THE BOUNDS OF JUSTIFICATION

by

G. Anthony Bruno

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Abstract

In the *Theaetetus*, Socrates proposes that knowledge is true belief that is accounted for or justified. The question that intuitively follows is what the proper structure of a justifying account of true belief is. Answers to this question are available throughout the history of philosophy and are generally vulnerable to the Agrippan trilemma of justification that originates with Pyrrhonian skepticism. I trace the influence of Pyrrhonism on the search for the proper structure of justification as it plays out in the current debate between coherentists and "contemporary" foundationalists. I expose their principal concerns—normative and naturalist, respectively—as descendants of ancient skeptical challenges. Illuminating this lineage shows that currently competing forms of justification are locked into a dilemma that is circumscribed by the Agrippan trilemma.

Immanuel Kant and Ludwig Wittgenstein grapple with precursors to the current debate, which sets an interesting precedent for John McDowell's attempt to resolve it with what I think is a conceptualist interpretation of contemporary foundationalism. I argue that a genetic story heuristically reinforces McDowell's interpretation in a way that frustrates normative and naturalist concerns and leaves open the threat of skepticism. I in turn portray Kant and Wittgenstein as capable of domesticating these threats with a unique structure of justification that I argue is *non-epistemically foundationalist*. Such a structure meets the Socratic challenge that justifying true belief itself requires true belief as to the soundness of this justification. My central aim is to show how non-epistemic foundationalism is a matter of grounding, which depicts an asymmetrical relationship between empirical belief and pre-cognitive or transcendental awareness. I conclude that a grounding model satisfies normative and naturalist concerns and thereby offers a way out of the contemporary dilemma and an escape from the Agrippan trilemma.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

> We complain of the darkness in which we live out our lives: we do not understand the nature of existence in general; we especially do not know the relation of our own self to the rest of existence. Not only is our life short, our knowledge is limited entirely to it, since we can see neither back before our birth nor out beyond our death, so that our consciousness is as it were a lightning-flash momentarily illuminating the night: it truly seems as though a demon had maliciously shut off all further knowledge from us so as to enjoy our discomfiture.
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> But this complaint is not really justified: for it arises out of an illusion produced by the false premise that the totality of things proceeded from an *intellect* and consequently existed as an *idea* before it became actual; according to which premise the totality of things, having arisen from the realm of knowledge, must be entirely accessible to knowledge and entirely explicable and capable of being exhaustively comprehended by it.—But the truth of the matter is, I fear, that all that of which we complain of not knowing is not known to anyone, indeed is probably as such unknowable, i.e., not capable of being conceived. For the *idea*, in whose domain all knowledge lies and to which all knowledge therefore refers, is only the outer side of existence, something secondary, supplementary, something, that is, which was necessary not for the preservation of things as such, the universal totality, but merely for the preservation of the individual animal being. Consequently the existence of things as a whole entered into the realm of knowledge only *per accidens*, thus to a very limited extent: it forms only the background of the painting in the animal consciousness…

> Schopenhauer (1970), 25-6

In Plato's *Theaetetus*, Socrates proposes some theories as to what knowledge is. The last he considers is that knowledge is true belief that can be accounted for in some way.[1] According to this theory, knowledge is achieved when one believes a true proposition and can also account for or *justify* this belief. A question intuitively follows as to what *form* of justification is proper to knowledge—that is, what ought to be the *structure* of a justifying account of true belief. Answers to this question are available throughout the history of philosophy and are generally vulnerable to a trilemma of justification that originates with Pyrrhonian skepticism.

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[1] Plato (1997), *Theaetetus*, 201d-2d.

My aim in chapter one is to trace the development of ancient skepticism as it shapes the search for the proper structure of justification, a tradition as old as philosophy. I will situate in this tradition the twentieth-century debate between coherentists and "contemporary" foundationalists in order to expose their principal concerns—normative and naturalist, respectively—as descendants of ancient skeptical challenges. Illuminating this lineage will show that currently competing forms of justification are locked into a dilemma that is circumscribed by the Agrippan trilemma.

I will assess in chapter two the difficulties that John McDowell has in arbitrating between the concerns that drive the contemporary dilemma. Influenced significantly by Immanuel Kant and Ludwig Wittgenstein, who themselves grapple with precursors to this dilemma, it will be argued that McDowell, because of a genetic story that heuristically reinforces his account of true belief, is unable to satisfy the concerns relevant to current debate and thus to allay the threat of skepticism.

In chapters three and four, Kant and Wittgenstein will be portrayed as capable of domesticating such skeptical threats because they advance unique forms of justification that I will argue are non-epistemically foundationalist. This will be seen to avoid Socrates' observation[2] that a consequence of accounting for true belief is that one must also give an account of this account—that in justifying true belief, one requires *true belief* as to the soundness of this justification. Thus I will argue that the form of justification proper to knowledge, exemplified separately by Kant and Wittgenstein, is a matter of grounding, where this depicts an asymmetrical relationship in which *non-epistemic*

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[2] Plato (1997), 210a.

thought grounds empirical belief and thus terminates justification. I shall conclude that their respective transcendental models offer a way out of the contemporary dilemma and an escape from the Agrippan trilemma.

Chapter 2
A Trilemma and A Dilemma

1.   To appreciate how the current debate among coherentists and contemporary foundationalists descends from a skeptical challenge from antiquity, we must go to the source. Ancient skepticism falls into two schools: Academic and Pyrrhonian.[3] Skepticism for the Academics was a dialectical process of scrutinizing the dogmatic commitments of philosophers of their day, the goal of which was freedom from *assent* (though it is unclear that refutation did not conceal for them some ethical end or other). The Pyrrhonists on the other hand exposed the weaknesses of philosophical dogma for the specific ethical goal of freedom from *disturbance*. Pyrrhonism accordingly determines the equality of force or equipollence (*isosthenia*) of contrary theses in order to suspend judgment (*epoche*) and achieve the silence (*aphasia*) of intellectual tranquility (*ataraxia*). To illustrate the skeptical freedom from disturbance, I draw on a paradigmatically Pyrrhonian picture of knowledge: the Agrippan trilemma of justification.

Living in the first century C.E., the skeptic Agrippa wrote nothing. Five tropes that establish the impossibility of theoretical knowledge are attributed to him by Diogenes Laertius.[4] And in his *Outlines of Skepticism*, Sextus Empiricus depicts Agrippa's tropes as five modes of the suspension of judgment.[5] These modes hold that any attempt to substantiate a belief inevitably amounts to disagreement, relativity, infinite regress, circularity or hypothesis. A Pyrrhonist need only determine the method behind

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[3] For selections by thinkers from these schools, see Inwood and Gerson (1998), chapter 3.
[4] Inwood and Gerson (1998), 291 f.

some dogmatic account for x and use this same method to prove ~x. This establishes the equipollence of each contrary thesis, opening the way toward *epoche*.[6] Agrippa's modes have been condensed into the Agrippan (or Muenchhausen) trilemma of justification,[7] which refines the fate of justification to infinite regress, circularity and hypothesis.

We can imagine Agrippa strolling through a marketplace and encountering members of various schools of thought. In his day, these would have included Stoics, Epicureans, neo-Platonists and others. They would inevitably begin arguing, but what about? They would agree that belief is an inherent feature of thought and action, and that true belief is somehow crucial for knowledge. The point at which they would diverge is how one can satisfactorily account for or justify true belief. The philosophers would attempt to provide the correct structure of justification, whether for beliefs about fate, atoms or immortality. And Agrippa would simply deploy these same structures in order to support opposing beliefs, say, in freedom, monism or mortality, and thereby suspend judgment. He would expose the philosophers' dogmatism by showing it to be vulnerable to the trilemma of justification.

So is it possible to rehabilitate justification vis-à-vis Pyrrhonism, and if so, what form could justification take in order to account for true belief? Before answering this question, I turn to a peculiar horn on the trilemma: infinite regress. Pyrrhonism, Sextus tells us, is prepared to allow that one may dogmatically hold what is *at least*

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[5] Sextus (2000), 167-73.
[6] Ibid, 170-3.
[7] See Williams (1999), 145, and Franks (2005), *passim*; and see Albert (1985), 18 ff.

algorithmically an infinitely regressive justification of belief x.[8] A Pyrrhonist is thereby warranted in employing an equally regressive account of belief ~x in order to achieve *ataraxia*. Contemporary philosophers may be loath to entertain the possibility of infinitely regressive justification. But if they can diffuse this possibility, the threat of Agrippan skepticism is not diminished, but only evolves into a dilemma familiar to those engaged in the coherentist-foundationalist debate today.

As to the possibility of an infinite regress in justification, the coherentist, who claims that all beliefs are inferential, will deny that justification can continue endlessly. Instead of terminating a linear regress, she portrays justification according to the reciprocal support of beliefs within an inferential system. I will shortly present the coherentist position and how it produces a sort of circularity that must contend with the relevant horn of the Agrippan trilemma. For their part, contemporary foundationalists demand that any justification worth the name rests on basic, non-inferential beliefs. Precedence for this demand can be found in Aristotle's notion of non-demonstrative knowledge in *Posterior Analytics*, which is meant to ensure that the demonstration of knowledge from premises does not regress infinitely.[9] Non-inferential beliefs thus serve to terminate single- or multi-string justification structures. I will soon consider the position of contemporary (as opposed to traditional and classical) foundationalists and how a basic belief, which is indemonstrable and thus in some sense unjustifiable, can be hypothetical by Pyrrhonism's lights.

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[8] Sextus (2000), 169.
[9] Steup (1996), 93 f.

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Ultimately, infinitely regressive justification appears psychologically impossible for finite minds and logically impossible as a candidate for complete justification.[10] And while it is true that the Agrippan trilemma overlaps the coherentist-foundationalist debate by conceding the possibility of an infinite regress, it is crucial to see that participants in the debate exemplify one of the trilemma's horns. Proving the impossibility of infinite regress then does not obviate any vulnerability of contemporary models of justification to Agrippan skepticism. I therefore draw on the trilemma in order to supplant the two competing models with one invulnerable to skepticism. But for now, the force of the trilemma can be reduced to an *epistemic dilemma* that rears its head throughout the history of philosophy in various forms and most recently as a stalemate between coherentists and contemporary foundationalists.

2.   The coherentist-foundationalist debate of the twentieth century exemplifies the time-honoured search for the form of justification proper to knowledge. Each side of the debate is driven by a central concern that comes as a skeptical challenge to the other.

Coherentists hold that the content of justification is entirely doxastic, that is, that beliefs and only beliefs are the source of knowledge. No belief on this model is more basic or less inferentially dependent than any other belief. The coherentist structure of justification is accordingly non-hierarchical or holistic. Candidate beliefs assimilate with one's doxastic (belief) system by taking part in epistemic relations among other true beliefs. As Brand Blanshard defined a coherent doxastic system, "no proposition would

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[10] Steup (1996), 97.

be arbitrary, every proposition would be entailed by the others jointly and even singly, [and] no proposition would stand outside the system".[11] So it is not arbitrary that I believe it is safer, despite statistics, to travel by car than by plane. For I infer this (singly) from my belief that one is more likely to die in a plane crash than in a car crash. And this belief follows (jointly) from my beliefs that it is significantly more dangerous to travel at five hundred miles per hour at forty thousand feet in the air without a parachute than it is to travel at fifty miles per hour on the ground with a seatbelt and a braking mechanism; that the majority of the people I know who have been in car crashes have survived; that news reports about fatal plane crashes are trustworthy, etc.

Since the coherentist account of true belief is governed by rational rules of inference, it is principally driven by a *normative* concern. This does not mean that coherentists are not empiricists. Donald Davidson's brand of coherentism accepts that "sensations cause some beliefs and in this sense are the basis or ground of those beliefs". But his point is that since a causal relation is not a *logical* one, "a causal explanation of a belief does not show how or why the belief is justified".[12] A candidate belief owes its success to its consistency within a belief set according to *rational* norms of inference.

The inferential relationship among beliefs in a coherentist's holistic structure of justification is not simply one of linear entailment. It has the crucial character of *reciprocity* or mutual support, whereby every belief is entailed through direct or indirect inference by every other belief. Accordingly, there is neither asymmetrical epistemic

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[11] As quoted in Dancy (1985), 110.
[12] See Davidson (1986).

security among beliefs nor a separation of beliefs into tiers. Rather, a belief set is coherent according to the symmetrical or web-like relations among its members.[13] Aristotle's advocation of justificatory completeness—the culmination of justification in non-demonstrable, non-inferential knowledge—is of no concern to the coherentist, since members of a doxastic system are demonstrable by other members in the system (singly) and ultimately by the system itself (jointly).

Coherentism can be expressed as a theory of truth, which holds a proposition *true* if and only if it is a member of a coherent set, or as a theory of justification, which holds a belief *justified* to the extent that it is a member of a coherent belief set. Each form invites the same general worry, one anticipated in the critiques of idealism found in Kant and Johann Gottlieb Fichte.

The criticism of a coherence theory of truth is that, by construing truth as a matter of coherence, it is incapable of making truth amount to more than consistency among one's beliefs. Significantly different belief sets can consequently be equally coherent and thus equally true, which is impossible if we suppose that "truth is one".[14] The coherentist will respond by arguing that since sensations are not propositional, they cannot relate logically to beliefs, but rather only causally.[15] And if we take causal relations to be fixed states of affairs, we are bound to say that sensations are of an objective world that constrains which beliefs can be true. The coherentist will insist that this is why her

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[13] Dancy (1985), 111-2.
[14] Dancy (1985), 113. For Fichte's observation of this, see Fichte (1964), EM, II:3.
[15] Davidson (1986), 311.

structure of justification avoids doxastic pluralism and epistemic relativism.[16] But the problem with this is that the coherentist is restricted to a *causal* as opposed to a *justificatory* appeal to things in the world. And since causal relations cannot guarantee that a single coherent belief set will result from our experiences, rational norms of inference are apt to establish different and equally coherent belief sets.

A coherence theorist of justification may fair better. At any rate, she is directly engaged with the *Theaetetus* challenge of *justification*. However, one may charge her account with a doxasticism so thorough that it is incapable of achieving anything of *epistemic* importance. Since the justification of some belief on her account increases only to the extent that it adds to the coherence of a belief set, it will be argued that the achievement of coherent *belief* about the world says nothing about what we can *know* about the facts of the world.[17] An increase in consistency entails no increase in a belief set's being constrained by an external reality—and this is reminiscent of the problem of doxastic pluralism that plagues the coherence theorist of truth.[18] Since the holistic structure of a doxastic system may justify belief that is potentially in discord with reality, a general dissatisfaction with coherentism remains.

3. Contemporary foundationalists express this dissatisfaction as a skeptical threat to coherentism: not only is the coherentist form of justification not in sufficient friction with reality, but, since its content is uniformly doxastic, exhaustively inferential and

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[16] Dancy (1985), 115.
[17] Dancy (1985), 116.

reciprocally supportive, this form is circular. Contemporary foundationalists respond with a principally *naturalist* concern for the termination of justification in basic beliefs the sources of which are "non-normative" experiences.[19] This concern is both methodological, because it seeks to hierarchicalize the structure of justification, and substantive, because it legitimates belief by appeal to facts independent of beliefs about them. But understanding contemporary foundationalism's naturalist concern requires first appreciating its history.

Foundationalism comes in many forms that can reasonably be separated into three major groups: traditional, classical and contemporary. Traditional foundationalists from Plato to Descartes were concerned in resting an account of true belief on incorrigible and indubitable first principles.[20] These principles constituted basic beliefs that were alleged to confer justification deductively on non-basic beliefs.

Classical foundationalists of the first half of the twentieth century held that beliefs are not exhaustively inferential in order to avoid justificatory regress. Thus, they retained the epistemic privilege of basic beliefs. Foundationalists of this sort were also sympathetic to the empiricist tenet that knowledge derives ultimately from experience. Basic beliefs were no longer considered principles that deductively transmit justification,

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[18] We will see in chapter two that this is the same problem McDowell exploits in response to (specifically Davidsonian) coherentism. And in chapter three we will find that this issue motivates Fichte's doubt that the bare inner truth (coherence) of a system of knowledge can establish any outer (extra-systemic) truth.
[19] Steup (1996), 150 f.
[20] See Dancy (1985), 64; and Steup (1996), 106. The standard foundationalist interpretation of Cartesian epistemology is that it rejects all beliefs except the belief that one thinks (and therefore exists) in order to rest on this minimal foundation all clear and distinct ideas. While this interpretation may be challenged, it is important to treat foundationalism strictly as a heuristic label by which we may understand and compare past thinkers who themselves did not use or endorse the term.

but rather were viewed as *infallible* reports of immediate sense experience that transmit justification inductively.[21]

A fallibilist will deny that classical foundationalists, such as A.J. Ayer and Rudolph Carnap, can show *any* beliefs are immune to error. For if a basic belief merely constitutes a description of how things appear *to me* in sense experience, then it is insufficiently robust to serve as a premise in an inference to belief about how things are independent of my experience. Anything sufficiently robust, however, is surely not immune from error.[22] Classical foundationalism is as a result incapable of sustaining an asymmetry between infallible observational statements and the non-observational statements they support.[23]

"Contemporary" foundationalists include Matthias Steup, Gareth Evans and Christopher Peacocke. While eschewing infallibility, contemporary foundationalists retain the notion of basic belief. In an attempt to ensure that true belief is accountable to the world, they defend a two-tiered, asymmetrical structure of justification that deems basic any belief derived from non-normative experience. This is consistent with fallibilism because it leaves perceptual access to such a source contingent on the deliverances of experience. Thus, I may believe that traveling by plane is quite dangerous. And I may infer this from other beliefs, such as that the faster and farther from the ground one travels, the harder it is to land; that traveling in the air without a

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[21] Dancy (1985), 53-5; Steup (1996), 107.
[22] Dancy (1985), 59.
[23] Dancy (1985) notes that while W.V.O. Quine's claim, that non-observational statements exist only within a general theory, commits him to a holistic theory of meaning, his retention of asymmetry between these and observational statements commits him to a strand of classical foundationalism (94-101).

parachute ignores the issue of gravity; that an evacuation slide is a paltry assurance given the success rate of emergency landings; etc. But the inferential force of these beliefs owes ultimately to a qualitatively different, *basic* belief—e.g., that the human body can withstand only a certain amount of injury—the source of which is a particular experience—e.g., sustaining a near-fatal injury.

While I think the principal concern for the contemporary foundationalist account is naturalistic, I recognize that any attempt to justify true belief is normative in some sense. But to be sure, naturalist concerns are *not* the main drive behind traditional foundationalism, which often involves the *super*natural, or classical foundationalism, which appears to *construct* the natural in some sense. But *contemporary* foundationalism is distinct in eschewing metaphysics and phenomenalism and anchoring belief in the non-normative. And invoking a non-normative source for basic beliefs reflects the substantive naturalism one expects from an empiricist account of true belief such as this. It also exhibits the methodological demand, dating back to Aristotle, that justification culminates in indemonstrable knowledge. The contemporary foundationalist, recognizing that justification is by and large doxastic and demonstrable, seeks to terminate justification in basic beliefs the sources of which are indemonstrable, pre-doxastic experiences of the world.[24]

Steup says the contemporary foundationalist structure of justification distinguishes the doxastic act of justification from the non-doxastic fact or property of

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[24] For an argument that coherentists might terminate doxastic inferences in an indemonstrable property, namely, coherence itself, see Steup (1996), 144.

being justified.[25] *Facts* legitimate mental *acts* by literally giving justification a world in which justification is transparently anchored to things beyond one's beliefs about them.

But oscillation continues as the skeptical threat turns on contemporary foundationalism. Naturalist explanations of the sort offered by contemporary foundationalists are forced into a dilemma. Either they cannot make sense of how non-normative experiences are the *source* of basic beliefs, which begs the *quaestio quid juris*—the question of our right to affirm the justificatory power of this source. Or their invocation of a non-normative source of belief presupposes the necessary normative constraints that enable justification, which cannot answer the *quaestio quid facti*—the question of how experience actually links beliefs to the world they are about.[26]

To reiterate, the concerns I assign to coherentists and contemporary foundationalists do not reflect a rigid disjunction. While contemporary foundationalists, by a *principally* naturalist concern, base beliefs on non-normative experiences, they do not deny that a crucial matter for justification is normativity. They agree that inferential consistency ensures the cogency of one's beliefs and safeguards against defeating background beliefs.[27] But they respond to a perceived weakness of coherentism by attempting to bring natural facts to bear on the *structure* of justification. Jonathan Dancy argues that this does not disqualify the coherentist from sharing the naturalist concerns of empiricism. For since coherentists "maintain with Kant that it is impossible to draw a suitable distinction between the cognitive and the sensory 'elements' in sensory

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[25] See Steup (1996), 141.
[26] For a distinction between the *quaestio quid juris* and the *quaestio quid facti*, see Kant (1998), A58/B117.

experience", they do not separate belief from experience of a world.[28] And so a coherentist, whose concern is *principally* normative, is not for this reason *anti*-naturalist, but in fact urges that beliefs arise from our causal relation to the world.

4.   However, the debate remains a struggle over what the final word can be as to the *proper form* and the *principal concern* of justification. Is its form holistic or linear, symmetrical or asymmetrical? And is its basic concern normative or naturalist? Coherentists and contemporary foundationalists wind up in a stalemate on these questions because championing one concern always dissatisfies the other equally compelling concern. As a result, advancing one form of justification can never dismantle its competing form. Neither side of the debate is sufficient on its own to account for true belief. For we want to say *both* that the world about which we have beliefs plays a part in justification *and* that whatever plays a part in justification is amenable to rational norms.

It is important to notice that the debate cannot escape the Agrippan trilemma. For surely the coherentist's normative concern strikes contemporary foundationalists as the skeptical objection that an appeal to a non-doxastic, non-normative source of belief is an inscrutable or at best *hypothetical* justificatory move. And the contemporary foundationalist's naturalist concern comes as a skeptical threat to the coherentist's

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[27] Steup (1996), 110.
[28] Dancy (1985), 120-1. Dancy argues that, in the absence of reasons to accept foundationalist asymmetries, "we should take it that there is only one form of justification [namely, coherentism], the same for all beliefs" (117). An alleged virtue of this form is that it allows for the revision of our belief system. Also, he claims that coherentism dispenses with the individualistic project of classical epistemology, where one constructs a theory of knowledge for oneself, by seeing knowledge as a shared and revisable social phenomenon (118-9). This strikes me as a bit hasty. Contemporary foundationalism is fallibilist and admits

reciprocally supportive or *circular* inferences. Let us see just how this exchange expresses challenges as old as Pyrrhonism.[29]

The coherentist must certainly confront the circular horn of the trilemma. She flatly denies the psychological possibility of infinitely regressive justification, as well as the intelligibility of a basic belief. Assuming that the trilemma exhausts all justificatory paths to knowledge, the only option that remains for her is circular justification. And the symmetrical structure of a coherent belief set *is* one of reciprocal support among equivalent members. Any belief x will be singly entailed by beliefs y, z and so on, with no hope of termination. The result is that belief x enters an inferential chain that is bound to loop back upon itself. Equally, any belief x becomes credible in light of a presupposed doxastic system that in turn is intelligible only insofar as it jointly entails belief x. Like a painting's foreground and background, belief x and the system with which it is coherent are unintelligible independent of each other. Inasmuch as this entails circularity, is it virtuous,[30] and if so, does it escape the trilemma's sting?

I think it cannot. First, the coherentist has not deflected charges that her model tolerates doxastic pluralism. However virtuous the coherentist form of justification may seem, it is not obvious that it avoids being relativized by the existence of significantly different doxastic systems. And if the price of virtuous circularity is doxastic pluralism,

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of doxastic revision; and it is opposed to the classical program of first-personal epistemology by insisting that this justificatory activity presupposes a third-personal fact of being justified.

[29] For an informative look at the normative thrusts and naturalist counter-thrusts that move philosophy, from Aristotle's engagement with Plato's anti-naturalism, to the logical positivists' critique of German and British idealists' proto-coherentism, to Davidson's "post-Quinean" naturalism, see Friedman (2002).

[30] For instances where circular justification is not vicious, such as feedback loops, equivalence proofs in mathematics and the verification of scientific hypotheses, see Walton (1985). For an argument for the non-

then the Pyrrhonist is free to show that another's coherent doxastic system is inconsistent with his own and exploit this equipollence for the sake of *epoche*.[31] Second, while the correct structure of justification must involve coherence *generally*, which the contemporary foundationalist recognizes, one's justificatory strategy cannot be *mere* coherence but *impingement by a mind-independent world*. But should this embolden contemporary foundationalists against the trilemma?

It may. The contemporary foundationalist argues that if justification ought to avoid regress, infinite or circular, it must terminate in non-inferential belief.[32] Demanding a terminus for justification ensures that thought is complete and about the world. But a non-normative source is unjustifiable. It begs the *quaestio quid juris*. Like the story of the earth being supported by a turtle and in turn by an elephant, and so on, the contemporary foundationalist cannot *explain* the basic-ness of basic beliefs by appeal to non-normative experience. And since she cannot substantiate basic belief x without undermining it, the Pyrrhonist is free to employ the same foundationalist method to promote basic belief ~x. The contemporary foundationalist's non-normative source of belief will, according to the trilemma, begin or end single- or multi-thread inferences only arbitrarily and hence participate in merely *hypothetical* justification. Is justified true belief then even possible? Or is thought sentenced to complete *epoche*?

vicious circularity of the revision of the extension of a definition, see Antonelli (2000). For arguments that the vagueness of fuzzy logic supervenes on the necessary circularity of definition, see Rosenberg (2000).

[31] An argument could nevertheless be made that the coherentist form of justification is viciously circular. Coherentists respond to fears of doxastic pluralism by insisting that the beliefs that comprise a doxastic system are the ones that embodied thinking beings such as we are usually hold, constrained by the same, single world we inhabit. The problem then is that coherentists will be forced to rely (circularly) on coherence in order to specify this common class of beliefs. See Steup (1996), 144f.

[32] For a helpful distinction between progressive and regressive foundationalism, see Ameriks (2003), 7-11.

5.   We must appreciate why Pyrrhonists, wielding the Agrippan trilemma against dogmatic philosophers, are nevertheless committed to holding certain non-dogmatic beliefs.[33] It is this commitment that inhibits total *epoche* and, as I argue in subsequent chapters, offers a form of justification that surmounts contemporary problems.

Diogenes reports that the dogmatists respond to Pyrrhonism by identifying it with a *negative* dogmatism. They say that, "insofar as [the skeptics] believe they have refuted someone, they are grasping [something], since by the same act they are confirming [their belief] and dogmatizing".[34] The Pyrrhonists do appear committed to *some* belief. In response to the charge of dogmatism, they claim that uttering "I determine nothing" is unlike uttering "'the cosmos is round' [because] the latter is non-evident, whereas the former [follows from] mere admissio[n]".[35] Distinguishing between non-evident *theory* and self-evident *phenomena*, the Pyrrhonists go on to say:

> [W]e acknowledge that it is daytime, that we are alive, and many other appearances in life. But concerning the things the dogmatists assert definitely with argument…we suspend judgment because of their being non-evident, acknowledging only the states which we find ourselves in…That this appears white we say colloquially without asserting definitely that it is really so.[36]

Pyrrhonists accept the apparent and unleash doubt strictly on claims about the *real*. However, this motivates the argument that since the skeptic helps herself only to what is

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[33] M.F. Burnyeat and McDowell are aware of this feature of Pyrrhonism, which sets it apart from Cartesian skepticism and its manifestation of a dogmatic account of true belief that the Pyrrhonist will reject.
[34] Inwood and Gerson (1998), 295.
[35] Inwood and Gerson (1998), 296.
[36] Inwood and Gerson (1998), 295 f.

apparent—to *phainomena*—she cannot hold beliefs about *reality*.[37] This is a less than

charitable reading of Pyrrhonism. Despite well-worn stories[38] of Pyrrho obstinately

ignoring nearing precipices and the need to blink, such reality-denying behaviour is

hardly befitting of a life the singular of goal of which is freedom from disturbance.

Michel de Montaigne, a Pyrrhonist in his own right, says that Pyrrho was able to

achieve *ataraxia* only because he refused "to make himself a stump or a stone [but rather]

wanted to make himself a living, thinking, reasoning man" and simply renounce false

epistemic privileges.[39] Thus, he says of the Pyrrhonists:

> As for the actions of life, they are of the *common* fashion in that. They lend and
> accommodate themselves to *natural* inclinations, to the impulsion and constraint
> of passions, to the constitutions of laws and customs, and to the traditions of the
> arts…They let their common actions be guided by those things, without any
> taking sides or judgment.[40]

This echoes Diogenes' claim that the Pyrrhonists "suspend judgment about dogmatic

questions, but not about matters of everyday life and of observance" and that they accept

habit and custom without jettisoning the goal of freedom from dogmatic passion.[41]

Montaigne's own skepticism has a certain respect for common sense, for he calls it a

"foolish presumption to go around disdaining and condemning as false whatever does not

seem likely to us; which is an ordinary vice in those who think they have more than

common ability".[42] The pretense he rejects, and which motivates him to withhold assent

to non-evident beliefs, is *not* the "common ability", but rather the mode of thinking by

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[37] Burnyeat (1980), 27 f.
[38] See Hume (1998), 5, 58 and Montaigne (1976), II:29, 553.
[39] Montaigne (1976), II:12, 374.
[40] Montaigne (1976), II:12, 374. Italics added.
[41] Inwood and Gerson (1998), 297.

which one thinks one is *above* this ability. *Epoche* it seems disarms only those beliefs that misrepresent or are phenomenologically unsubstantiated by ordinary experience.[43]

6.   Pyrrhonism concedes things only as they strike us, refusing to provide *proof* as to their reality. This effectively sanctifies the credibility of a stratum of belief that neither requires nor admits of justification. The Pyrrhonist recognizes that we can raze our epistemic edifice only so low to the ground before losing the place from which to do so. Pyrrhonism is therefore *not* a negative dogma of inaction because it is alive to the pitfalls of striving for the right picture of knowledge. Given the concerns propelling the current debate, this striving persists despite the Agrippan trilemma.

An intriguing possibility arises from this: the Pyrrhonist's sanctified stratum of evident or ordinary belief represents a class of belief not taken up by either side of the current debate. It is a class I think apt to figure in an alternative form of justification. In what follows, I will take this possibility as a challenge to propose a non-dogmatic account of true belief that satisfies normative and naturalist concerns.

I have argued that these concerns constitute poles to which coherentists and contemporary foundationalists are driven in their accounts of true belief. Tending mostly to one, each camp is incapable of satisfying the other. And so a stalemate of trading valid

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[42] Montaigne (1976), II:27, 132.

[43] David Hume (1977), for his part, claimed that despite the inadequacy of our grounds for knowledge we "must act and reason and believe" (110-1). He recognized that tranquility and inaction are not to be conflated, for one must act on *some* beliefs in order to reject others. This illustrates that *epoche* is limited to *theoretical* commitments that stray from commonsense. See Hume (1977), section XII, part II, for his view of a "*mitigated* skepticism, which may be of advantage to mankind, and which may be the result of the Pyrrhonian doubts and scruples" for which *epoche* is neither total nor action-ceasing.

complaints leaves the debate in a dilemma. We have seen that to yield *bona fide* knowledge, a structure of justification must avoid regress and its content must admit of explanation. This proviso precludes both the exclusion of non-normative experiences from accounts of true belief (*pace* coherentism) and the appeal to such experiences in order to explain a belief's basic-ness (*pace* contemporary foundationalism). But while the Agrippan trilemma confirms the problems of contemporary accounts of true belief, we must not infer that the Pyrrhonist's is a life without belief (*adoxastos*). For she can hold that coherentism exemplifies circular justification, and contemporary foundationalism hypothetical justification, without denying that there *is* a form of justification proper to knowledge. And understanding that Pyrrhonism holds to a minimum of beliefs can encourage us to find the form of justification that satisfies normative and naturalist concerns and avoids the current dilemma and the ancient trilemma. I will argue that this involves recasting the doxastic/non-doxastic distinction—which awkwardly straddles a mind-world gap—by transposing it into what is sometimes called a "space of reasons". We will see in the next chapter that McDowell does just this.

Chapter 3
An Antinomy and A Response

1.   I have tried to make clear that the current debate between coherentists and contemporary foundationalists merely reproduces two of the unsatisfying positions defined by Agrippan skepticism. McDowell diagnoses this dilemma as an "antinomy of justification" around which revolve coherentism and non-conceptualism in competition for the proper form of justification.[44] He characterizes the dilemma as a fumbling to appreciate how "concepts mediate the relation between minds and the world".[45] Getting this mediation right, I think, is a matter of accounting for how a belief may be true of the world—that is, of engaging in the *Theaetetus* task of justifying true belief.

McDowell is acutely aware that what pulls many philosophers into the antinomy of justification is their willingness to take seriously what Wilfrid Sellars calls the Myth of the Given.[46] This is the notion that justification extends beyond our use of concepts to a non-normative experience. Accepting or rejecting this notion is done on the basis of a primary concern, which we have seen results in the *inability* to satisfy an equally valid opposing concern. In presenting McDowell's critique of coherentism and non-conceptualism, I assess his attempt to remove the anxiety that this inability produces.

McDowell enters the fray by considering "minimal empiricism", which encourages us to see knowledge as bound up at base with sensibility or receptivity. For

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[44] McDowell (1994), xii. Susan Haack (1998) also weighs in on the debate with her "foundherentist" position, an interesting contribution that I will not discuss here.
[45] McDowell (1994), 1.
[46] See Sellars (1956).

mental states and beliefs to be correct according to how things are in the world, the spontaneous activity of understanding must be answerable to the tribunal of experience. Construing experience as a tribunal establishes a mind-world relation in which thought aims at judgment that is empirically assessable.[47] Minimal empiricism, then, is an inquiry into the way in which the world and beliefs about it are veridically related. But taking up this inquiry, McDowell is aware, reveals that minimal empiricism harbours apparently conflicting desiderata: that experience *must*, insofar as we are receptive to a world that impinges on us, and *cannot*, insofar as we freely deploy concepts, determine or "stand in judgment over our attempts to make up our minds about how things are".[48] These desiderata belong to the principal concerns I have been highlighting. And their combination results in anxieties of the sort that conjures up questions the answers to which inevitably champion one desideratum at the expense of the other.

If the desideratum is that experience stands in judgment over thought, then the freedom of thought is sacrificed. And this begs the *quaestio quid juris*: for with what uncoerced authority can we say that the tribunal of experience determines how we must exercise our conceptual capacities? Minimal empiricism, a seemingly innocuous entry into the discussion of the mind-world relation, now appears to frustrate an otherwise valid *normative* concern. On the other hand, if we want to say that our conceptual capacities are totally spontaneous, this threatens the possibility that belief and judgment are answerable to reality. A second problem then is that mental exercises are as McDowell

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[47] McDowell (1994), xii.
[48] McDowell (1994), xii f.

puts it "moves in a self-contained game",[49] which begs the *quaestio quid facti*: for what phenomenon can assure us that the spontaneous exercise of thought is in friction with the world? What was intended to be an account of the mind-world relation now fails to satisfy even the *naturalist* concern that the world impresses itself on what Sellars calls the space of reasons, in which we logically relate our thoughts and beliefs.[50]

We are left with the task of uniting freely deployed conceptual schemes with the content of experience—components cleaved by anxious responses to incommensurable conditions. But synthesis by philosophers often cannot *explain* how experiential givenness rationally constrains our conceptual capacities.[51] We saw in the last chapter that this is true of the contemporary foundationalist conundrum of showing how we have access to the non-normative source of basic beliefs. McDowell says this problem is a matter of whether we indulge in or recoil from the Myth of the Given—the notion that a conceptual scheme works on bits of pure empirical content and that experience includes *non-conceptual content*.

Since beliefs involve concepts, non-conceptual content ought to be taken as non-normative in the contemporary foundationalist's sense.[52] Non-conceptualists would agree that experience, while mental, is not like believing because its vivacity and immediacy is not guided by rational norms of inference. Hence, its content is not entirely conceptual. This is essentially a contemporary foundationalist claim that experiences point to non- or

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[49] McDowell (1994), 5.
[50] See Sellars (1956).
[51] McDowell (1994), 6.

pre-normative episodes not unlike Humean impressions. Only in this way do basic beliefs stop the regress of inference among non-basic beliefs.[53] I leave aside whether or not non-conceptualists like Evans and Peacocke are themselves avowed contemporary foundationalists.

2.   Non-conceptualists claim that our receptivity of empirical content can entitle judgment to count as knowledge. This is the thought that the authority of judgment ultimately derives from a non-mental source. Certain beliefs can therefore be said to put us in touch with the world as given in empirical content. However, McDowell warns that the content of beliefs and judgments must admit of justification in order to be proper to knowledge. And for this reason, he says that we "could not begin to suppose that we understand how pointing to a bit of the Given could justify the use of a concept in a judgment". To appeal to the Given, he says, is to appeal to "an alien force…operating outside the control of our spontaneity".[54] A familiar, normative challenge confronts the non-conceptualist to the effect that it is illegitimate for her to pose non-mental or non-conceptual impingements from the world as *rational* constraints on justification. One is quite understandably tempted to recoil from non-conceptual content. It is an inexplicable

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[52] Spinoza (1992) says ideas—what we would call conceptual content—must be affirmed or denied, and hence doxastic (II, prop. 49).
[53] Though he does not explicitly connect non-conceptualism with contemporary foundationalism in *Mind and World*, McDowell (2002) makes it clear in response to Charles Taylor that he intends this identification (282).
[54] McDowell (1994), 6-8. Kant (1998) for similar reasons rejects John Locke's empirical deduction of certain concepts (causality) and intuitions (space and time) as undermining their status as necessary *a priori* conditions for the possibility of experience (A86-7/B119).

hypothesis in the Pyrrhonian sense of the word—a myth, McDowell says, that merely "offers exculpations where we wanted justifications".[55]

Rejection of the Myth, McDowell continues, leads to coherentism as advanced by Davidson, which holds that experience bears strictly *causally* on the justification of beliefs. Davidson denies that empirical (non-doxastic) content can impinge on our conceptual scheme or doxastic system. *Causally* efficacious non-conceptual content could not have anything *logically* to do with a space of reasons. This follows the coherentist line offered in chapter one, for which the goal of justification is doxastic coherence according to the stipulation that a belief is warranted only other beliefs. As a response to the Myth of the Given, it is no wonder that Davidsonian coherentism conjures the image of "the circle of beliefs",[56] for we have seen that the predictable response to hypothetical justification is circular justification. McDowell is dissatisfied with Davidson's conclusion because it denies that experience, i.e., sensation, could play anything more than a *causal* role in justification. The effect is to render the understanding's spontaneously *rational* role in justification frictionless.[57] Championing a normative concern against the Myth of the Given thus predictably invites a naturalist rejoinder—and a sense that the antinomous oscillation of contemporary epistemology is itself circular.

More importantly, I think, McDowell disavows Davidson's claim that a contemporary foundationalist conception of experience, indulging in an exculpatory

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[55] McDowell (1994), 8.
[56] Davidson (1986), 318.
[57] McDowell (1994), 14.

Myth, leads *exclusively* to skepticism. This is because McDowell rightly sees that a contemporary foundationalist has a legitimate complaint regarding Davidson's coherentist anxiety that, since our conceptual capacities are confined to spontaneous acts of understanding, we cannot credit ourselves with anything like empirical knowledge. I will return to this anxiety in a discussion about skepticism in section five. For now, it is clear that McDowell brings coherentism and contemporary foundationalism into the skeptical fold I have been tracing back to the Agrippan trilemma. Each camp champions a concern that expresses a skeptical threat to the other. And McDowell finds such threats constitutive of the very "way of thinking that underlies the familiar philosophical anxiety about empirical knowledge", which he says "is precisely what Davidson endorses".[58] Diagnosing this anxiety allows McDowell to offer a method of putting normative and naturalist concerns on a par and escaping the dilemma of justification, which I will argue presents us with a unique sort of foundationalism.

3.   Before substantiating my position, I want to make clear just what McDowell takes for his own view from the embattled positions he criticizes. While he wants to neutralize their respective anxieties, he sympathizes with their respective aims. First, McDowell is sensitive to the coherentist demands that rationality be spontaneous and that one's beliefs and utterances be charitably interpreted as coherent according to the constitutive ideal of rationality. His normative sensitivity here leads to conceptualism. This is the view that figuring non-conceptual bits of transcendent givenness into empirical judgments and

beliefs fails to render such judgments and beliefs explanatory and hence candidates for knowledge. The content of experience, instead, must be entirely *conceptual*. And construing conceptual content as "possessed by impressions themselves" is McDowell's attempt to ensure such content is embedded in the impact of experience.[59]

Second, McDowell appreciates the contemporary foundationalist's demand that rationality be constrained by non-normative experience, but with the important qualification that its constraint be explanatory. If we see experience as giving us conceptual content, we can appreciate that our receptivity to the impact of experience is in some sense rationally spontaneous.[60] That is, if we understand our conceptual capacities, not as exercised in, but rather as drawn upon by experience, we need no longer worry about the experiential traction of belief.[61] Insofar as our receptivity in experience involves the operation of our conceptual capacities, this operation can be seen as having a worldly, not a strictly mental, setting. And in this way the world's constraint on thought can be rational: "it must be possible to decide whether or not to judge that things are as one's experience represents them to be. How one's experience represents things to be is not under one's control, but it is up to one whether one accepts the appearance or rejects it".[62] McDowell's conceptualism breaks open the circle of beliefs by extending the space

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[58] McDowell (1994), 15.
[59] McDowell (1994), 9.
[60] McDowell (1994), 10.
[61] That is, we need not suppose we must choose between saying either that facts are causal constraints on belief (coherentism) or that belief is basically constrained by an inexplicable givenness of facts (foundationalism). This is because we want the constraint on thought to be rational (contra coherentism) and explanatory (contra foundationalism). This is only achieved if we integrate receptivity and spontaneity and appreciate them as adjusting to the conceptual deliverances of experience. Only then can we understand how empirical judgments are "possible elements in a world-view". See McDowell (1994), 29.
[62] McDowell (1994), 11.

of reasons into a world that impinges on us conceptually. For *what* we receive in passivity is not up to us. But the *way* in which we receive it lends itself to the spontaneous abilities of our understanding.

Extending the space of reasons *into* the world, as I have put McDowell's point, invites the objection that McDowell is committed to idealism. For it is one thing to say that rational animals are the sorts of beings that can inhabit the space of reasons. It is another to say that the space of reasons is, as it were, written through the world. This makes it sound as if McDowell holds that things, so far as they concern us, are constituents of the space of reasons or *mental*. This idealist charge is also potentially open to Davidson since, on his coherentist view, the mind is unconstrained in rendering consistent its beliefs, their causal connection to the world notwithstanding. But McDowell thinks his position superior to Davidson's—so what separates them on the score of *idealism*? I will show that *nothing* does because both have arguments at their disposal to reject idealism. After doing so, I will show what really separates McDowell and Davidson is related to the matter of *skepticism*.

Dancy has argued that a coherentist can retain non-idealistic empiricist sensitivity to the role that experience plays in knowledge. As we saw, the coherentist does not confine belief from experience and thus does not face the problem of having to show that beliefs are connected to the world.[63] Dancy concedes to the contemporary foundationalist that sensory and non-sensory beliefs are asymmetrical, but *not* that the former supports or

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[63] See chapter one, section three.

transmits justification to the latter.[64] This is because beliefs about immediate sensations are acceptable in the same way as *any* beliefs: one's doxastic system is always linked with the causal deliverances of experience. Contemporary foundationalists will insist that basic beliefs enjoy "antecedent security" because they are a) true if nothing stands against them and b) part of the space of reasons if they survive scrutiny. But the coherentist can in turn show that a) and b) are precisely what define *any* belief we are justified in holding, sensory or not. One therefore cannot ascribe antecedent security to any beliefs.[65] Dancy concludes that a coherentist can be a non-idealistic empiricist.

We should not worry that the coherentist is an idealist out of touch with reality. Davidson after all regulates belief with a constitutive ideal of rationality, which is meant to show that doxastic systems are generally coherent, translatable and commensurate against the backdrop of a single world.[66] And Spinoza can be construed as arguing that coherence is not a test of truth, but all to which truth amounts.[67] When he says, "a true idea must agree with that of which it is the idea",[68] he does *not* correspond true belief with a world that is independent of a belief that could be about it. Rather, he intends to show that the world is nothing if not an object of belief. This is because the attribute of thought is as inseparable from Spinozistic nature as is the attribute of extension.

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[64] Lehrer argues that, since justification is transmitted from one belief to another, foundationalism forwards the absurdity of making basic beliefs transmit justification to themselves. Steup's response is to say that connecting basic beliefs to a factual source is what makes them *privileged* among other beliefs, *not* self-justified in the traditional sense of indubitable or the classical sense of infallible. See Steup (1996), 99-101.
[65] Dancy (1984), 363 f.
[66] See Davidson (2001).
[67] This is why Walker (1985) interprets Spinoza as a coherence theorist of truth. What is important for my purposes is not whether such an interpretation is correct, or whether it is sensitive to the fact that Spinoza predates coherentism. Rather, it is that justification can depend on coherence without losing the world.
[68] Spinoza (1992), I, axiom 6.

Consistency among our ideas is all that bears on our talk of how the world really is.[69] Davidson's reliance on coherence therefore does not commit him to idealism.

McDowell's disavowal of idealism issues from his direct realist demand that subjectively perceptible facts are of an objectively perceptible world. He acknowledges that his refusal to locate perceptible reality outside the sphere of the conceptual may seem to constitute idealism. Conceptualism appears to render the world "a shadow of our thinking" or mere "mental stuff". But this is only the case for someone who thinks we are forced to choose between the dissatisfying views that thought is either causally or mythically constrained. McDowell's alternative is to "acknowledge that independent reality exerts a rational control over our thinking" and is in this way is not slighted.[70]

Idealism, McDowell reminds us, has the crucial consequence that rational constraint is issued by minds and not the world. This identifies perceptible facts with mental acts.[71] McDowell avoids this consequence by noting that "what appears [in experience] to be the case is understood as fraught with implications for the subject's cognitive situation in the world: for instance, that she is confronted by an object with a facing surface illuminated in such-and-such ways". In this respect we say that a subject "takes in" experience as part of a wider reality that is independent of her experience. Idealism is thwarted when we recognize that it is the *world* that issues rational constraint

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[69] Walker (1985), 10 f. Walker argues that Spinoza can ensure epistemic uniqueness against charges of isolation by showing that ideas reside in God's infinite mind (11). This metaphysics plays a role similar to the commensurability of conceptual schemes for Davidson. It would be a worthy study to relate Spinoza's intuitive or anomalous knowledge of God and Davidson's anomalous monism.

[70] McDowell (1994), 26-8.

[71] McDowell (1994), 25-8.

on thought.[72] McDowell's view properly understood is that the world provides thinkable

contents—a claim that I suggest puts normative and naturalist concerns on a par such that

no competition or consequent anxiety arises in the first place. McDowell, like Davidson,

is no idealist.[73]

4.   Now that idealism is off the table, we can see the real crux of the debate between

McDowell and Davidson. McDowell's problem with Davidsonian coherentism is that it

construes experience as a *causal* constraint on thought. McDowell's worry at this stage is

normative because he thinks our experience of the world *rationally* constrains thought.

Davidson's error is then cashed out as a frictionless spinning in a void. Now McDowell's

worry is decidedly naturalistic, for he wants the circle of belief to be in touch with reality.

But Davidson's causal account of the mind-world relation is naturalistic in its own way.

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[72] McDowell (1994), 32. Though it is beyond the scope of this thesis, it must be noted that idealism is a term that applies differently to a wide variety of quite distinct philosophical views, from Plato to Hume to Berkeley to Kant.

[73] Friedman (2002) argues that since McDowell has it that "received impressions become experiences of an objective world (and thus impressions of outer sense) only by being *taken as such* by the active faculty of understanding", he has made the understanding independent of sensibility in a "coherence-theoretic" sense and thus has failed to rebut the charge of idealism (33-5). McDowell's response (2002, 273-4) is to cite Friedman's distaste for post-Kantian idealism—i.e., the way it frees understanding from sensibility and allies it with what Kant called reason. I suspect a deeper problem lies in Friedman's inattention to the *Kantian* spirit of McDowell's picture. Kant (1950) in the *Prolegomena* says that consciousness begins with the subjective "connection of perceptions in my mental state, without reference to the object" (48). But "it does not, as is commonly imagined, suffice for experience that *perceptions* are compared and connected...[for] thence arises no universal validity and necessity by virtue of which alone consciousness can be objectively valid, that is, that it can be called experience" (49). Since a *judgment of perception*, based solely on the deliverance of the senses, lacks universal validity, Kant thinks that experience, if it is to be of empirical reality, must connect passively received impressions of outer sense with *judgments of experience* made by spontaneous understanding (50). Bringing the employment of concepts to bear on sensibility in this way is directly in line with McDowell's "aim of vindicating a commonsense realism" (2002, 274) and the very reason he relies on Kant's motto about the necessity of integrating receptivity and spontaneity to this end. Of course, this puts McDowell close to a very specific *kind* of idealism—namely, transcendental idealism—but then Friedman never discusses exactly what he dislikes about *post*-Kantian idealism, much less why Kantian idealism might be preferable.

We are thus faced with a competition of naturalisms that I think is similar in certain respects to a competition between Descartes and G.W.F. Hegel.

For Descartes, nature is a realm of law that impinges deceptively on the mind. This is why he quarantines the mind's clear and distinct ideas from the mechanistic structure of nature. For Hegel, nature is rather an organism imbued with *Geist*, i.e., a historico-cultural drive for freedom. Hegel's dissatisfaction with Cartesian dualism is that it blocks the partial enchantment of nature, as McDowell puts it, resulting in what he thinks is a kind of subjectivism. Davidsonian nature is also a realm of law occurring at the level of sensation, where the impact of the world on believers is strictly causal. This strikes me as quasi-Cartesian at least inasmuch as a mechanistic view of nature is in play.

To see why this is, consider that in a footnote McDowell accepts that on Davidson's view we can "ring changes on the [believer's] actual environment…without changing how things strike the believer, even while the interpretation is supposed to capture how the believer is in touch with her world". This strikes McDowell "as making it impossible to claim that [Davidson's] argument traffics in any genuine idea of being in touch with something in particular".[74] This is a fair assessment of Davidson because, although coherentism allows what happens at the causal level of sensation to impinge on the logical level of belief, it does not give sensation authority over the *justification* of belief. If it did, coherence would be a superfluous notion. It is instead by a constitutive ideal of rationality—of the space of reasons, we would say—that the coherentist can hold that things strike the rational animal as being thus and so.

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[74] McDowell (1994), 17n14.

To be sure, Descartes is willing to say the world as it causally impinges on us is *entirely* different from our beliefs about it. But I infer from McDowell's footnote that Davidson is willing to say the world as it causally impinges on us is *partially* different from our beliefs about it. For Davidson does not think that beliefs as a coherent whole can be arbitrated by the causal impacts of sensation. The effect of this is to champion the spontaneity of understanding at the cost of friction with the world. And recall that McDowell thinks this is guilty of a "familiar philosophical anxiety about empirical knowledge". But this does not make Davidson a Cartesian skeptic. Rather, it means that his view shares enough with Cartesian skepticism to warrant hearing out McDowell's preference for *ancient* skepticism.

McDowell says that "the Cartesian requirement is that the epistemic status of the thought that one is not dreaming must be established independently of the epistemic status of whatever putative knowledge of the environment is in question, serving as a test case for the possibility of acquiring such knowledge at all".[75] Although for Descartes our clear and distinct ideas do weigh in on the findings of sensation, the epistemic status of the former is established independently. And although for Davidson our beliefs are causally linked to sensation, the epistemic status of our belief set is established according to a standard of rationality internal to the space of reasons.

In contrast, McDowell says that in "ancient skepticism, the notion of truth is restricted to how things are (unknowably, it is claimed) in the world about us, so that how things seem to us is not envisaged as something there might be truth about, and the

question whether we know it simply does not arise".[76] McDowell thinks that if we properly integrate receptivity and spontaneity, and reject non-conceptualism, Cartesian skepticism is no longer able to raise questions that warrant answers.[77] I would argue that his approving remarks on ancient skepticism gesture toward Pyrrhonism, particularly when he champions the "innocent" thought that, in contrast with the Cartesian view,

> the infallibly knowable fact—its seeming to one that things are thus and so—can be taken disjunctively, as constituted either by the fact that things are manifestly thus and so or by the fact that that merely seems to be the case. On this account, the idea of things being thus and so figures straightforwardly into our understanding of the infallibly knowable appearance; there is no problem about how experience can be understood to have a representational directedness towards external reality.[78]

The disjunction here pertains to knowledge. It holds that *seeming to be the case* is, for all intents and purposes, identical with *manifestly being the case* and thus perfectly acceptable as knowledge.[79] McDowell holds that, in the absence of the Archimedean point for which Descartes strives, appearances manifest how things really are when one is not misled. His disjunction defends the adequacy of what is, in our experience and under normal circumstances, evidently the case and shrugs off the philosophical desire to safeguard this adequacy.

I glean from this a limited resonance with the Pyrrhonist claim that belief concerns strictly what is apparent to common sense. Indeed, McDowell's appreciation for

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[75] McDowell (1998), 238.
[76] McDowell (1998), 239.
[77] See McDowell (1994), 113 and (1998), 238-43.
[78] McDowell (1998), 242.
[79] For this reason, McDowell (1994) detects an innocent circularity in which being and looking red are mutually dependent (31) or, one might say, inseparable or rationally distinct.

Wittgensteinian quietism is not far from Pyrrhonism's goal of *ataraxia*.[80] Sympathy for ancient skepticism would appear to underscore McDowell's ability to champion his conceptualist naturalism over Davidson's coherentist naturalism. It is the latter for which arise non-pressing questions about how experience bears on true belief, answers to which are vulnerable to a contemporary dilemma and an ancient trilemma.

5.   McDowell has distanced himself from idealism. But how much does McDowell align himself with realism? A realist will insist that the world presents us with, not merely things we can think, but things we can think *about*. In a critical notice of *Mind and World*, Paul M. Pietroski insists that "apart from thoughts about thoughts, our mental events are about dogs and such: constituents of our environment that are not individuated by the epistemic criteria appropriate to thoughts".[81] Pietroski here argues that, while spontaneous exercises of conceptual capacities concern mind-independent reality the content of these exercises are mind-dependent thoughts. Surely this content is subject to the epistemic criterion of rational scrutiny. But Pietroski's complaint is that McDowell applies the epistemic criterion of rational scrutiny to that which thoughts are about. This conflates things we think—what Pietroski calls "facts *qua* thoughts"—and things we think about—what he calls "facts *qua* things".[82] We get this impression when McDowell

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[80] Of course, the Pyrrhonist would certainly refrain from talking of appearances, as McDowell does here, in terms of "reality", since that idea is distended by dogmatic pretensions to non-evident knowledge.
[81] Pietroski (1996), 628.
[82] Pietroski (1996) describes this as "a new threat of oscillation. By taking conceptualized contents to be Fregean, as McDowell does, one seems to be individuating states of the mind-independent world too finely. Guarding against this prospect runs the risk of individuating mental states too coarsely (626).

denies it is problematic "to say that perceptible facts are *essentially* capable of impressing themselves on perceivers…[and] embraced in thought in exercises of spontaneity".[83]

I grant that Pietroski's distinction between thoughts and things might harbour a sort of dualism. And I grant that his worry might be a species of the idealism charge, which I have argued cannot be leveled against McDowell. However, I do think Pietroski's naturalistic concern warrants our admitting that McDowellian conceptualism frustrates realism inasmuch as it acknowledges but does not reinforce the difference between thoughts and things. By subjecting our experience of things to the rules of the road in the space of reasons, McDowell makes every aspect of thought conceptually determinate. As a result, McDowell fails to consider that different kinds of criteria are appropriate to things and thoughts about things. How is this so?

Pietroski's use of the word "epistemic" is telling here. In his effort to show that the world rationally constrains our spontaneous deployment of concepts, McDowell intends to show that justification is entirely cognitive. This, I think, is the force behind McDowell's attachment to Wittgenstein's assertion that in experience we never stop short of the fact. And since this would seem to prohibit the conceptual indeterminacy of, say, non-epistemic criteria of individuation, McDowell's conceptualism is epistemic all the way down. That McDowell's account is exhaustively epistemic follows not simply because he a) intertwines understanding and receptivity and b) shows experience to contain only conceptual content—although a) and b) contribute precisely to what Pietroski calls epistemic criteria appropriate to thoughts. Rather, it is McDowell's

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[83] McDowell (1994), 28.

insistence that c) the world rationally constrains thought by saddling it with what is already conceptually determinate content that constitutes a third and equally epistemic criterion. But is it possible that mind-independent reality can be rationally scrutinized according to an epistemic criterion?

Pietroski agrees with Julian Dodd's claim that "McDowell conflates two kinds of theories about what facts are: modest theories, according to which facts are true thoughts (where thoughts are held to be denizens of the realm of sense [or the space of reasons]); and robust theories, according to which facts are 'items with particular objects and properties as constituents whose totality makes up the world'".[84] This conflation results from McDowell's emphasis on the conceptual character of the content of human experience and its consequent refusal to address how the content of mind-independent reality precedes experiential content, how mind-independent reality is indifferent to our faculties of cognition, how mind-independent reality undergirds the development of our natural potentialities, etc.

I suspect that a clear separation of criteria appropriate to thoughts from criteria appropriate to things is contingent on one's offering both a modest theory about thought's participation in the space of reasons and a robust theory about reality's independence from thought. McDowell appears incapable of effecting this separation if only because conceptualism can only capture a modest theory, which is surely *epistemic*, not a robust theory, which is in some sense ontological or, as I will argue, *non-epistemic*.

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[84] Pietroski (1996), 628-9.

6.   I turn now to substantiate a suggestion I made in section two. It was that McDowell's alternative to coherentism and contemporary foundationalism itself constitutes a unique foundationalism, which I will explain is *organic*.

A symptom—indeed an achievement—of McDowell's exhaustively epistemic conceptualism, I think, is to transpose the contemporary foundationalist's doxastic/non-doxastic distinction into the conceptual. Retaining this distinction clearly marks his intention to give traction to what would otherwise be a frictionless doxasticism. He considers two operations—conceptual responses and doxastic exercises—and holds that it is our "antecedent capacity" to respond conceptually to reality by representing it such that these representations are expressible doxastically.[85] That is, we are in experience saddled with conceptual content that we can subsequently utter in the form of affirmations and denials.

McDowell's point is that the content of experience, while wholly conceptual, is not entirely doxastic. Perception, for example, provides the sort of conceptual content to which beliefs are related but which itself is not properly doxastic. It strikes me that this alters the contemporary foundationalist form of justification in the following way. A contemporary foundationalist says that basic beliefs, because of their non-normative source, enjoy an antecedent epistemic security by which they support non-basic beliefs. McDowell instead claims that perception, by responding to the conceptual content of

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[85] McDowell (1994), 48.

experience, is an antecedent capacity that enables doxastic utterances. McDowell thus renders the two tiers of contemporary foundationalist form conceptual in character.[86]

However, McDowell's transposition of the contemporary foundationalist form of justification into a space of reasons loses the intuitive appeal of a mind-world asymmetry, to which contemporary foundationalists, coherentists and, I would argue, common sense realists alike are attracted. This is because thoroughgoing conceptualism of the sort McDowell advances is epistemically determinate on all fronts: our sensible receptivity to the deliverances of experience is at once spontaneously rational because these deliverances are already conceptually filled out. And this, we have seen, blurs the mind-world divide at the expense of a robust account of mind-independent reality. McDowell thus replaces doxasticism with a conceptualism for which the *non-doxastic perception* and the *manifest fact* that the world is thus-and-so are identical because they are constitutive of exhaustively epistemic experience.

Loss of asymmetry need not drive one toward the Myth of the Given, of course. McDowell confidently avoids this by relying on a description of an organic process by which a rational animal's upbringing develops its second nature from its first nature.[87] This heuristic allows McDowell to drive home the point that spontaneity operates *in* nature and thereby to consolidate normative and naturalist concerns. But this leaves untouched the issue, which Pietroski notes, of how on McDowell's view mental events

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[86] Crispin Wright (2002) claims that McDowell does not reject, but rather recasts the Myth of the Given as of the form 'that p', and thus "remains a foundationalist" (145).
[87] McDowell (1994), 77, 84.

are about dogs and not merely doggy conceptual content. Moreover, this raises an antecedent question of just how we get from first to second nature.

We can reasonably construe this process as blossoming from the kernel of human nature. This would indeed appear to be the fundamental assumption from which McDowell's story begins since a condition for maturation through upbringing is that one be naturally disposed toward initiation into rational practices. But then McDowell's heuristic does not simply benefit *methodological* foundationalism. It abets *substantial* foundationalism because it construes our pre-doxastic or "antecedent" response to the world as developing, not only within a partially re-enchanted reality our receptivity to which is already conceptual, but as latent potential of our animal nature. Since for McDowell the ultimate basis of belief is the maturation of the human organism, I claim that the form of justification he offers is *organically foundationalist*.

If this is right, then the heuristic McDowell employs is a genetic story concerning the origin and development of second nature. In the next two chapters, I shall present such a story and consider Kantian and Wittgensteinian responses to it. Each will argue that McDowell's organic foundationalism and the genetic story it presupposes frustrate some *normative* concern. For the Kantian, it is the concern that an account of true belief must ultimately be non-empirical or transcendental. For the Wittgensteinian, it is the concern that an account of true belief must avoid inconsistencies born of theoretical immodesty.

Their responses should support my claim that satisfying normative and naturalist concerns relies on a grounding model. This model, like McDowell's, transposes the

doxastic/non-doxastic distinction to the conceptual, but only against the backdrop of a transcendental story. Instead of non-conceptual content, so this story goes, the structure of grounding rests on a concept that does not lend structure to a particular intuition. This *non-intuitive concept* is a regulative ideal of thought—quite literally *the purely formal concept of non-conceptual content*. Such an intuition-less concept will as a result be epistemically indeterminate, or simply non-epistemic. And so the grounding model I will propose retains an important, foundationalist asymmetry absent on McDowell's account: the asymmetry between epistemic and non-epistemic roles in conceptual thought.

Chapter 4
A Transcendental Story and a Genetic Story

1.   McDowell's organic foundationalism relies on a genetic story that identifies several lessons in Aristotle. First, practical wisdom is a stance taken by beings for which doing so is natural.[88] From this McDowell infers that knowledge in general derives from our occupying an outlook that is natural to the sort of animal we are. This coheres with the view, usually attributed to Aristotle, that humans are rational animals.

Second, nature is not the disenchanted[89] realm of law that Descartes distances from reason—the world that fails to constrain thought rationally (coherentism) or to figure into explanations (contemporary foundationalism). To "partially re-enchant" nature, then, McDowell urges that we not adopt a "rampant Platonism" according to which the space of reasons is a structure of meaning independent of nature. Instead, we ought to view nature via a "naturalized Platonism" according to which the space of reasons is dependent on human practices. To wit: "exercises of [rational] spontaneity belong to our way of actualizing ourselves as animals".[90] On this view nature is a meaningful realm that engenders our activities with rationality.

Third, knowledge springs from a pattern of maturation in the natural life of a latently rational animal. Aristotle's thought is that the normal human organism is initiated into practices the significance of which is not supernatural, but *tied to the potentialities of*

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[88] As McDowell (1994) says: ethical demands do not follow from projections or constructions of facts, but simply bear on us (83). See Aristotle (1991), 1.7, 1098a16-7.
[89] McDowell (1994), 85.
[90] McDowell (1994), 77-8.

that organism. Learning is an organic process whereby one's upbringing cultivates one's genetic[91] disposition toward reasoning. Knowledge emerges as an aspect of our second nature. McDowell embraces Aristotle's developmental story[92] in order to dispel the familiar and uncomfortable separation of nature and reason. The result is a genetic story that renders intelligible McDowell's integration of receptivity and spontaneity and the anointment of nature as a realm that rationally impinges on its human inhabitants.

One's upbringing is certainly salient for seeing how one acquires true beliefs. Contemporary thinkers would agree that, regardless of which form of justification is proper to knowledge, we are inculcated into epistemic practices, whether they concern being good, driving or doing calculus. However, McDowell is notoriously cagey about just how inculcation plays out. He invokes Hegel's notion of upbringing (*Bildung*) as that which opens our eyes to reason and develops our second nature. But McDowell's quietist approach forbids him to say too much about this genetic process. And his commitment to common sense realism rests satisfied with the intuitive force of the notion of the *animal rationale*. He says simply that our upbringing actualizes potentialities that we are born with and that "we do not have to suppose [upbringing] introduces a non-animal ingredient into our constitution".[93] But I think McDowell's denial that the blossoming of

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[91] Pietroski (1996) acknowledges that McDowell's developmental story is genetic in that reaching the age of reason, like puberty, is the upshot of natural endowment (634). Pietroski's complaint is that McDowell's rhetoric adds nothing to the truism that one does not acquire conceptual capacities in a vacuum, adding that it is not illuminating to say that acquiring a language is tantamount to realizing one's second nature (635). I think it is for concerns about Humean *skepticism* that McDowell avoids explaining how we are born into first nature and learn second nature (see section two of this chapter).
[92] See McDowell (1994), 84-5.
[93] McDowell (1994), 88.

second nature involves anything non-animal (that is, non-natural) encourages an investigation into whether his view harbours any problematic implications.

2.   A crucial possibility is that McDowell's genetic story is *Humean*. It was of course Hume's observation that, since we cannot justify our inductive claims without begging the question of the uniformity of nature, we must deny that we have a genuine idea of causality.[94] We can only offer a *psychologistic* explanation of causal phenomena—that is, a naturalistic or strictly empirical account of why we make inductive claims about necessary connections among events. Thus, Hume says that as we grow accustomed to apparent uniformity in nature, we acquire a "general habitual principle" by which "we regard even one experiment as the foundation of reasoning, and expect a similar event with some degree of certainty". He continues:

> But though animals learn many parts of their knowledge from observation, there are also parts of it, which they derive from the original hand of nature…These we denominate *instincts*, and are so apt to admire, as something very extraordinary, and inexplicable by all the disquisitions of human understanding [which]…is nothing but a species of instinct or mechanical power.[95]

In short, Hume thinks that our apparent deployment of the idea of causality, together with our alleged knowledge of necessary connections among observed events, are products of a process of habituation whereby a *natural* instinct is developed. Customary expectations are what they are because of genetic roots.

The letter of Kant's response to Hume's psychologistic argument is well noted:

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[94] See Hume (1977), section VII.
[95] Hume (1997), section IX, 71n36, 72.

[Causal] concepts that supply the objective ground of the possibility of experience are necessary just for that reason. The unfolding of the experience in which they are encountered, however, is not their deduction (but their illustration), since they would thereby be only contingent. Without this original [conceptual] relation to possible experience, in which all objects of cognition are found, [concepts'] relation to any object could not be comprehended at all.[96]

Hume appreciates the indispensability of thoughts about necessary connections among events. And since we can find no impression and hence provide no justification for such thoughts, he argues that complex notions, e.g., personal identity, must be a product of an *instinctive association* of ideas according to the "uniting principles" of resemblance, contiguity and causation.[97] But Kant's point is that Hume's derivation of our alleged idea of causality from *psychological* features of experience—which are as contingent as the matters of fact purportedly related by this idea—is self-defeating.[98] Indeed, Hume's psychologistic argument about mechanical instinct employs the very idea—causality—that he means to reduce to instinct. And it is far from clear which impression could give rise to a "uniting principle" of causation. Thus, *if* our expectation of uniformity in nature is a habituated matter of fact, then no psychologistic account of concepts can show this.

Paul Franks has called attention to the spirit of Kant's critique of Humean skepticism. Contemporary thinkers are divided as to whether skepticism is philosophy's scourge (e.g., Quine, Richard Rorty, Roderick Chisholm) or its task (e.g., Stanley Cavell, Thomas Nagel, Barry Stroud). Franks notes Kant's confidence that it is both.[99] Whereas

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[96] Kant (1998), A94/B126-7.
[97] See "Of Personal Identity" in Hume (2000), book I, part IV, section VI.
[98] Kant (1998), A95/B127-9. See B4-5 where Kant says we ought to be content with that the fact of our possession of concepts is displayed in scientific as well as ordinary judgments.
[99] As Franks (2005) importantly notes, "Kant never says that he was provoked into attempting a *refutation* of Hume's *skepticism*" (150).

Hume is consumed by skeptical *despair* about the justifiability of our use of concepts, Kant is filled with transcendental *hope* about the conditions under which we do in fact use concepts.[100] In this, I think, Kant learns a *Pyrrhonian* lesson where Hume does not: restrict skepticism to what is philosophically spurious so that we are not lured toward *dogmatic negativity* about what is in fact or evidently the case. As Franks puts it: "there should be no room for skepticism proper…At most, there is room for the deployment of skeptical arguments against philosophy's recurring seduction into transcendent dogmatism by dialectical illusions. For Kant recognizes no drive to skeptical doubt *as such*. There is only the drive to *knowledge*".[101] Skepticism can show us the bounds of justification, but only as a catalyst for ridding philosophy of dogmatic pretension and, ultimately, skepticism itself.

Of course, I do *not* suggest that McDowell's genetic story about the development of second from first nature is consumed by Humean *despair* about inductive claims. He would certainly reject the arguments of a Humean skeptic such as Salomon Maimon, for whom judgments of experience in Kant's sense[102] may be valid without requiring that we actually apply them to experience in some determinate way.[103] Indeed, McDowell would

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[100] Franks (2005), 148-50. To be sure, Hume is not skeptical all the way down. As mentioned at footnote 43, Hume sets a limit to *epoche*. Hence, he says (1977) that when the skeptics "leave the shade" and confront "the more powerful principles of our nature", they find their triumphs confined to the sphere of philosophical objections (109-10). Humean despair does not stifle action. But as this quotation makes plain, he nevertheless wields skepticism against the possibility of providing rational justification for what he thinks is in fact determined by "principles of our nature".

[101] Franks (2005), 151.

[102] See footnote 73 where I argue that Kant intends that judgments of perception are impossible unless they are *conceptualized qua* judgments of experience.

[103] Unless judgments of experience can be shown to be actual without begging the question—that is, if they can be mathematically grounded, which Kant admits is not possible—Maimon is content to rest with Hume's psychologistic account of our use of concepts. See Franks (2005), 176-89.

be right in maintaining that the Kantian no more begs the *quaestio quid facti* about our use of concepts than the Humean begs the *quaestio quid juris* about the viability of a psychologistic account of our alleged possession of ideas. And whereas Hume sees this possession as the upshot of a *mechanical* power, McDowell is clearly *organic* in his view that for us deploying concepts is a socially-nurtured developmental achievement for suitably endowed animals.

But this fails to distance McDowell from Hume on the score of *naturalism* as I suspect McDowell's genetic story is a species of psychologistic argument. To be sure, neither instinct nor upbringing constitute a theory of justification, but rather belong to the heuristical story *presupposed* by having a theory of justification as such. In McDowell's Hegelian spin on Aristotelian initiation, *Bildung* is part of a set of naturalistic conditions by which we develop our natural ability to have true beliefs. And Hume talks of instinct in just this way, i.e., as explaining how we develop our customary tendency to discern necessary connections. Now McDowell *does* uphold our use of concepts, but only to insist that it follows from a process located in the natural development of a human organism. And he naturalizes Platonism only inasmuch as he integrates spontaneity with nature. This is because McDowell wants matters of fact to impress conceptual content and conceptual capacities to develop from natural potentialities. But these capacities are just those that Hume attributes in naturalistic fashion to instinct.[104]

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[104] Franks (forthcoming) highlights Hermann Cohen's incisive interpretation of Kant. Cohen reads the first *Critique* as adducing from facts of consciousness "that space, time and the categories are *a priori* in the sense that they are invariants of human sensibility and understanding; consequently, they have no temporal development and signify *limits* for psychology". The consequence for psychologistic neo-Kantians of the

If the genetic story McDowell presupposes is not a full-bodied Humean view of the conceptual exercises of rational animals, it at least suffers from being half-committed to a psychologistic image of such exercises—half-committed since while McDowell advances Aristotle's image of wisdom blossoming from human nature, he disavows the problems that come with spelling out just how first nature *entails* second nature, organically *or* mechanically. Human DNA, for example, no more produces second nature than Hume begs the *quaestio quid juris*, that is, assumes the right to inductively derive the idea of causality from psychological features of experience. It is unclear whether on McDowell's view certain concerns are not forced together and certain questions not unduly ignored.

This tension I think bears as much on McDowell's claim to common sense realism as on his rebuttal of the charge of idealism. For there is a real sense in which his *normative* concern that the world rationally constrains thought is run over roughshod by a *naturalist* concern that this be traced to the maturation of human organisms. The prevailing naturalist thrust here motivates McDowell's organic view of how we deploy concepts just as it motivates Hume's mechanistic view of how we make inductive claims. And this motivation owes enough to a psychologistic image of the life of the mind that a genetic story is its obvious heuristic. So I do not see how McDowell can comfortably

late nineteenth century is that they are unable to go beyond psychology to a *transcendental method*, while the German idealists before them, deducing facts of consciousness from a "mind-like" first principle, "have rendered psychology cosmic, instead of escaping it altogether". I think the method Cohen reads from Kant is a forebear of the transcendental story that I argue in the next chapter is at Wittgenstein's disposal.

place on a par, as he seems to intend, the concerns that motivate him (like Hegel) to synthesize the merits of Kantian spontaneity and Aristotelian second nature.[105]

3.   I turn now to pursue an alternative to organic foundationalism and its genetic heuristic. I do so with appreciation of the Kantian spirit by which McDowell improves on recent accounts of knowledge. This improvement is to take the contemporary foundationalist's doxastic/non-doxastic distinction—where this distinguishes between the non-normative source of basic beliefs on the one hand and non-basic beliefs on the other—and render both tiers conceptual. What is crucial at this stage is to persist in refining this distinction. The negative motivation for this is the need to distance foundationalism from the troubles of psychologism. The positive motivation is an intuitive—indeed, common sense realist—desire to distinguish things from thoughts about them, reinstating an asymmetry not accommodated on McDowell's exhaustively epistemic view. As I have hinted, this reinstatement distinguishes between epistemic and non-epistemic roles of thought and will figure into a two-tiered structure of justification. In establishing this structure, I hope to make evident the claim—Kantian in spirit—that *knowing is nothing other than grounding*. This means, roughly, that true empirical belief rests on a non-empirical presupposition about mind-independent reality that—because it is presupposed, rather than justified—counts as non-epistemic thought.

But, as a preface to my exegesis of Kant, I must address the question: *what makes non-epistemic thought so attractive*? To answer this, I begin by claiming that we want to

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[105] This tension will be investigated with Hegel in mind in chapter four.

say two things about experience. The first is that the world is (for the most part) as I experience it. The second is that the world I experience is independent of my experience of it. I take this to resonate with common sense realism.

If we are allowed to say both of these things, a tension becomes apparent: what we can say about our experience of the world seems to be of a different *kind* than what we can say about the world independent of our experience of it. This is because we cannot appeal to our experience of the world *as a reason* for our thinking that the world exists independently of our experience of it. This produces only an apparent contradiction and does not threaten to rob us of a world. We are only concerned to show that our account of true belief does not bear the mark of a real contradiction. Doing so requires getting clear on the two kinds of things we can say about experience.

I think these two things map onto the most central Kantian distinction, which is between the empirical and the transcendental. This distinction pertains to cognition (as when Kant is talking about kinds of knowledge), objects (as when he talks about experience) and perspectives (as when he talks about agency). For my purposes, the importance of this distinction is its bearing on cognition. In the following section, we will see that empirical knowledge is *composite*. As McDowell often and approvingly cites, empirical knowledge for Kant involves a combination of concepts and intuitions. Meaningful experience is thus the intimate cooperation of understanding and sensibility.

As we shall see, Kant notices that some features of knowledge are constitutive of experience. My spatial, temporal and causal perception of phenomena is constitutive of my knowledge of having traveled in planes across different time zones. Kant also sees

that certain features of knowledge are not constitutive of experience, but instead regulate experience and knowledge derived from it. Thus, there is a scary world of planes and other things presupposed by my nerve-racked experience of them. Kant deems regulative "principles" *transcendental* because they are the necessary conditions for the possibility of experience. A transcendental argument is concerned with determining just these sorts of conditions.

Now we have two candidates—empirical and transcendental cognition—for picking out what we can say about mind-dependent experience and the mind-independent world. Kant in particular conditions empirical knowledge—which, since it is a marriage of concepts and intuitions, is thoroughly conceptual—with a limiting concept (*Grenzbegriff*) or a thought that lacks sensible intuition.[106] It is what Kant also calls the idea of the thing in itself, by which he means simply *the world as it is independent of our experience of it*. The idea of the in itself is neither of a murky netherworld distinct from our own nor of that aspect of a thing that eludes our gaze. It is a way of describing the fact that we think and say *but do not know* that the world as we experience it is precisely the world that is independent of our experience of it.

What we can properly be said to know about the world is what we experience of it. And this is the thrust behind Kant's empirical realism. Empirical knowledge is epistemic. Transcendental cognition, on the other hand, is of the presupposed *ground* of empirical knowledge. For this reason Kant holds that we must think but cannot know

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[106] This, in contrast to McDowell's (1994) claim that Kant "recognizes a reality outside the sphere of the conceptual" (44).

things as they are in themselves. The transcendental thought of the in itself is therefore, not only necessary *qua* ground, but also non-epistemic *qua* ground of that which *is* epistemic. In answer to the question beginning this section, then, I respond: non-epistemic thought allows us to say, in contrast to what we can verifiably know, that we can neither be said to know nor not know that which provides the framework in which we can verify anything.

To be sure, grounding, transcendental awareness and non-epistemic thought are unlike anything considered by coherentists and contemporary foundationalists as I have presented them. Both camps construe justification as an explicit appeal to something citable as evidence for our beliefs. As the foregoing has been meant to show, this appeal is vulnerable to problems internal to their respective concerns and justificatory structures as well as to problems of skepticism. The advantage of grounding as I have defined it is that it satisfies normative and naturalist concerns while providing a form of justification that circumvents Agrippan skepticism by showing that the intelligibility of thought rests on a pre-theoretical awareness concerning which the demand for justification is moot.

4.   I think it fair to suggest that much of the current epistemological debate grapples at base with, not a prejudiced *scheme-Given dualism*, as McDowell supposes, but rather Kant's *dual-edged demand* that empirical knowledge both makes our concepts sensible—objectifies them in intuition—and makes our intuitions understandable—brings them under concepts. This is just what Kant means when he says, "Thoughts without concepts

are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind".[107] A post-Kantian philosopher, if nothing else, strives to explain how the intellectual and sensible components of empirical belief are already united in experience.

The method of Kant's own explanation—his form of justification—is what he calls transcendental. In the B Introduction to the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant entitles "all cognition transcendental that is occupied not so much with objects but rather with our mode of cognition of objects insofar as this is to be possible *a priori*". This passage differentiates the *empirical* cognition of objects from the *transcendental* cognition of the *a priori* conditions for the possibility of this cognition. Kant's structure of justification "would not be a doctrine, but must be called only a critique of pure reason".[108] Thus, Kant proposes a *critical* form of justification according to which true belief presupposes a transcendental—*not* a genetic—story about empirical knowledge.

The relationship between empirical knowledge and transcendental awareness, we have seen, is asymmetrical insofar as the latter conditions the former. Indeed, *dependence* is a cornerstone of a transcendental story because it displays conditional relationships made implicit or explicit by a mode of inquiry. Thus, Kant's first *Critique* is devoted to determining the conditions for the possibility of our ability to make objective empirical claims that provide scientific and ordinary knowledge beyond subjective perception and beyond the analysis of concepts. His success in this rests on his ability to illuminate the dependence of conditioned or empirical knowledge on unconditioned or transcendental awareness.

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[107] Kant (1998), A51/B75.

Kant's dual-edged demand renders empirical knowledge composed of both our sensible intuition of space and time and our spontaneous understanding of concepts. Of such knowledge he says that when we assume "the conditioned [i.e., empirical] is given, then so is the whole series of conditions subordinated one to the other, which is itself unconditioned".[109] This is because reason seeks the unity of empirical knowledge ("the unity of understanding"), which by itself would be *endlessly* conditioned by contingent, subjective perception.[110] Kant's explicit intent then is to preempt an infinite regress by satisfying the Aristotelian demand that demonstrative (conditioned) knowledge culminates in justification through its derivation from indemonstrable (unconditioned) knowledge. Thus, the unconditioned whole is heterogeneous with "everything conditioned".[111] And the possibility of its unity "drives us to go beyond the boundaries [*Grenze*] of experience and all appearances" to the idea of "the thing in itself [*Ding-an-sich*]", which, though "uncognized by us…reason necessarily and with every right demands…for everything that is conditioned, thereby demanding the series of conditions as something completed".[112] While empirical knowledge is a conditioned series, reason is driven to think—*not know*—the transcendental idea of the mind-independent thing in itself as that which completes this series.

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[108] Kant (1998), A11/B25 f.
[109] Kant (1998), A307/B364 f.
[110] See footnote 73 for why Kant could not rest content with judgments of perception alone.
[111] Kant (1998), A308/B365.
[112] Kant (1998), Bxx. For a succinct account of Kant's aim here, see Ilyenkov (1977), 102-7.

One must bear with the paradox by which Kant calls transcendental cognition "cognition" because it is not knowledge proper, like empirical cognition, but what I will call an *awareness* that conditions knowledge proper.

These passages show that Kant's structure of justification uses the asymmetrical form common to foundationalists of all stripes.[113] On the one hand is empirical cognition, which is composite, contingent and conditioned by the unity that reason imposes on it for the sake of completeness. This unity is provided by the limiting concept of the thing in itself, which on the other hand is proper to a transcendental story in which this concept is not *cognized*. This limiting concept, rather, is a *regulative* condition of empirical cognition, a role it plays *non-epistemically* (and hence also non-doxastically).

McDowell jettisons Kant's transcendental story because he claims that when Kant "attributes mind-independence to the ordinary empirical world" it is "disingenuous".[114] There are two reasons for this. First, it apparently spoils the insight about the co-dependence of concepts and intuitions for knowledge by entertaining the idea of unknowable supersensible reality. Second, it fails to maintain that nothing is "external to the conceptual" by construing supersensible reality as devoid of meaning.[115]

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[113] This asymmetry brings out the centrality of dependence in grounding. Franks (2005) depicts such dependence by a modal distinction, where x (empirical knowledge) is modally dependent on y (transcendental awareness) if x is unintelligible independent of y but not vice versa (58).

[114] Robert Pippin (2002) says that McDowell's worry about Kantian subjectivism distorts the projection metaphor and stems from F.H. Jacobi's "limited interpretation of such subjectivity" (62-70). My current research includes exposing the ties between McDowell's and Jacobi's misreadings of Kant on the score of disingenuous realism. Both interpretations are motivated by direct realism. And both rest on a diagnosis of philosophy with an empty formalism. McDowell identifies this formalism with coherentism and Jacobi with nihilism (see Franks (2005), 157-60), both of which misconstrue Kant as an *empirical* idealist. Of course, this misconstrual is a major impetus for Kant's writing the B edition of the first *Critique*.

[115] McDowell (1994), 95-6.

I think McDowell's worry about Kant's transcendental story misunderstands its role. For *if* it is the case that we assume in thought, but do not know, reality beyond that which is sensible by us, then talk of a regulative limiting concept is far from disingenuous. And invoking such a *concept* posits nothing external to the conceptual, but only to the *epistemic*: McDowell fails to notice that Kant's insight about the concept-intuition relationship is intelligible only against the backdrop of a transcendental story about the necessary conditions for the possibility that such a relationship is constrained by a mind-independent world. As I infer from Kant's discussion of cognition, the idea of a *non-epistemic* ground hinges on the intelligibility of contrasting determinate (empirical) with indeterminate (transcendental) concepts. I see no such contrast in McDowell, which is why in chapter two I call his conceptualism exhaustively epistemic, and which is why I think he trades a transcendental for a genetic story. This not only commits him to a dubious psychologistic story, as I have argued, but it also repeats post-Kantian reactions to transcendental philosophy, which we will see in section six.

Why does Kant distinguish regulative from putatively epistemic functions? As I noted in the previous section, Kant separates features or principles that are *constitutive* of knowledge proper, which stipulate the conditions of empirical cognition, from those that are *regulative* of reason, which we assume in order to bring existence, which cannot be constructed in empirical cognition, under *a priori* relations.[116] By presupposing *a priori* the existence of mind-independent reality, regulative principles impose a transcendental

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[116] Kant (1998), A179/B222 f. See A772/B800 for Kant's distinction between thinking and knowing.

condition on empirical knowledge. These principles express the uncognizable and unspoken awareness that underlies or grounds empirical belief.

Whereas we have seen that McDowell conflates the criteria appropriate to mind-independent things with those appropriate to thoughts about things, Kant distinguishes these criteria according to a regulative-constitutive distinction that appreciates the un-specifiable mind-independence of the world. On Kant's view, the concept of the givenness of things—a concept conceived without intuition—is not mythical. It is *neither* exculpatory *nor* explanatory. It is instead *transcendental* because, as a condition of knowledge proper, it enables our ability to provide good reasons for knowing or believing x. What makes transcendental awareness non-epistemic is that it is not constitutive of *what* we know or believe, but rather is definitive of how empirical knowledge operates on necessary presuppositions.

Congruent asymmetries emerge for Kant—between empirical cognition and transcendental awareness, appearances and things in themselves, knowledge and assumption—that bring out his non-epistemic brand of foundationalism. These parallels I think help to illuminate the grounding model on which I have been drawing. This model claims that *that which grounds x enables and is presupposed by the true belief of x*. Grounds in this sense are conceptual inasmuch as they are thinkable, but are *neither epistemic nor doxastic*. They are not true beliefs because they condition our ability to have true belief. *Unconditioned grounds demarcate the bounds of justification*. They are categorially different from the empirical beliefs that they ground—beliefs that are determinate according to the unity of concept and intuition in empirical knowledge.

Accordingly, these non-doxastic and non-epistemic concepts—which Kant restricts to the singular limiting concept of the thing in itself—are *indeterminate* concepts.[117]

5.   How does Kantian foundationalism bear on the contemporary debate? As I noted in chapter one, current oscillations manifest a tradition of defending, on behalf of one concern or another, the form of justification that is proper to knowledge and of rising to the skeptical challenges that confront this endeavour. Kant's own time was no different. He diagnosed a version of the current dilemma as a struggle between rationalist and empiricist theories of knowledge.

We have seen in previous chapters that even within the rationalist ranks there are arguably expressions of both foundationalism (Descartes) and perhaps prototypical coherentism (Spinoza). Their failure to secure *normative* principles with clear and distinct ideas or intuitive knowledge led Kant to conclude that a deductive edifice may enjoy logical coherence without being constrained by subjective judgments of perception. This dissatisfying feature of what he calls transcendental realism leads naturally to empirical idealism.[118] But this shift has its problems. Hume's failure to show that experience is an aggregate of impressions guided by *natural* mechanisms moved Kant to supplement perception with conceptual judgments of experience.[119] And Kant's rejection of the mechanistic or causal account of belief offered by empirical idealists can be seen as a prototypical argument against the coherentist's threat of separating belief from the world.

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[117] Kant's distinction between general and transcendental logic is congruent with the difference between empirically determinate and indeterminate limiting concepts. See Kant (1998), A72/B97.
[118] Kant (1998), A369.

Surely this philosophical dialectic set a precedent for the concerns and challenges of contemporary positions on justification.

The dialectic also set a precedent for critiques of Kant's response to it, particularly in the work of Fichte. And I think that, because of McDowell's manifest and acknowledged sympathy for German idealism, the most plausible implication of his genetic story is, not that it is Humean, but rather that it is *Fichtean*.[120] Illuminating this implication will a) parallel McDowell's work with a unique attempt at reconciling coherentism and contemporary foundationalism, i.e., via organic foundationalism and a genetic heuristic; b) link McDowell substantially to a philosophical tradition—German idealism—that he acknowledges only in passing in *Mind and World*; and c) prompt a transcendental rejoinder in the final chapter to McDowell's decidedly post-Kantian project. But first I must summarize Fichte's account.

Like Kant, Fichte is aware of a version of the current dilemma of justification, observing that consciousness is *both* circular *and* the culmination of a foundational act.[121] He draws on Kant's argument for the transcendental unity of apperception, which states that since all discrete, third-personal experiences must be ascribable to a self—that is, to the 'I think' that accompanies every representation—the analytic (episodic) unity of consciousness presupposes the synthetic (reflexive) unity of self-consciousness.[122] Fichte argues that this presupposition also applies in the other direction, since self-consciousness

[119] See Kant (1950), 48-50, for a distinction between judgments of perception and judgments of experience.
[120] McDowell has said that, for all his interest in philosophy from Kant to Hegel, he requires a concerted reading of Fichte. Franks (2005) notes that it is possible "to apply an abstract description of McDowell's procedure to Fichte's rethinking of the theoretical/practical distinction" (200n114).

is a species of consciousness and therefore presupposes consciousness of a discrete experience. This reveals the "inescapable circularity" of thought, "the necessary circle of our mind" and the "coherence" of belief.[123]

We might infer from this that Fichte is a proto-coherentist.[124] His concern is normative when he says, "one cannot think *about* the laws of thinking in any other way except *according* to those laws". And in a letter to Goethe, he anticipates Blanshard by claiming that the "correctness of [his] system is vouched for by, among other things, the inner connection between the whole and each single part".[125] This captures precisely the holistic structure of a doxastic system and the reciprocal form of coherentist justification.

However, we must see that Fichte's system boasts coherence *among other things*. For he is fully aware that the "inner truth" of the system of thought does not itself establish the "outer truth" of an extra-systemic basis.[126] And he claims that, since a

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[121] For helpful discussions of coherentist and foundationalist tendencies in Fichte's developing thought, see Breazeale (1994) and Rockmore (1994, 1996).

[122] Kant (1998), B131.

[123] Fichte (1992), 14 and (1964), II:3, 14; see also (1991), *passim*. P.F. Strawson (1959) claims that in the case of humans *qua* individuals, first-person ascriptions and third-personal ascriptions are unintelligible independent of each other (104 f). Fichte seems to anticipate this rational distinction with his claim that thought is a circular relationship where object-consciousness and self-consciousness presuppose each other.

[124] Given Robert Stern's (1999) coherentist reading of Kant, Fichte's greatest influence, this interpretation might appear plausible; see for example Rockmore (1994). Mark Sacks (1999) rejects Stern's reading in a way that showcases Kant's non-epistemic grounding. To avoid the troubles of transcendental idealism and defeat the doxastic skeptic, Stern relies on transcendental arguments *simpliciter*. Sacks says this is a retreat to the absurdity of believing what may not be true, which undermines any inference to reality and leaves the doxastic skeptic unscathed. More than this, it reads Kant as an empirical idealist, which loses Kant's insight that experiential sequence is an irreversible fact that we *presuppose* but do not *believe*—an insight that undercuts the epistemic skeptic as well as the doxastic skeptic.

[125] As quoted in Breazeale (1994), 47, 66n41. Although Friedman (2002) claims that the "coherentism problematic" begins with the British idealists of the mid nineteenth century (50n14), it certainly finds earlier expression in German idealism.

[126] Fichte (1964), EM, II:3, 24.

coherent system may be *untrue*, justification must be constructed on an intuitively certain first principle that ascribes to *facts* of reason an *act* of reason as their source.[127]

Without delving into the moral character of this first principle, it is important to note that for Fichte reason must be *practical*. There are two reasons for this. First, reason must be active if we are to understand ourselves as given in consciousness as an unconditioned unity—that is, as an organic "drive [*Trieb*]" comprised of rational and natural sub-drives, the proper end of which is practical freedom.[128] Unless this is the case, we cannot ascribe to ourselves facts about our spontaneously enacting means to ends.[129] Second, unless reason is active, the facts of reason (thoughts) will drag putatively spontaneous acts of reason into an infinitely regressive inferential chain.[130] This argument, which Fichte levels against K.L. Reinhold, effectively holds that the only way for reason to be practical or affective is for the circle of thought to have a *non-doxastic, active source*. A precedent to the current dilemma thus pushes Fichte to balance coherentist leanings with a foundationalist temperament.[131]

6.   Fichte inverts Steup's fact-act hierarchy (see chapter one, section three) so that naturalized rational activity provides the foundation for true belief. Fichte thereby distinguishes himself as an organic foundationalist, a move that anticipates McDowell in

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[127] Fichte (1964), UBWL, I:2, 113. For thoughts on the primacy of activity, see Fichte (1991), 133, 139.
[128] Fichte (2003), 122-3.
[129] Fichte (1964), RC, I/2: 28.
[130] Franks (2005), 271-3.
[131] Fichte surely operates in a different philosophical milieu than contemporary thinkers. I merely notice that recurring (normative and naturalist) concerns motivate thinkers including Fichte throughout history. So the coherence that Fichte attributes to self-reflexive thought is meant to characterize belief systems *simpliciter*, whether empirical or transcendental in his unique sense. And the fundamental source on which

certain respects. The most salient of these is that Fichte, like McDowell, breaks away from Kant's transcendental story in order to presuppose for his organically foundationalist form of justification a *genetic* story.

Fichte achieves this in two steps. First, he jettisons the thing in itself, which he calls "the uttermost perversion of reason" because "all existence…is necessarily sensory in character, for we derive the concept of existence from the form of sensibility."[132] For Fichte, sensibility and understanding are not really distinct: intuition is *both* sensible *and* intellectual. As a result, experience is entirely *epistemic*.[133] For Fichte, like McDowell and unlike Kant, no distinction among principles of reason separates thinking about thinking and thinking about things.[134] Reason itself is an act (*Tathandlung*) from which facts (*Tatsache*) as such spring. Fichte thereby makes reason a *material* principle that grounds the formal demonstration of facts of reason.[135] That thinking presupposes a substantial, organic ego foreshadows McDowell's placing spontaneity into nature.

Dispensing with the transcendental story of the thing in itself allows Fichte, secondly, to pursue a *natural* condition for true belief—namely, freedom—our awareness

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he rests belief reflects a desire to locate thought in the active experience of a peopled world, a desire he shares with philosophers like McDowell who are dismayed by the potential isolation of doxastic coherence.

[132] Fichte (1991), p. 45.

[133] Even the fragment of the in itself Fichte assigns to the self is cognizable in intellectual intuition. Ilyenkov (1977) claims this preserves Kantian dualism by reducing Kant's antinomies to the antinomy of an ego composed of theoretical and practical drives, allegedly united in the intellectually intuitable concept of activity (142-3).

[134] Ilyenkov (1977) gives a helpful explanation of Fichte's unification of the principles of reason into logic as a science, the laws of which are "equally binding on both thinking about thinking and thinking about things" (120). This is precisely the conflation Pietroski attributes to McDowell in chapter two, section five.

[135] Franks (2005) and Beiser (2002) challenge subjectivist readings of Fichte on this naturalistic line. Ilyenkov (1977) observes that Fichtean activity is meant to give substance to the abstract schema of Kant's transcendental logic and to give a higher position to intuition than to logic (128-31).

of which is cultivated through upbringing (*Erziehung*).[136] In Fichte's words, education "roots out in first youth the sources of self-activity, and accustoms a man never to set himself in motion, but to expect the first push to come from without. And so long as it does this, [education] will always remain a special grace of nature".[137] I suspect that Fichte's socialization of reason influences his student Hegel's use of *Bildung* in telling the story of rational maturation, which impresses itself significantly on McDowell.

Fichte calls our socially acquired self-activity—our learned awareness of the natural condition of true belief—an "intellectual intuition". This intuition is immediate because it is the "indemonstrable" ground of "conditioned, mediate certainty". And it is intellectual because it is the self-ascribable thought of one's freedom.[138] While McDowell does not invoke the notion of intellectual intuition, it is evident that Fichte's willingness to do so (despite Kant's prohibitions) expresses a desire, which McDowell shares, to put normative and naturalist concerns on a par where they are satisfied by an organically foundationalist conception of the reciprocal conditions of knowledge proper. Fichte couches these conditions in terms of fact and act, freedom and nature, while McDowell speaks of mind and world, second and first nature. Both insist that these conditions are intelligible only inasmuch as they are products of *organic processes* occurring in *natural communities*. Thus, Fichte and McDowell make significant use of a genetic heuristic.

The troubles with Fichte's genetic story are not identical with McDowell's. They mainly concern what I take to be Fichte's inability to motivate an acceptable conception

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[136] Fichte (2000), 3: 39.
[137] Fichte (1991), 76-7. See Franks (2005), 242, 301-13.
[138] Fichte (1991), 77.

of intellectual intuition, an issue beyond the scope of this thesis. However, I think Fichte's problems are symptomatic of a general, twofold problem with genetic stories.[139]

The first problem is Kantian. Organic foundationalism (whether Fichtean or McDowellian) banishes all vestiges of *transcendence* by conflating the criteria appropriate to things and those appropriate to thoughts about things. This conflation fails to satisfy normative concerns by begging the *quaestio quid juris* with Hume. Thus, proponents of organic foundationalism trade the un-specifiable mind-independence of things for a transparent or exhaustively epistemic relation between mind and world. The second problem is Pyrrhonian. By presupposing a genetic story, Fichte and McDowell advance substantive theories of knowledge that are based on non-evident assertions about, e.g., human nature. The result is not just the epistemic over-determination of the constituents of knowledge, as the Kantian problem suggests, but a gesture away from *modesty*, which leaves organic foundationalism vulnerable to the hypothetical horn of the Agrippan trilemma.

In the last chapter, we find McDowell's account is vulnerable to Wittgenstein's quasi-Pyrrhonist stance because it exhibits an inconsistency of Hegel's historicism, which is avoided by what I will argue is Wittgenstein's modest transcendentalism.

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[139] It should be noted that Fichte is intrigued by the *intelligibility*, not the *truth-aptness*, of genetic stories.

Chapter 5
A Reason and A Foundation

1.   We have come quite far in assessing the evolution of responses to the *Theaetetus'* task of providing a satisfactory account of true belief. Coherentists and contemporary foundationalists have strived to provide the form of justification proper to knowledge after having their work cut out for them by the Agrippan trilemma. McDowell has weighed their successes and failures, while their historical precedents had already received attention from Kant and Fichte.

I have hoped to make evident that post-Kantian genetic stories, erring on the side of Humean naturalism, fail to answer the *quaestio quid juris*, which concerns the right with which we can soundly reduce conceptual capacities to natural mechanism. This failure leaves intact the Socratic challenge that, in justifying true belief, one *believes truly* the soundness of justification. I have also tried to show that a transcendental story can rise to this challenge by identifying the form of justification with that of grounding, which shows that true empirical belief is conditioned by a transcendental awareness. This asymmetrical structure stops the epistemic regress, about which Socrates cautions, at non-epistemic thought. Hence, transcendental stories are the backdrop to what I have dubbed a non-epistemic foundationalist form of justification. This avoids the Kantian problem, to which certain post-Kantians are susceptible, of preserving the mind-transcendent character of things. And it circumvents the Pyrrhonian problem of dogmatism by asserting nothing theoretically substantive about grounds as such.

Of course, post-Kantians are not forced to choose between transcendental and genetic stories. Another option is historicism, a position taken by Hegel and inherited in some sense by McDowell. This story tells of the unfolding of laws and norms—of humanity itself—throughout the succession of epochs. On this view, no account of true belief has *transhistorical* sources. Normative concerns express their own histories, which are therefore *both* constitutive *and* regulative of such concerns. Hence, the process that unites the dichotomy Kant puts forth is inseparable from the *development of history* itself.

What is the relation between a genetic and a historicist story? In terms of the development of German idealism, the relation is dialectical. After being dissatisfied with Kant's philosophical rigidity, Fichte forwards a genetic account of how selves are born; and after seeing the limitations of this somewhat psychologistic approach, Hegel fulfills historicist aims that contextualize Kant's epistemology and add a spiritual element to Fichte's evolutionary approach. As regards McDowell, the relation between these stories is perhaps historical: he is wittingly impressed by Hegel and, through the latter, unwittingly impressed by Fichte.

I think there is an inconsistency internal to historicist stories that prevents them from resolving the dilemma of justification. And I suspect that Wittgenstein is able to avoid this inconsistency by a) maintaining a quasi-Pyrrhonian aversion to substantial theoretical commitments and b) presupposing instead a modest transcendentalism. Before offering a Kantian-Wittgensteinian critique of Hegelian-McDowellian historicism, however, I must first present a case for Wittgenstein's Kantian spirit.

2.   We have seen that Kant is committed to non-epistemic thought. Wittgenstein's distinction in *On Certainty* between a ground (*Grund*) and a foundation or assumption (*Grundlage*) strongly suggests he shares this commitment. Of course, identifying Kantian elements in Wittgenstein's return to the rough ground of common sense requires discerning which aspect of Kant's work advances Wittgenstein's purposes. And I think this aspect is transcendental.

There are two ways in which Wittgenstein's philosophy is not transcendental and two in which it is. It is *not* transcendental insofar as he makes mention of neither *a priori* concepts nor pure reason. Both for him introduce theoretical commitments, a distance from common sense and a needless metaphysical quagmire. His story *is* transcendental insofar as he is, like Kant, concerned with a non-doctrinal account of our mode of knowing everyday objects.[140] Getting behind the scenes in this way achieves the goal of *On Certainty*: securing common sense against skepticism by showing that doubt only gets a foothold against a presupposed backdrop of knowledge.[141] Thus, Wittgenstein is interested in the transcendental conditions for the possibility of true empirical belief.

Wittgenstein's talk of grounding (*Begruendung*) in *On Certainty* is also consistent with my grounding model.[142] Though he does not mention a thing in itself and avoids

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[140] In the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1992), he says philosophy "is not a body of doctrine" (4.114).

[141] See Wittgenstein (1994), §§ 55-9, 341-2, 355-6, *passim*. James Conant (2004) argues that Wittgenstein inherits a Kantian problematic. Whereas Descartes assumes the possibility of our experience of a world, but doubts its actuality, Kant assumes the actuality of our experience of a world while investigating the necessary and universal—the transcendental—conditions for the possibility of this experience. By responding to the problematic of *possibility*, Conant thinks, Wittgenstein's approach is Kantian.

[142] See Wittgenstein (1994), §§ 167, 449, 559, 563, 614, *passim*. This will offend those who deny that Wittgenstein can be claimed by any *picture*. But to discredit one interpretation is to champion another. Since we understand philosophers in better or worse ways, there must be an account that best represents

fleshing out his ideas into a full-bodied theory of knowledge, the crucial feature of grounding is that it illuminates the bounds of justification. It shows that knowledge proper is limited by certain necessary conditions. For Kant, a boundary indicates thought's pre-theoretical relation to things in themselves.[143] And Wittgenstein invokes this boundary when he puts into an epistemically asymmetrical relationship what he calls rational *grounds* and matter-of-course *foundations* or fundamental *assumptions*.

One must bear an unfortunate terminological shift here, for whereas on Kant's grounding model transcendental *grounds* condition empirical *reasons*, on Wittgenstein's model fundamental *assumptions* condition empirical *grounds*. Thus, a ground for Wittgenstein is a reason that it is verified by experience: "*We* may derive [beliefs] from experience, but experience does not direct us to derive anything from experience. If [experience] is the *ground* of our [believing and] judging like this, and not just the cause, still we do not have a ground for seeing this in turn as a ground".[144] The force of reasons is furnished by its place *within* experience.

Had Wittgenstein not contrasted a *Grund* with anything else, the account on offer might appear coherentist. For here experience circumscribes reasons as the sorts of things

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Wittgenstein's thought. This need not inject substantive theory into his thought, but then transcendental stories preclude just this.

[143] For Kant's limit-boundary distinction, see Kant (2002), 354 f. Jacobi, one of Kant's harshest critics, accused him and all philosophers of nihilism—what in contemporary philosophy would be called a frictionless spinning in a void. Kant, Jacobi charged, spun a principled system of conceptual relations in total isolation and infinite regression from real individual beings. Jacobi therefore demanded that reason be recognized for what it is: a "faculty of presupposing the true" (Jacobi (1994), 513). The irony of this is that Jacobi, misreading Kant as an *empirical* idealist, failed to appreciate that Kant, influenced by Scottish commonsense philosophers as much as by German rationalists, actually *insists* that empirical knowledge presupposes things as they are in themselves. Transcendental idealism cannot dispense with regulative principles as a matter of *commonsense*. For an illuminating exposition of Jacobi's misinterpretation of Kant, see Franks (2005), chapter 3.

[144] Wittgenstein (1994), § 130.

that would participate in inferences. Wittgenstein is in fact quite sensitive to the coherentist temperament.[145] To wit: "when we first begin to *believe* anything, what we believe is not a single proposition, it is a whole system of propositions (Light dawns gradually over the whole). It is not single axioms that strike me as obvious, it is a system in which consequences and premises give one another *mutual* support".[146]

But, it is crucial that Wittgenstein does not want experience to support reasons as their *causes*, in contrast to Davidsonian coherentism. He seeks something neither inferential nor causal. And he finds it in the basic thoughts established by one's learned "world-picture", which forms "a matter-of-course foundation [*selbstverstaendliche Grundlage*]" that "goes unmentioned".[147] Fundamental assumptions—e.g., that here is a hand—are therefore not properly epistemic at all, for they frame one's giving reasons, marking the *bounds of justification*:

Somewhere I must begin with an assumption [*Annahme*] or decision.[148]

We work with [our inherited picture of the world] without doubting it.[149]

Doesn't testing come to an end?[150]

To be sure there is justification; but justification comes to an end.[151]

It is…difficult to begin at the beginning. And not try to go further back.[152]

Indeed, Wittgenstein all but invokes the idea of basic belief when discussing foundations: "At the foundation of well-founded [begruendeten] beliefs lies belief that is unfounded [unbegruendete]".[153] With the contrastive *Grundlage* in play, we get a sense that Wittgenstein is forging a foundationalist structure of some kind.[154] Thus, he says the riverbed of thoughts "consists partly of hard rock, subject to no alteration or only to an imperceptible one, partly of sand, which now in one place now in another gets washed away, or deposited".[155]

We might infer from a transcendental thinker's foundationalist sympathies that his form of justification must be non-epistemic. And indeed, Wittgenstein speaks explicitly of belief's non-epistemic foundations. Consider his claim that "the difficulty is to realize the groundlessness [*Grundlosigkeit*] of our believing".[156] Keeping in mind that a *Grund* for Wittgenstein is a reason, we can take this passage to mean that true beliefs neither consist in a self-contained system[157] nor are they at base supported by reasons. Rather, they hinge on heterogeneous and non-epistemic fundamental assumptions:

> If the true is what is grounded, then the ground is not true, nor yet false.[158]
>
> Our 'empirical propositions' do not form a homogeneous mass.[159]
>
> [S]ome propositions are exempt from doubt, are as it were like hinges on which [others] turn.[160]

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[153] Wittgenstein (1994), § 253.
[154] For more evidence of this, see Wittgenstein (1994), §§ 85-8, 94-9, 103, 152, 167, 205-13, 248, *passim*.
[155] Wittgenstein (1994), § 99.
[156] Wittgenstein (1994), § 166.
[157] This is Jacobi's concern with philosophy (see footnote 141) and McDowell's worry about coherentism.
[158] Wittgenstein (1994), § 205. This is an awkward lapse back into the terminology of Kantian grounding.
[159] Wittgenstein (1994), § 213.
[160] Wittgenstein (1994), § 341.

[A] foundation for all my action. But it seems to me that it is wrongly expressed by the words 'I know'.[161]

I cannot be making a *mistake* about [a hinge]. But that does not mean that I am infallible about it.[162]

I have known something the whole time, and yet there is no meaning in saying so, in uttering this truth.[163]

Fundamental assumptions lie beyond what I can be said to *know*. They do not involve giving reasons because they *ground* or *enable* our linguistic practice of doing so.

3.   Interpreting Wittgenstein as a foundationalist is not novel.[164] But if it involves a non-epistemic component, it can offer a form of justification capable of rising to the Socratic challenge, avoiding the Humean conundrum and resolving the current dilemma.

Michael Williams disagrees with the foundationalist interpretation. He admits that Wittgenstein defends the claim that basic thoughts lie outside the scope of justification because they are "wholly non-epistemic". But although he concedes that "the term 'foundationalism' can be applied with some latitude", he claims it asserts more than that "there are certainties of some kind or other, so that skepticism goes wrong *somehow*". It

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[161] Wittgenstein (1994), § 414.
[162] Wittgenstein (1994), § 425.
[163] Wittgenstein (1994), § 466. See also §§ 243, 252, 359.
[164] Dancy (1985) calls Wittgenstein a unique foundationalist (82-3). Avrum Stroll (2004) canvasses Wittgenstein's later work for evidence of foundationalism. Daniele Moyal-Sharrock's argument (2004) has affinities to my interpretation. Daniel Hutto (2004) argues that Wittgenstein's foundationalist sympathies are not restricted to *On Certainty*, detecting a dependence relationship between epistemic practices and the non-theoretical foundations of "logical form" in the *Tractatus* and "form of life" in the *Philosophical Investigations*—forms that are inexpressible inasmuch as we express *via* them.

is committed moreover to a) the theoretical distinction between basic and non-basic beliefs and b) the independence of basic beliefs.[165] I wish to challenge these criteria.

First, it is no strike against Wittgensteinian foundationalism that his *Grund*/*Grundlage* distinction derives in some sense from the theoretical contrast between basic and non-basic beliefs. Surely his distinction avoids *substantial* epistemological or ontological commitments to the sort taken up by Descartes, Carnap and Steup. Second, it is unclear that foundationalism, with the latitude Williams allows it, requires a "freestanding stratum of basic knowledge". It could instead involve, as Williams puts it and indeed as Wittgenstein exemplifies, a "semantic inter-dependence of basic and non-basic [beliefs that] entails that there is no such [freestanding] stratum".[166] For while Wittgenstein's famous notion of hinges concerns autonomous grammatical bounds that are not answerable to particular observations—and this is precisely their transcendental character—surely hinges are not freestanding in the traditional, i.e., Cartesian, sense of being self-evident truths both determinable through abstraction and immune to rational scrutiny. We feel the walls of grammar by walking down its hall. That is, we are aware of a hinge's relevance through our use of propositions. It is in this sense that *Grundlage* have a life in virtue of believing and judging.

Williams hastily denies that foundationalism can motivate a view on which basic beliefs are *both* non-inferential *and* non-freestanding. This fails to make sense of

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[165] Williams (2002), 2-4.
[166] Williams (2002), 8. Williams notes (4) the definition of foundationalist structure as pyramidal, where at the apex is a small class of basic judgments. Kant's commonsense thought of the in itself is *not* pyramidal, but rather a *monadological identity* between noumena and phenomena. For a look at Kant's Leibnizian

Wittgenstein's attack on *traditional* foundationalism for the sake of non-isolated knowledge: "It is not single axioms that strike me as obvious, it is a system in which consequences and premises give one another *mutual* support".[167] And this ignores Wittgenstein's ability to criticize prototypical forms of coherentism on behalf of non-inferential foundations: at the foundation of well-founded belief lies belief that is not founded. Once we see Wittgenstein as a non-epistemic foundationalist, we appreciate a grounding project in which *Grund* and *Grundlage* are not *really* distinct—that is, intelligible *independent* of each other—but rather *rationally* distinct or *unintelligible* independent of the other.

I turn briefly to a subtlety in Wittgenstein's writing. While he does provide *propositional* examples of the hinges on which reason-giving turns, he never speaks of *hinge propositions*. This is because the metaphor distinguishes hinges from empirical propositions or *propositions proper*.[168] The peculiarity of giving propositional examples of hinges may recall Kant's paradoxical talk of transcendental "cognition", which I have been referring to as transcendental awareness. But as I have tried to show, Kant's apparent ambiguity results from a differentiation of the epistemic and non-epistemic roles thought plays. Once we see that Kant and Wittgenstein are transcendental thinkers, we see that thinking of hinges as propositional in the proper, i.e., empirical, sense

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motivations, see Franks (2005), chapter two. *Grundlage* are likewise not pyramidal but rather permeate *each and every* move within a language game.

[167] Wittgenstein (1994), § 141.

[168] Moyal-Sharrock (2004) is helpful on this point.

misunderstands grounding.[169] We also notice that grounding is importantly at odds with McDowell's exhaustively epistemic conceptualism. For while the conceptual is unbounded for transcendental thinkers like Kant and Wittgenstein, the *epistemic* is not: the foundations of our epistemic practices lie precisely *beyond* the space of reasons.[170]

Of course, the parallel I draw between Kant and Wittgenstein is limited to a *methodological* comparison, as I am concerned with the *structure* that best accounts for true belief. This deserves mention because Kant's non-epistemic grounds are *ontological*—pertaining to the in itself—whereas Wittgenstein's are largely *linguistic*[171]—hinges being grammatical rules that apply to self-ascribable and public foundations.[172]

A potential problem for my parallel is Wittgenstein's claim that membership in the class of foundations is not fixed: "the same proposition may get treated at one time as something [empirical] to test by experience, at another as a [non-empirical] rule of testing

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[169] An important distinction should nevertheless be made. While Kant responds to skepticism about reality in general by showing why logically experience is not merely of appearances, Wittgenstein is responding to skepticism about propositions in particular by showing why some items of language have no truth-value. What connects their differently directed responses is the *structure* they take.

[170] Taylor (2002) shows that whereas McDowell rejects awareness that is neither causal nor fully conceptual, *On Certainty* captures the sense in which reflective "focus" is sustained by non-causal, non-reflective "coping", which takes for granted an "indefinitely extending background understanding" (113). This helps us see that Wittgenstein is engaged in *grounding*. Taylor also connects with this observation what he calls an "ontological" principle of charity, which is aimed to show that doubt trades on the thought of reality, a point consistent with Kant's and Wittgenstein's ontological use of non-epistemic thought.

[171] However, as Joan Weiner (2001) excellently shows, there is a strong tie between the early Wittgenstein's and Gottlob Frege's views on the "object" as a "formal concept". Both hold that definition ends in the positing of an indefinable class, which takes an ontological/existential gloss by including the term "object". This motivates Frege and Wittgenstein to distinguish from the *explanation* of objective truth the *elucidation* of (nonsensical) notation (43-65). This is significant for my parallel not simply because Kant, in his critique of the ontological argument for the existence of God, shows that existence is not a predicate. Rather, what is significant is that Kant, Frege and Wittgenstein share a distinction between knowledge proper and *regulative* or *elucidatory* knowledge. Thus, I think Frege's indebtedness to the transcendental tradition deserves further attention.

[172] See Moyal-Sharrock (2004).

[…] There is no sharp boundary between methodological propositions and propositions within a method".[173] The claim is that even fundamental assumptions are open to rational scrutiny. I would contend that Wittgenstein actually encourages a fixed boundary between propositions proper and hinges. He says that but for "very special circumstances" such as colour-blindness or failure to master a language, fundamental assumptions remain immune.[174] Indeed, his favourite examples of fundamental assumptions are ontological claims about hands, trees, mountains and the earth.[175] And it is unlikely that he wants to say these assumptions—again, but for "very special circumstances"—could lose their role of being unsusceptible to rational scrutiny. Wittgenstein reinforces the thought that some fundamental assumptions are definitively axial when he says forms of life share a foundation that "is removed from the traffic", that "gives our way of looking at things, and our researches, their form" and that belongs "to the *scaffolding* of our thoughts".[176] So crucial is this foundation for *our* thought that Wittgenstein appears virtually compelled to declare its fixedness.[177]

Since fundamental assumptions are non-epistemic, it is incorrect to speak of them as "justified". But insofar as they constitute the framework of true beliefs, they justify or give life to that which they frame. The fixedness of a fundamental assumption reveals its

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[173] Wittgenstein (1994), §§ 98, 318.
[174] Wittgenstein (1994), §§ 413 f, 526.
[175] See Wittgenstein (1994), §§ 182, 190, 209. Wittgenstein (§ 143) says a child who learns that someone climbed a mountain years ago assumes that mountain had existed for a long time—an assumption one would think is non-fluid. And he asserts the thought that the earth has existed for many years "belongs to the foundations" of "our language games" (§ 411).
[176] Wittgenstein (1994), §§ 210-1.
[177] Wittgenstein avoids individuating forms of life in any strict sense precisely because they are equally beholden to grammatical rules or hinges. Thus, I do not see a form of life as his non-epistemic ground.

transcendental status of being unverifiable and of rendering verification intelligible. Hence, the heuristic with which Wittgenstein operates is a quite unique transcendental story adapted for linguistic purposes.

Since Fichte holds that the ground of knowledge is itself knowable through intellectual intuition, and since Wittgenstein is averse to substantive accounts of true belief like Fichte's, Wittgenstein could not propose a genetic story.[178] And whereas McDowell says "that the good questions we can raise in the evolutionary context come as close as good questions can to the philosophical questions [we should] exorcise",[179] Wittgenstein avoids for the sake of normative cogency the uncomfortable position of entertaining pictures that carry too much philosophical weight.

4.   Wittgenstein's transcendental story escapes another McDowellian tension, one that originates with Hegel. McDowell's naturalized Platonism views the structure of the space of reasons as neither isolated from humans nor derivative of truths about humans.[180] This is interesting in that it refuses to lose reason to either transcendent Platonism or baldly naturalist (or whole-hearted) psychologism. While a McDowellian might use this to allay worries about ties to Fichte, it exposes a problem that McDowell's Hegelian influence harbours. For wresting reason from Platonism and bald naturalism only offers it up, if not to a genetic story, then to a historicist story. And we will see that such a story frustrates normative and naturalist concerns by making reason both a product

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[178] This, despite Wittgenstein's talk (1994) of the link between foundation and activity (§§ 148, 196, 204).
[179] McDowell (1994), 124n13.
[180] McDowell (1994), 92.

of enculturation and a necessary feature of human individuals—that is, both social and pre-social.

Mark Sacks sees McDowell's tension as concerning where to *index* the space of reasons. If it is *locally* indexed, one runs the logical and ethical risk of relativism. If it is *epochally* indexed, one adopts the "Platonic-cum-Hegelian" view that cultures are stages in the development of a single social order, a move McDowell resists. But, Sacks says, McDowell does index the space of reasons to nature by making the *historical* cultures of human communities "the enabling conditions for the development of what is in fact second nature to the human animal".[181]

But we see that a normative concern is caught in the crossfire of McDowell's historicist impulses. As Sacks notes, indexing the space of reasons to (human) nature commits McDowell to holding *both* that the space of reasons is intersubjective *and* that individuals are constrained by an inborn talent for navigating the space of reasons that precedes socialization. He is pressed "to deny that normativity is individualistic and to assert that it is". And since McDowell refuses to appeal to a brutely natural fact of human animals' sociability, he seems to conflate "naturalized Platonism…with Aristotle's immanent Platonism, which is what he wants, but which brings in individualist metaphysical assumptions that he cannot defend. Confined to the former, the space of reasons…cannot be universalized as the space applicable to any and all acculturated human beings".[182] We have seen that this inability to universalize is what keeps

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[181] Sacks (2000), 166.
[182] Sacks (2000), 167.

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psychologistic accounts of true belief from answering the *quaestio quid juris*. And it is evident that McDowell's appropriation of Hegel in the service of his Aristotelian-cum-Fichtean picture carries over this same inability.[183]

5.   David Bakhurst detects genetic as well as historicist leanings similar to McDowell's in the work of Soviet philosopher Evald Vassilievich Ilyenkov, who reacted to Stalinist positivism by defending the objectivity of spiritual culture as embedded in one's natural environment. Ilyenkov's concern is primarily *normative*. Bakhurst paraphrases: "if we are to comprehend our mental powers, we must understand the nature of *normativity*"—that mentality is "governed by *reasons*". But Ilyenkov invokes Hegel in insisting that reasons are ideal phenomena that nevertheless have *objective* existence:

> Social consciousness is not simply the sum of many individual consciousnesses, just as the social organism in general is not the sum of many individual organisms. Social consciousness represents a historically formed and historically developing system of 'objective representations', of forms and schemes of the 'objective spirit', the 'collective reason' of humanity.[184]

Ilyenkov's point is that while reasons are expressed by historical cultures, culture itself is only rendered meaningful by our objective, *material* embodiment.

But when Ilyenkov speaks of embodiment in terms of "the fundamental human activities at the root of the idealization of nature",[185] he begins to sound very much like Hegel's *teacher*. It is *Fichte* who thinks such activities are identifiable (via intellectual

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[183] Pippin (2002) is equally aware of McDowell's problem. He says that if conceptual mastery does not owe itself to a non-conceptual "guiding from without", it owes to social, *not natural*, normativity—collective, *not worldly*, self-constraint—which is vulnerable to a bald naturalist rejoinder. It is this problem, he says, that casts "reasonable doubt" and raises "appropriate questions" where McDowell perceives none (64-5).
[184] Bakhurst (1997), 35.

intuition) as the root of reason. Indeed, Bakhurst says, Ilyenkov offers a "philosophical account of anthropogenesis" that clashes with his explicitly normative purposes.[186] And we have seen that this naturalist thrust is a problem that runs from McDowell past Fichte back to Hume. So on one hand, Ilyenkov makes idealized nature inaccessible "prior to its infusion with culturally established modes of meaning", which results from indexing reason to history. And on the other hand, he objectifies idealized nature on the assumption that reasons sprout from a fundamental human activity, which results from an implied though pregnant notion of second nature. The issues, then, that both Ilyenkov and McDowell face are precisely post-Kantian.

Ilyenkov's accidental debt to Fichte is understandable given his ties to Hegel. And the genetic tendency of his story is therefore unsurprisingly expressed in his views on the historical development of consciousness. This is why I think Ilyenkov provides a useful example of what is at stake for accounts of knowledge that shy from transcendental stories. I furthermore think it pertinent of Bakhurst to suggest[187] that the speculative dimension of Ilyenkov's transcendentalism could benefit from Wittgenstein's quietism—that is, his Pyrrhonist opposition to advancing substantive theories.

6.   I have praised Wittgenstein's appreciation for the limitation or boundary of thought through his notion of a non-epistemic *Grundlage*. The transcendental story this makes use of avoids two significant problems expressed by McDowell's affinities to

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185 Bakhurst (1997), 37.
186 Bakhurst (1997), 40.
187 Bakhurst (1997), 44.

Fichtean genesis and Hegelian historicism—problems highlighted respectively by Bakhurst's work on Ilyenkov and Sacks' work on McDowell.

With that said, we have come full circle. For in learning from Wittgenstein, we return in some measure to the Pyrrhonist drive for *ataraxia*. In the *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein says:

> It is not our aim to refine or complete the system of rules for the use of our words in unheard-of ways. For the clarity that we are aiming at is indeed *complete* clarity. But this simply means that the philosophical problems should *completely* disappear. The real discovery is the one that makes me capable of stopping doing philosophy when I want to.—The one that gives philosophy peace, so that it is no longer tormented by questions which bring *itself* in question.[188]

This sentiment, we remember, is the ethical goal of Agrippan skepticism. It is Kant's reason to prefer a hopeful to Hume's desperate philosophical temper. And, despite his Fichtean and Hegelian problems, it is McDowell's explicit aim in *Mind and World*.[189] What is crucial is that, aside from certain historical and practical differences, Wittgenstein and Pyrrhonism share an explicit opposition to philosophical excess.[190]

I close by considering an interpretive question: *is Wittgenstein doing philosophy at all*? Does he engage with the *Theaetetus*' task by offering an account of true belief or does he discard the need for such accounts? Those who stress the quietist character of his writing will claim that Wittgenstein merely discredits an expendable class of beliefs on

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[188] Wittgenstein (2001), § 133.

[189] See McDowell (1004), 86.

[190] It is perhaps no accident that when the early Wittgenstein (1992) says his elucidations serve as a ladder one must throw away after climbing up (6.54), he invokes Sextus' claim: "Just as it is not impossible for the man who has ascended to a high place by a ladder to overturn the ladder with his foot after his assent, so also it is not unlikely that the Skeptic after he has arrived at the demonstration of his thesis by means of [exposing equipollence]…should then abolish this very argument" (Hookway (1990), 19). I thank Patrick Moran for bringing this to my attention.

behalf of *ordinary* epistemic practices. The problem this runs into is that the exiled

doxastic class cannot be restricted to *philosophical* beliefs about activity or human

nature. It would have to extend, for instance, to *religious* beliefs about deities and souls—

beliefs that figure significantly into many otherwise ordinary epistemic practices.

Wittgenstein was of course sensitive to religious beliefs, recommending silence

regarding them.[191] But his tacit recommendation of neutrality on these issues carries with

it a view of what ordinary epistemic practices ought to be doing. It is no accident that

Kant's antinomies—paradoxes of speculative reason that cannot be resolved by

advocating a thesis over its antithesis—concern metaphysical matters his transcendental

response to which is to suggest (to a point) anti-dogmatic nonalignment. This renders

both Kant's and Wittgenstein's accounts of true belief not entirely *descriptive*. Indeed,

Wittgenstein offers a tacit *revision* of the problems and theories motivating linguistic

traditions, whether philosophical or religious. As Sacks puts it, Wittgenstein is

> inclined toward giving up philosophy for a kind of Pyrrhonian acquiescence. But
> it is important to emphasize that this withdrawal from philosophy does not leave
> everything as it was. The conception of reason, and of normative validity in
> general, that we come away with after giving up the philosophical study is not at
> all the conception with which we entered study.[192]

Wittgenstein's "post-metaphysical" position is in some sense programmatic.[193] For if

Wittgenstein's claims—that a "philosophical" doubt is out of step with "normal linguistic

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[191] Wittgenstein (1992), 7. See also Wittgenstein (1996).
[192] Sacks (2000), 218.
[193] See G.J. Warnock (1997): "No, surely not *every* problem is of the Wittgensteinian form; not *every* philosophical question expresses mere confusion. Some of our questions genuinely ask for straightforward answers; and philosophers, as we all know, are in fact constantly undertaking to provide such answers; and

exchange" and that when I think of the "everyday use" of a sentence "instead of a philosophical one, its meaning becomes clear and ordinary"[194]—are to avoid begging the question as to just what counts as normal, ordinary meaning, he must be seen as offering a *non-descriptive* though *modest* account of true belief.

I do not see that this renders his view theoretically suspect or metaphysically substantial. As Bakhurst says, "puzzlement can, and should, weigh with us, and it is a virtue of meaning-skepticism that it makes us wonder how meaning is *possible*. Wittgenstein's philosophy rightly denies that we should respond to this wonder with a substantive philosophical theory".[195] This means no more than that our concern for the conditions of the possibility of knowledge proper is perfectly reasonable without licensing bold theories or suspect stories. To those who advance mechanical or organic theories and entertain genetic or historicist stories, Wittgenstein would therefore recommend pleading the seventh—as in the seventh proposition of the *Tractatus*: "what we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence".[196] And although Kant's transcendental story on many points speaks louder than Wittgenstein's, they both rise to the Socratic challenge of providing an account of true belief—a form of justification— that need not be epistemically transparent all the way down.

David Macarthur has recently criticized Hilary Putnam's attributing common sense realism to Wittgenstein on the grounds that the latter was opposed to isms of any

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if so, they cannot brush aside the question…as the example of Wittgenstein himself sufficiently shows, the aim of getting something clear is not so different…from the aim of getting something right" (10).
[194] Wittgenstein (1994), §§ 259 f, 347.
[195] Bakhurst (1995), 40. Italics added.
[196] Wittgenstein (1992), 7.

kind.[197] Since Putnam's interpretation uses language Wittgenstein refused to speak in regard to problems he refused to recognize, Macarthur claims Putnam's defense of common sense realism fails to champion *Wittgensteinian* purposes. Fortuitously, Macarthur says Putnam's account is salvaged by Kant's view of common sense as non-rule-governed (i.e., non-epistemic) thought, which Macarthur likens to Wittgensteinian "quietism". This is just the thought I detect in *On Certainty*.

But Putnam's response to Macarthur is incisive. He contends that philosophy cannot be nonsensical *simply because it is philosophy*. And he notes that the very practice of an allegedly non-sensical game *gives itself* sense. Putnam concludes that to take seriously and learn from Wittgenstein is to recognize that he was in the grip of a picture of his own.[198] If Putnam is right, and the very practice of philosophy (or religion for that matter) is the source of its meaning, then the rejection of an account of true belief brings with it its own account, however minimal, and its own story, however sketchy. Having a story to tell is itself nothing to be admonished.

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[197] Macarthur (2007).

[198] Putnam (2007). McDowell appropriates Wittgensteinian "quietism" in order to reject even the idea of a project that responds to the questions asked by philosophers. To this, Pietroski (1996) says: "the question of which questions are bad ones is itself a matter for inquiry and debate. And [we] should be as free as McDowell to reject some aspects of the Tradition, in the aid of resolving felt tensions" (625).

Chapter 6
Conclusion

If we take the *Theaetetus*' task seriously, we find that a belief is not knowledge unless we can account for or justify it. I have tried to assess the strengths and weaknesses of some of the forms or structures of justification on offer throughout the history of philosophy and most fervently in the twentieth century. I have construed this perennial epistemological endeavour as propelled by a competition between normative and naturalist concerns, one driven to oscillation because it is ensnared by an ancient skeptical trilemma that is at best reducible to a dilemma or antinomy of justification.

McDowell is well aware of what can be harvested and ought to be dislodged from the current debate between coherentists and contemporary foundationalists. I have highlighted his combined appropriation of the conceptual transparency of coherentism and the doxastic/non-doxastic asymmetry of the contemporary foundationalist form of justification. I have also drawn attention to the story McDowell presupposes in an attempt to show that a philosopher's response to the Socratic challenge of providing a form of justification proper to knowledge brings with it a heuristic of some kind. For in rendering conceptual the contemporary foundationalist's non-normative world and finding the coherentist a resident in it, McDowell has made human nature a seed designed to blossom into second nature. The underlying story of his organically foundationalist form of justification is genetic and thus vulnerable to Humean and Fichtean limitations.

I contrasted this story with the transcendental stories presupposed by Kant and Wittgenstein. While responding to the same problems as McDowell, they avoid his heuristical limitations by advancing what I argued are non-epistemically foundationalist forms of justification. I tried to show that these accounts rise to the Socratic challenge of avoiding having to know one's account of true belief by presupposing a story based on a non-epistemic and indeed common-sensically realist awareness of mind-independent reality, which is lost on McDowell's exhaustively epistemic structure and the genetic as well as historicist stories he inherits from Fichte and Hegel, respectively.

While the current debate expresses an entrenched philosophical tradition, McDowell's arbitration of it manifests certain post-Kantian impulses that are incompatible with Wittgenstein's purposes. I have not intended to identify his purposes with Kant's. I have merely perceived in Wittgenstein an anti-dogmatic vindication of both the Pyrrhonist drive for *ataraxia* and the Kantian insight that, if justification is to come to an end, then knowing must at base be an act of grounding—of *non-knowing*.

While I think Kant and Wittgenstein capable of a) answering the *quaestio quid facti* and the *quaestio quid juris*, b) settling the current dilemma and c) avoiding skeptical threats, I think the ancient Greek view that history is cyclical is important to keep in mind when anticipating the dizzying dialectics of philosophy. That is to say, I fully expect subsequent participants in the *Theaetetus* challenge, on behalf of some normative or naturalist concern, to be dissatisfied with the non-epistemic foundationalist form of justification and with the transcendental story alike.

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