

ADAM GROBLER

## RADICAL CONVENTIONALISM AND HINGE EPISTEMOLOGY\*

### 1. WITTGENSTEIN AND THE RISE OF HINGE EPISTEMOLOGY

#### 1.1 THE SOURCES OF HINGE EPISTEMOLOGY

“Hinge epistemology” is the term coined by Annalisa Coliva (2015) to refer to the diverse philosophical movement that draws upon Ludwig Wittgenstein’s ideas from *On Certainty*. Apart from herself, Coliva includes Michael Williams, Crispin Wright and Duncan Pritchard in that camp. My sandwich theory of knowledge (2016, 2019) can be also subsumed under this rubric. Wittgenstein writes:

341. That is to say, the questions that we raise and our doubts depend on the fact that some propositions are exempt from doubt, are as it were like hinges on which those turn.

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

343. ... If I want the door to turn, the hinges must stay put. (WITTGENSTEIN 1969)

George E. Moore’s (1939) attempted rejection of skepticism—“I know I have two hands”—is countered by Wittgenstein:

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151. I should like to say: Moore does not know what he asserts he knows, but it stands fast for him, as also for me; regarding it as absolutely solid is part of our method of doubt and enquiry. (WITTGENSTEIN 1969)

What stands fast—hinges—is beyond any doubt, beyond the limits of inquiry, and therefore cannot be part of knowledge. Moore suggests that if I know that I have hands, and these are external objects, I know thereby that the external world exists. Wittgenstein views this as an abuse of ‘know’ and offers quite a different anti-skeptical strategy. According to him I cannot know that the external world exists because, or just because, I cannot doubt it. And I cannot doubt it for the unrestricted doubt destroys the very object and method of inquiry and turns ‘know’ into a meaningless noise.

In other words, if ‘know’ is to be an utterance used in a language game, surely some props are needed, be it a sports field, a game board, etc., as well as some rules and the object. The assumptions about the existence of the world and its fundamental furniture are the props of the game of knowing while scientific methods are its rules. Playing chess, for example, I may doubt whether the move I am considering is the best one in the current position, that is, whether it is the most effective one with respect to the object of the game. A competent analysis may decide this question and make up for the gap in my knowledge. I cannot doubt, however, that the bishop moves diagonally or which squares are located diagonally. To question the chess-board layout or the rules of chess is to destroy the game. Moreover, “when I am trying to mate someone in chess, I cannot have doubts about the pieces perhaps changing places of themselves and my memory simultaneously playing tricks on me so that I don’t notice” (WITTGENSTEIN, 1969).

## 1.2 WILLIAMS: EPISTEMIC CLOSURE AND THE INSTABILITY OF KNOWLEDGE

Hinge epistemology adopts a similar strategy against the skeptic. Michael Williams claims that knowledge is relative to the context determined by the presuppositions assumed. Questioning a presupposition amounts to changing the context. For example, to question that the world is over a dozen billion years old and admit the possibility that it came into existence five minutes ago together with the false evidence of earlier developments has nothing to do with raising the standards of historical inquiry, as contextualists like

Stewart Cohen (e.g., 1988) or Keith DeRose (1995) suggest. Instead, it amounts to a change of the subject (WILLIAMS 2004, 471).

His position is not consistently Wittgensteinian, however, for he includes presuppositions in the body of knowledge. He does that out of commitment to Epistemic Closure: if I know anything and know that what know entails that I am not under a massive illusion, I know that I am not under a massive illusion. I am neither imprisoned in Plato's cave, nor deluded by a Cartesian demon, nor am a brain in vat in an evil scientist's lab. All this I know provided that I know anything. On the other hand, I cannot exclude skeptical scenarios, and therefore cannot know that I am not trapped in one of them. Consequently, on Closure I cannot know anything. Still, in order to know anything I have to presuppose that I am not in a skeptical scenario.

Now, we run into a serious problem. As long as I am in a context that ignores skeptical scenarios, I can have some knowledge, for in such a context I am not supposed to be in the position to exclude skeptical scenarios in order to have some knowledge. Hence, if I know something and know that if I know that something I know that I am not in a skeptical scenario, then, on Closure, I know that I am not in a skeptical scenario. Once I realize that, however, I introduce into my context the possibility of a skeptical scenario. Consequently, being unable to exclude this possibility, I cease to know that I am not in a skeptical scenario. I am losing this knowledge at the very moment I am contemplating it. And, again on Closure, I am losing that knowledge that has enabled my knowing that I am not in a skeptical scenario. Thus, I can know anything as long as I refrain from drawing therefrom the conclusion to the effect that I am not in a skeptical scenario. Performing such a simple derivation ruins all my knowledge. Instead of admitting to have fallen into a vicious circle, Williams calls this puzzle the instability of knowledge. To make matters worse, the instability of knowledge prevents one from acquiring any second order knowledge, knowledge that one knows.

To illustrate the problem: in an ordinary context Moore knows that he has hands. He knows also that if he has hands then the external world exists. On Closure, he knows thereby that the external world exists. Once he realizes that he knows this he is forced to extend his context to include the idea that the world may not exist. Since he is not in the position to decide the question about the existence or non-existence of the external world, in the extended context he ceases to know that the world exists. As a result, again on Closure, he ceases to know that he has hands. Once he contemplates the idea of an external world he ceases to know anything. Consequently, his knowledge

that he has hands is instable, while his knowledge that he knows that he has hands is impossible.

### 1.3 WRIGHT: REJECTION OF CLOSURE AND THE IDEA OF ENTITLEMENT

The instability of knowledge is avoided by Crispin Wright's (2004) account of entitlements. He rejects Closure in case when the premise of known entailment presupposes its conclusion. For example, the premise that says that I have hands presupposes that the external world exists.<sup>1</sup> Thus even if Moore knows that he has hands and knows that if he has hands then the external world exists, he still may not know that external world exists. Epistemic Closure does not hold in this case. Wright, however, admits a weaker version of Closure that enables one, under certain conditions to be specified later, to rationally accept the conclusion of known entailment, where rational acceptance is a weaker epistemic attitude than that of knowledge. Thus, under certain conditions, if Moore knows that he has hands, he is entitled to rationally accept that the external world exists, even if he cannot know this. Clearly, on Wright's account presuppositions do not count as knowledge. Still, they can be rationally accepted by entitlement. Wright is therefore more faithful to Wittgenstein who does not include hinges in knowledge, while he exempts them from doubt.

### 1.4 PRITCHARD: FROM THE FRYING PAN OF PRAGMATISM TO THE FIRE OF EPISTEMIC DISJUNCTIVISM

Duncan Pritchard (2016) reproaches both, Williams and Wright, that their anti-skeptical strategies are purely pragmatic. Indeed, Williams accepts the cost of the instability of knowledge for even if I am under a massive illusion and only seemingly know something, it doesn't matter much because "what

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<sup>1</sup> A similar idea, albeit without introducing the concept of entitlement, I put forth in GROBLER 2001. There, I considered the concept of semantic presupposition that derives from the work of F. Strawson (1950), while Wright endorses a broader concept of pragmatic presupposition, that is, what is a component of the common ground for the participants of a conversation (STALNAKER 1999). I made a use of this broader concept only in my *Epistemologia. Sandwiczowa teoria wiedzy* (2019). Next, unlike Wright, I admit the possibility of knowledge in the circumstances in which presuppositions are not true. For example, I tend to ascribe knowledge to brains in a vat even if they mistake the effects of computer simulations for the real-world facts. Their knowledge, however, may be revised in a Matrix-like scenario, where Neo learns that he falls prey to a systematic delusion.

is ordinarily called ‘knowledge’ is really only knowledge-for-all-practical-purposes” (1996, 126). For Wright (2004, 183), in turn,

X is *absolutely strategically entitled* to accept P just in case

- (i) X has no sufficient reason to believe that P is untrue; and
- (ii) in all contexts, it is a dominant strategy for X to act exactly as if he had a justified belief that P.

This link between entitlement and action adds a distinctly pragmatic flavor to his account. Pritchard, however, finds pragmatic solutions to the skeptical problem unsatisfactory. To make up for shortcomings of Williams’s externalism and Wright’s internalism, he offers a combination of internalism and epistemic disjunctivism.

Epistemic disjunctivism is a generalization of disjunctivism in the theory perception. It has been offered as an explanation of utterances like “I seem to see/hear/feel...”. Phenomenologically, they do not differ in meaning from “I see/hear/feel...”. If I seem to be in pain, I am in pain, even if it is only a phantom pain. If I seem to see an oasis in the desert, I can see an oasis in the desert, even if it is a mirage. For the disjunctivist there is a difference, however. This difference accounts for lady Macbeth’s hallucination of a bloody dagger. She could not have seen it, because the dagger was not there. She just seemed to see it, even if she was in the same mental state as if she really saw it. By analogy, as Pritchard maintains, in a skeptical scenario I can only seem to know something, even if my mental state does not differ from that of genuine knowledge.

The analogy, however, is inaccurate. If I am in a perceptual error, an epistemic peer may let me know this. She may shout, “Look, traveler, do not be so happy, it’s a mirage!” or “Look, Lady Macbeth, there is no dagger over there!” In a skeptical scenario, in contrast, no my fellow brain-in-a-vat can justifiably tell me, “Look, you seem to know something, but in fact you do not know anything!”—save in a semi-skeptical scenario, where Neo learns from Morpheus that he is trapped inside the Matrix. On this occasion, Neo can revise his knowledge but he does this only when invited to become Morpheus’s epistemic peer. Cartesian demon or the evil scientist, however, are not expected to invite their victims in this way. So disjunctivism neglects the social aspects of knowledge.

## 2. COLIVA AND CONTROVERSIES WITHIN HINGE EPISTEMOLOGY

For reasons of space I omit the differences among hinge epistemologists with respect to the internalism–externalism issue. Coliva (2015) finds this question relatively independent from the chief controversial points within this movement, and I can only agree with her, at least in the context of the present discussion. Anyway, Coliva herself puts more weight on other questions. First of all, she distances herself from the pragmatic justification of accepting hinges, especially from Wright’s account of entitlement that she finds to be entirely *ad hoc*. Instead, she puts forward a kind of transcendental justification that seems to be more faithful to Wittgenstein, for “it belongs to the logic of our scientific investigations that certain things are indeed not doubted.... If I want the door to turn, the hinges must stay put” (1969, 342–43).

Secondly, Coliva gives up the realist conception of truth. Possibly, it is just this conception of truth that pushes Williams and Wright towards pragmatic justifications of accepting presuppositions and entitlements and Pritchard towards disjunctivism. Coliva instead favors an unspecified epistemic conception of truth. This also is more in keeping with Wittgenstein, who in earlier passages of *On Certainty* puts the idea of hinges in terms of “an inherited background” that is called “a kind of mythology” rather than knowledge. As such, in the game of knowledge it plays a role of the rules rather than of the position in the game board.

94. But I did not get my picture of the world by satisfying myself of its correctness; nor do I have it because I am satisfied of its correctness. No: it is the inherited background against which I distinguish between true and false.

95. The propositions describing this world-picture might be part of a kind of mythology. And their role is like that of rules of a game; and the game can be learned purely practically, without learning any explicit rules.

If I distinguish between true and false against a certain background, the notion of truth that is at stake here is relativized to that background. All the more so since:

96. It might be imagined that some propositions, of the form of empirical propositions, were hardened and functioned as channels for such empirical proposi-

tions as were not hardened but fluid; and that this relation altered with time, in that fluid propositions hardened, and hard ones became fluid.

97. The mythology may change back into a state of flux, the river-bed of thoughts may shift. But I distinguish between the movement of the waters on the river-bed and the shift of the bed itself; though there is not a sharp division of the one from the other.

In other words, the background may change and after it is changed I distinguish between true and false differently than before. Thus Wittgenstein clearly is for an epistemic conception of truth.

Thirdly, Coliva includes in hinges only the most general propositions like Uniformity of Nature, the general trust in our cognitive powers, or the assumption about the existence of the world. She does not take into account the presuppositions of special contexts of inquiry, contrary to Williams, or entitlements of cognitive projects, contrary to Wright. In this respect she departs significantly from Wittgenstein who gives many examples of specific hinges, like “the sun is not a hole in the vault of heaven” (1966, 104). Such hinges make up a system and

all testing, all confirmation and disconfirmation of a hypothesis takes place already within a system. And this system is not a more or less arbitrary and doubtful point of departure for all our arguments: no, it belongs to the essence of what we call an argument. The system is not so much the point of departure, as the element in which arguments have their life. (WITTGENSTEIN 1966, 105)

Coliva’s departure from Wittgenstein is significant, for it ignores the possibility of “the shift of the river-bed”, that is the possibility of revising the presuppositions. To illustrate this point, consider the proposition that no one has ever been on the Moon that Wittgenstein includes in those that have hardened, that is, play the role of hinges:

If we are thinking within our system, then it is certain that no one has ever been on the moon. Not merely is nothing of the sort ever seriously reported to us by reasonable people, but our whole system of physics forbids us to believe it. For this demands answers to the questions “How did he overcome the force of gravity?” “How could he live without an atmosphere?” and a thousand others which could not be answered (WITTGENSTEIN 1966, 108).

Well, Wittgenstein did not live to see the Apollo 11 mission. Before, a part of the mythology Wittgenstein lived with had to become fluid.

Finally, Coliva maintains that hinges are propositions rather than rules, which is also at odds with Wittgenstein (e.g., 1966, 95). This, I think, is a minor point. In what follows I shall use the key motifs in Kazimierz Ajdukiewicz's (1934/1978) radical conventionalism to resolve the points of controversy among the hinge epistemologists. In my earlier writings (1999, 2008), I have suggested that Ajdukiewicz anticipated Imre Lakatos's idea of rationalization of conventionalism and Hilary Putnam's internal realism. Today, I refer to his work in order to shed some light on disputes within hinge epistemology.

### 3. A HYBRID OF AJDUKIEWICZ AND WITTGENSTEIN

The key concept of radical conventionalism is that of conceptual apparatus that consists of a vocabulary, syntax, and meaning rules. There are three kinds of meaning rules: axiomatic, deductive, and empirical ones. They jointly determine the meanings of the linguistic expressions of conceptual apparatus. Axiomatic rules specify the sentences that cannot be rejected without violating the system of meanings of the apparatus. Deductive rules are the rules of inference in the apparatus. Empirical rules today may be problematic for "they coordinate with certain experiential data certain sentences that—in view of the experiential data—one must be prepared to accept if he would avoid violating the meaning-specification of the language" (AJDUKIEWICZ 1978, 68). At present it is commonly accepted that "experiential data" are theory-laden, interpreted in light of some theories and may always be re-interpreted in the face of a theory change. For this reason radical conventionalism requires now some amendments on this score.

Actually, I have offered such amendments in my "Renowacja radykalnego konwencjonalizmu" (2013). In a nutshell, it draws upon the Wittgenstein idea that the rules, meaning rules in this context, can be underdetermined and further specified in the course of practice, scientific practice in this context. This idea is found in many places in *Investigations* but it is also present in *On Certainty*: "the [language, scientific] game can be learned purely practically, without learning any explicit rules" (WITTGENSTEIN 1969, 95). Such an approach breaks with "a paper-only fiction" (AJDUKIEWICZ 1953) of a closed and connected language that he has first adopted and abandoned later.



A language is closed if it has no conservative (relative to meanings) expansions and connected if any subclass of its expressions is somehow meaning-related to the expressions from the outside of that subclass. It goes without saying that if meaning rules are further specified in the course of practice, the language cannot be closed. Moreover, a language may initially seem to be disconnected and appear connected once the meaning rules are further specified. Anyway, nothing stands in the way of an idea of “a conceptual apparatus as a system of meanings of a language to be further developed” (AJDUKIEWICZ 1953).

Meaning rules so interpreted are excellent candidates for the position of hinges. They are exempt from doubt, because the game of science revolves around them. They also form “an inherited background” against which one distinguishes true from false.

I believe that epistemologists who predicate the attribute “true” of sentences are ready to submit to this meaning-rule leading from the acceptance of a sentence *Z* to the acceptance of the sentence “*Z* is true in my language”. (AJDUKIEWICZ 1978, 82)

Clearly, Ajdukiewicz anticipated here the epistemic conception of truth: ‘true’ in a language is just acceptable on the meaning rules of that language, acknowledged as true by a use of the specific for that language means of deciding sentences. This formula may bring to mind William James’s pragmatic conception of truth: true sentences are not true from eternity, but “truth *happens* to an idea. It *becomes* true, is *made* true by events” (1907, 97) and the use of meaning rules. To dispense with this somewhat misleading association, ‘acknowledged’ is easily replaced with ‘to be acknowledged’ in an unspecified future use of further specified meaning rules. Thus, the final shape of the meaning rule for ‘true’ may be as follows: “A sentence *Z* is true in the language of a conceptual apparatus iff it might be acknowledged after a sufficiently persistent use of meaning rules of that apparatus.” I believe that such a formula, that possibly anticipates Wright’s (1992) idea of superassertibility, is in keeping with the spirit both of radical conventionalism and Wittgenstein’s intuitions.

#### 4. PRAGMATIC VS. TRANSCENDENTAL JUSTIFICATION OF PRESUPPOSITIONS, ENTITLEMENTS, AND HINGES

I shall now go on to discuss, by Ajdukiewicz's lights, subsequent controversial questions of hinge epistemology. First, let us consider Pritchard's reproach concerning pragmatic—instead of epistemic—justifications of presuppositions (Williams) or entitlements (Wright). As I mentioned above, this complaint makes Pritchard go from the frying pan of pragmatism to the fire of disjunctivism. Coliva, who finds Wright's account of entitlements *ad hoc*, prefers to look upon hinges as rational assumptions. They are rational for they are *indispensable* for any kind of inquiry. On this proposal, hinges are justified on a kind of transcendental argument. The question is what is the difference between pragmatic and transcendental justifications long after Kant. As time went by, Kant's necessary conditions of cognition had undergone the process of gradual deconstruction. The *a priori* categories gave way to replaceable conventions (Poincaré), then to (again replaceable) hypotheses that organized experience (Popper), then to conceptual systems (Putnam). Apart from these, there were numerous conceptions of an evolutionary and cultural *a priori*.

These days the difference seems to amount to whether some assumptions *can be accepted* because they work or *have to be accepted* for nothing works without them. Some assumptions *have to be accepted* in a field to permit its study, but we *can* neglect the very need of the study. This dialectics of pragmatic *can* and transcendental *must* is much like the eternal controversy about whether the glass is half-full or half-empty. Recall Wittgenstein: "If I want the door to turn, the hinges must stay put" (1969, 343). Transcendental *must* if I pragmatically *want*. Ajdukiewicz also combines pragmatic and transcendental motifs:

If one wants to distinguish the good, better and best among conceptual apparatuses, one must prepare for the question. To what end? For the biological welfare of the human species? To satisfy our desire for knowledge? Or some other desire? Here pragmatism is relevant as our last remarks suggest. (1978, 85)

And a bit later:

Our view is close to the Copernican idea of Kant, according to which knowledge of experience depends not only on the material of experience but also on the apparatus of categories used in working up this material. However, in Kant's phi-

losophy this apparatus of categories is rigidly connected with the nature of man (though the possibility that it can change is not excluded). For us, on the contrary, this conceptual apparatus is a rather plastic affair. One alters it continuously, either involuntarily and unconsciously or voluntarily and consciously. But so long as a man practices articulated knowing, he must stick to some such conceptual apparatus. (1978, 86–87)

Wright does not deny his commitment to pragmatism but at the same time he claims that pragmatic ends include epistemic ones that epistemically sanction his account of entitlements. In my view there is not much difference, at least pragmatic difference, between accepting presuppositions on entitlement and accepting assumptions to be considered rational as long as they are indispensable. Passages from Ajdukiewicz also suggest that for him the difference cannot be easily identified. Pritchard's solution has possibly a stronger epistemic flavor but it is unfortunately committed to disjunctivism. The latter could not be accepted by Ajdukiewicz's lights, however, as it is incompatible with his account of evolutionary tendencies of conceptual apparatuses to be discussed below.

##### 5. AJDUKIEWICZ AGAINST DISJUNCTIVISM

The first tendency consists in eliminating the apparatuses that drive one to accepting inconsistent sentences. It should be noted that the inconsistencies to be arrived at need not logically follow from the meaning rules themselves. An inconsistency may arise from applying empirical meaning rules to empirical contingencies. Such an inconsistency might not have arisen had the empirical developments been different. The second tendency, the tendency to rationalization, consists in preferring those apparatuses that enable one to decide more questions without recourse to empirical data (i.e. empirical rules). Such apparatuses can be said to be more coherent, because their sentences are stronger interrelated so that a greater proportion of them do not require independent empirical tests. And if they had an independent empirical test they could acquire a greater empirical support. The third tendency, towards perfecting, aims at completeness of the system of sentences accepted on the meaning rules of the apparatus under consideration, that is, it aims at reducing the number of undecided sentences.

The fourth and final tendency is that of increasing empirical sensitivity, as described thus: “[it] consists in this, that we prefer conceptual apparatuses

which ignore as few experiential data as possible and which treat distinct data as differently as possible” (AJDUKIEWICZ 1978, 86). In other words, the preferred conceptual apparatuses distinguish data that are undistinguishable in less sensitive apparatuses. Again, in light of contemporary philosophy to science ‘data’ have to be understood in the sense of the amended version of radical conventionalism mentioned in section 3.

Now, disjunctivism requires a conceptual apparatus enabling one to accept only the sentences of the form “S or, if we are in a skeptical scenario, it seems that S”. All such disjunctive sentences are empirically undecidable. In the face of this, according to the third tendency, such an apparatus is to be abandoned in favor of an alternative whereby skeptical scenarios are *a priori* denied. In contrast, if a semi-skeptical scenario in which a Morpheus unmasks Matrix came to light, according to the fourth tendency an apparatus of greater empirical sensitivity would be preferred. Such a move, however, requires including the whistleblower in our epistemic community. Anyway, nothing of the sort can happen in a standard brains-in-a-vat scenario. Thus radical conventionalism serves to firmly reject both epistemic disjunctivism and radical skepticism.

#### 6. AJDUKIEWICZ AND ANTI-REALISM ABOUT TRUTH

If disjunctivism does not hold water, then Pritchard’s epistemic rejection of radical skepticism that combines internalism and disjunctivism cannot be accepted either. Thus we have to content ourselves with pragmatic-transcendental justification of hinges. Now, let us pass to other problems for hinge epistemology. The question of anti-realism about truth has been already roughly discussed. But taking into account evolutionary tendencies of conceptual apparatuses opens a broader perspective on this issue. For Ajdukiewicz the tendencies represent an endeavor towards “the goal toward which science does in fact develop” (1978, 85). Thus it may seem that his evolutionary account is a sort of empirical generalization of the developments in the history of science. He immediately adds, however, that he takes “the goal of science to be an idealized end stage to which the several stages of science approach closer and closer, much as the terms of a series approach its limit.” Such a formulation seems to have a normative rather than purely descriptive force. It clearly echoes Charles S. Peirce’s idea of the ideal limit of inquiry

that he calls the truth. And it is not the truth of a particular stage of inquiry or a truth relative to conceptual apparatus, but the Truth with an upper case T.

Ajdukiewicz, however, does not go thus far. For him, the concept of truth is meaningful only relative to a certain conceptual apparatus. One reason for Ajdukiewicz's distancing from Peirce's idea can be found between the lines. Evolutionary tendencies need not converge to a particular end point. There may arise some tensions between effort to obtain consistency, completeness, coherence and empirical sensitivity. It might be the case that progress in one respect is attained at the cost of the other. Next, progressive branchings are possible: there might be apparatuses  $A'$  and  $A^*$  that are superior to apparatus  $A$ , while  $A'$  is in one respect superior to  $A^*$  and inferior to another. Instead of an ideal limit if inquiry there might be few accumulation points<sup>2</sup> (cf. QUINE 1960, 23).

On the other hand, consistency, completeness, coherence and empirical sensitivity are the properties that are closely related to truth. Therefore one is justified in urging that the evolutionary tendencies of conceptual apparatuses are subject to the regulative idea of truth in Kant–Popper's sense. A regulative idea that governs cognitive efforts but remains unattainable need not have a precise meaning defined in terms of meaning rules of apparatus. By admitting such an idea one can easier accept the relativization of truth vis-a-vis a conceptual apparatus. The latter entails an analogous relativization of knowledge, where knowledge is called modestly by Ajdukiewicz a “world-picture” that consists of the sentences accepted according to the rules of a particular apparatus.

On this offer, knowledge is contextual, which makes it possible to account for the difference of epistemic status between outdated knowledge and sheer prejudice. Also, we can speak of superior and inferior knowledge in the sense of knowledge considered within a more or a less progressive conceptual apparatus, as well as about superior and inferior knowledge in the context of particular applications. The outdated conceptual apparatus of classical mechanics works perfectly in many epistemic contexts where the recourse to the apparatus of a relativity or quantum theory is as useful as calculating the distance between cities in millimeters. Thus the choice of hinges may depend on the intended applications of a body of knowledge. The dependence of knowledge on the intended applications is stressed in my sandwich theory of knowledge (GROBLER 2016, 2019), another version of hinge epistemology.

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<sup>2</sup> For example the sequence  $\{2, 3, 2\frac{1}{2}, 3, 1, 2\frac{3}{4}, 3, 14 \dots\}$  has no limit but it has two accumulation points, 3 and  $\pi$ .

It represents a form of contextualism that combines the pragmatic and the normative.

#### CONCLUDING REMARKS

First, let me comment on the last problem from Coliva's list that has not been addressed here so far. The question is what kind of entities can play the role of hinges. Coliva favors sentences or propositions over rules. Moreover, she chooses the most general propositions like "the external world exists" or Uniformity of Nature. This is a significant departure from Wittgenstein who compares "a mythology", or "the river-bed of thought", or hinges to the rules of a game (1969, 95) and gives a number of examples of quite specific hinge proposition. Ajdukiewicz, in turn, is unambiguous on this matter. While axiomatic meaning rules can be equated to sentences accepted as axioms, deductive and empirical meaning rules are definitely rules. They all play the role of hinges of diverse level of generality. Be that as it may, to account for the context-dependence of knowledge one has to admit more specific hinges.

To my mind, the question whether hinges are sentences or rules is of secondary importance. After all, rules can be formulated with sentences and sentences can imply rules. For example, Uniformity of Nature provides a justification for rules of inductive reasoning, whether classical J. S. Mill's (1843) canons of induction or contemporary Bayesian Conditionalization. More specific rules derive from scientific findings. For instance, the discovery of placebo effect has given rise to the methodology of blind experiments and Simpson's paradox points to the importance of the comparability of the experimental and the control group with respect to relevant parameters.

Now, let me sum up the discussion so far. It appears that Kazimierz Ajdukiewicz is ahead of Wittgenstein in offering the motifs that have inspired hinge epistemology. Moreover, the Polish philosopher did it more systematically and in greater detail. Meaning rules as hinges provide us with more clearly specified cornerstones of knowledge. His radical conventionalism furnishes clues that permit us to resolve some controversial questions within hinge epistemology. First, in directly rejecting epistemic disjunctivism it makes it possible to disarm Pritchard's complaint that in Williams's and Wright's versions presuppositions or entitlements are not epistemically but only pragmatically justified. This way radical conventionalism leaves

room for transcendental justification of hinges a la Coliva. It is not clear if this kind of justification is really stronger than the pragmatic one. Still, it must be conceded that no better justification is available. Second, Ajdukiewicz strongly corroborates Coliva's suggestion that hinge epistemology has to adopt an anti-realist conception of truth. In his approach, the conception of truth relative to the context is determined by a conceptual apparatus, that is to accepted hinges. At the same time, the evolutionary tendencies of conceptual apparatuses can be interpreted as norms that point to the regulative idea of truth classically conceived, norms that transcend those of practical utility. In effect, the evolutionary tendencies explain why "the river-bed of thought" may shift and why those shifts are rational. Finally, Ajdukiewicz calls into question Coliva's suggestion that the role of hinges is reserved exclusively for the most general sentences and not rules.

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#### RADICAL CONVENTIONALISM AND HINGE EPISTEMOLOGY

##### Summary

In the paper I explore some hints one can find in an updated version of Ajdukiewicz's radical conventionalism that may help to resolve some controversies within hinge epistemology, i.e. a family of positions that invoke Wittgenstein's idea of groundless grounds of knowledge. In particular I put into doubt whether there is a real difference between pragmatic and transcendental justification of hinges, I reject epistemological disjunctivism, and I argue for anti-realistic reading of truth in a context determined by particular hinges while retaining the classical notion of truth as a regulative idea of knowledge that governs the possible revisions of hinges.

**Keywords:** epistemological disjunctivism; hinge epistemology; radical conventionalism; pragmatic justification; transcendental justification; truth as a regulative idea; truth in a context.

#### KONWENCJONALIZM RADYKALNY A EPISTEMOLOGIA ZAWIASOWA

##### Streszczenie

Twierdzę, że w uwspółcześnionej wersji konwencjonalizmu radykalnego Ajdukiewicza można dopatrzeć się wskazówek pomocnych w rozstrzygnięciu kilku sporów prowadzonych



w ramach epistemologii zawiasowej, tj. rodziny stanowisk nawiązujących do tezy Wittgensteina o bezpodstawności podstaw wiedzy. W szczególności stawiam pod znakiem zapytania domniemaną różnicę między pragmatycznym a transcendentálním uzasadnieniem zdań zawiasowych, odrzucam dyzjunktywizm epistemologiczny i opowiadam się za antyrealistyczną koncepcją prawdy w kontekście wyznaczonym przez zdania zawiasowe zachowując przy tym klasyczną koncepcję prawdy jako idei regulatywnej poznania, której są podporządkowane ewentualne rewizje zawiasów.

**Słowa kluczowe:** dyzjunktywizm epistemologiczny; epistemologia zawiasowa; konwencjonalizm radykalny; prawda jako idea regulatywna; prawda w kontekście; uzasadnienie pragmatyczne; uzasadnienie transcendentálne.