby missing the important point Wittgenstein wants to make about the very nature of rational evaluation; *inferential contextualist* proposals (e.g., Williams 1991) go awry by, amongst other things, taking the apparently heterogeneous character of our hinge commitments at face-value, and hence embracing a kind of epistemic relativism; and *non-propositional* readings of OC (e.g., Moyal-Sharrock 2004) go awry by offering an account of hinge commitments which, while undoubtedly supported by key passages in the text itself, needlessly courts mystery. The crux is thus to offer a visceral, non-optional, account of our hinge commitments, which treats them as propositional while eschewing the idea that they involve knowledge-apt beliefs, and which also identifies the common core to these commitments, thereby avoiding the temptation towards aligning a hinge epistemology with epistemic relativism. For some other important recent works on OC, see McGinn (1989), Coliva (2010; 2015), and Schönbaumsfeld (2015).

²³ Note that the inspiration for epistemological disjunctivism comes from McDowell (e.g., 1995), though he does not express the view quite as straightforwardly as we do here. See Pritchard (2008; 2012*b*, *passim*) for further discussion of how McDowell's writings support epistemological disjunctivism. See also Neta & Pritchard (2007). Note too that epistemological disjunctivism is not meant to be a general theory of knowledge, but is rather a proposal regarding a specific kind of knowledge. For my views about knowledge in general, see Pritchard (2012*a*).

²⁴ See especially Pritchard (2012*b*). See also Neta & Pritchard (2007) and Pritchard (2008; 2015*a*, part three).

²⁵ Elsewhere I have referred to this objection to epistemological disjunctivism as the *access problem*. For further discussion of both the objection and my response to this objection, see Neta & Pritchard (2007) and Pritchard (2008; 2012*a*, part one).

²⁶ See Pritchard (2008; 2012*b*, part three) for a defence of this brand of neo-Mooreanism. Note that while I find the view *defensible*, I also think that a combined anti-sceptical proposal, one that has both a Wittgensteinian and an epistemological disjunctivist component, is far more plausible. See Pritchard (2015*a*) for a definitive statement of my views in this regard.

²⁷ Earlier versions of this paper have been presented at Soochow University, University of Cologne, University of Bonn, UC Irvine, Rutgers University, and the Sorbonne. I am grateful to the audiences on these occasions for their feedback. Special thanks to David Sosa, Ernie Sosa, Chienkuo Mi, Thomas Grundmann, Ram Neta, and Genia Schönbaumsfeld.