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HONEST DOUBT: QUASI-FIDEISM AND EPISTEMIC VERTIGO

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ABSTRACT. In his final notebooks, published as *On Certainty*, Wittgenstein articulated a radical conception of the structure of reasons, such that all rational evaluation essentially presupposes arational *hinge commitments*. I have argued elsewhere that such an account has application to the epistemology of religious belief by generating a distinctive proposal that I call *quasi-fideism*. Quasi-fideism seems to fare better than competing views in terms of capturing the phenomenology of at least a certain kind of fundamental religious commitment, particularly in terms of its visceral certainty and its associated resistance to ordinary rational considerations. And yet this apparent strength might also be thought to be in other respects a weakness. For can it not also be an important ingredient of the religious life—even the deeply religious life—that it involves religious doubt? But how is that to be squared with thinking of fundamental religious commitments in terms arational hinge certainties? I think the answer to this puzzle lies in a proper understanding of how such doubt can be a genuine manifestation of the (reflective) religious life rather than being inimical to it. Following Tennyson, I call this phenomenon *honest doubt*. With honest doubt so understood, it aligns with an important kind of intellectual anxiety that naturally arises in the context of a Wittgensteinian epistemology: *epistemic vertigo*. Far from being in tension with quasi-fideism, honest doubt, *qua* religious epistemic vertigo, is uniquely accommodated by this proposal.

KEYWORDS: Epistemic Vertigo; Epistemology; Quasi-Fideism; Religious Conviction; Wittgenstein.

“There lives more faith in honest doubt,
Believe me, than in half the creeds.”
Tennyson, *In Memoriam*

1. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

A life of religious faith is often depicted, even sometimes in saintly cases, as involving significant doubts. So long as the doubts don't prevent one from living a faithful life there seems no essential conflict between genuine faith and, as Tennyson puts it in the passage cited as epigraph, 'honest doubt'. Indeed, one might even go so far as to suggest that honest doubt of this kind is an essential part of a life of religious faith, at least one involving an intellectually rich and reflective faith, and not merely a blind conviction.¹

Nonetheless, this feature of what is ordinarily involved in manifestations of religious faith appears to cause problems for any account of religious commitment that takes it seriously as a kind of all-out conviction that functions as a fixed point relative to which other commitments are evaluated. A commitment of this kind will be very different from an ordinary belief. Our ordinary beliefs are at least in principle responsive to reasons, such that they are the kind of propositional attitude that is apt to be a strengthened or weakened in response to changes in one's evidence. In contrast, religious conviction, at its core at any rate, seems to be in a certain sense cut-free from rational concerns. Indeed, isn't that a hallmark of religious *faith*, and which sets it apart other kinds of commitment that one might have, such that if one doesn't have this kind of all-out fulcrum conviction, then one simply doesn't have faith? If that's right, however, then it is hard to square this conception of religious conviction with the idea that religious faith might involve—a *fortiori*, might *naturally* involve, at least where it is a reflective faith—honest doubt.

This issue will arise for a range of accounts of religious commitment, but especially those in a fideistic vein that take faith to be a distinctive attitude that is differentiated from our ordinary propositional attitudes, like our everyday beliefs. I want to confront this issue by considering how it arises with regard to a particular kind of fideistic proposal about the nature of religious conviction that I think is especially plausible, known as *quasi-fideism*.² In broad outline, this broadly Wittgensteinian account of religious conviction treats it as being, at root, a kind of arational optimal certainty that is immune to rational evaluation; what is known as a *hinge commitment*. But how can thinking of religious conviction along such arational hinge commitment lines be compatible with honest doubt?

I will be arguing that this apparent tension between quasi-fideism and honest doubt is merely superficial. In order to see this, however, we first need to understand how taking the existence of hinge commitments seriously means also recognizing the existence of a certain kind of intellectual anxiety that might naturally arise in specific contexts. This is what I term *epistemic vertigo*. While we might loosely characterize epistemic vertigo as doubt, it differs in some important respects from ordinary doubt. The honest doubt that concerns us in the religious case, I will be suggesting, is not ordinary doubt but rather epistemic vertigo as it arises in a religious context. So construed, just as embracing hinge commitments in general means recognizing epistemic vertigo, similarly embracing religious hinge commitments, in the form of quasi-fideism, means recognizing religious epistemic vertigo, and thus honest doubt. There is thus no tension between quasi-fideism and honest doubt. On the contrary, the former is uniquely placed to help us to make sense of the latter.

2. HONEST DOUBT

Let's begin by examining the notion of honest doubt in play, and in particular what about it makes it honest. There are four elements of this notion that we need to bring out. The first is that these doubts are meant to be substantial. They are targeted at one's fundamental religious convictions, one's religious worldview as a whole, as opposed to being directed at matters that are peripheral to the religious life, like marginal doctrinal issues. It is religious doubt of this serious kind that we wish to accommodate. (In any case, as we will see below, it is only religious doubts of this fundamental type that are even *prima facie* in conflict with quasi-fideism, given that this view allows that many of one's religious commitments are ordinary beliefs rather than being hinge certainties).

The second feature is that honest doubt is meant to be compatible with religious conviction. Indeed, the guiding idea is that honest doubt can be a natural manifestation of a reflective religious life. If so, then honest doubt and religious conviction must at least be compatible. Honest doubt is thus distinct from the kind of doubt that actually undercuts one's religious conviction (call this *ordinary doubt*). The honest doubter isn't in the process of losing their faith, and certainly hasn't lost it, but is rather simply entertaining honest doubts about it (albeit, as per the first feature honest of doubt that we noted, of a fundamental kind).

This brings us to the third feature of honest doubt, which is that although it is not a doubt that undercuts one's religious conviction, it is nonetheless a genuine form of doubt, and not merely

some form of intellectual artifice. This is one of the implications of the qualifier ‘honest’ in this regard. If the doubts were not real, then resolving the tension with a life of religious conviction, even one involving the optimal certainty of an arational hinge commitment, would be straightforward. There is obviously no barrier to one simply professing doubt of one’s religious hinge commitments if such public statements are in fact completely divorced from any genuine scepticism about their truth. In contrast, if the doubts are real, even if they are not radical in nature, then there is a *prima facie* tension with the idea of religious conviction *qua* optimal certainty, and thus with the conception of that conviction in terms of a hinge commitment.

The fourth element of honest doubt that interests us—which also relates to the ‘honest’ qualifier—concerns the suggestion that the doubt can be naturally arising, at least for any suitably reflective person. That is, these are doubts that an intellectually sophisticated individual who has faith is likely to have at some point. The honesty in this sense consists in the authentic recognition that one has these doubts, as opposed to refusing to countenance them or pretending that they don’t exist.

The challenge is thus to understand how having these real, fundamental and naturally arising (but not faith-undermining) doubts regarding one’s religious commitments can be compatible with genuine religious conviction. In particular, how can they be compatible with any view that takes such religious conviction at face value, as quasi-fideism does, by casting it in terms of an optimally certain arational hinge commitment? As Tennyson puts it, there ‘lives more faith’ in having honest doubts than one can find in the creeds that one might assert as an expression of faith. It is thus being suggested that it can be part of a lived faith that one has doubts of this kind—both the faithful commitment and the doubts regarding this faith are genuine. How is that possible according to quasi-fideism?

3. QUASI-FIDEISM

Quasi-fideism is essentially the application of Wittgenstein’s account of hinge commitments in his final notebooks, published as *On Certainty*, to the religious case. While religious questions are not at the forefront of these notebooks, this is an application that is plausibly in the spirit of Wittgenstein’s own wider religious concerns. Indeed, it is arguably the case that he derives his conception of hinge commitments, at least in substantial part, from John Henry Newman’s writings on the rationality of

religious belief, especially his *Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent*.³ Interestingly, however, thinking of Wittgenstein's treatment of religious epistemology this way marks a contrast with the straight fideism that one finds in some of his other later works.⁴

In *On Certainty*, Wittgenstein argued that our system of rational evaluation essentially presupposes a kind of primitive certainty in one's overarching worldview, in that this certainty needs to be in place in order for rational evaluations to occur. This certainty is manifest in our actions, and in particular it is evident from the absolute conviction that we have in a range of everyday claims that are taken for granted in ordinary inquiries. This includes such mundane certainties as that one has hands, one is speaking English, and that one's name is such-and-such.⁵ What they all share is that these are all claims where error, in normal circumstances, would indicate that one's grip on the nature of reality is fundamentally awry; that one's worldview as a whole is somehow mistaken. For example, how could one in normal circumstances be in error about whether one has hands or what one's name is? As Wittgenstein points out, how could we even make sense of a mistake in such conditions (e.g., that one thought that one hands but—what a surprise!—one in fact doesn't)? These commitments thus encapsulate the predominant certainty that one is not radically in error, as this certainty reveals itself in normal conditions.⁶

Wittgenstein's claim is that these everyday certainties, far from being propositions that enjoy an elevated epistemic standing that reflects their optimal certainty, are in fact completely groundless. One is not certain that one has hands in normal circumstances because one has reasons in support of this proposition, much less reasons of a special kind as befitting its optimal certainty. Its truth is rather something that holds fast and which functions as the backdrop against which other rational evaluations are made. For example, if one did not see one's hands where one expected to see them, then one would doubt one's eyesight. This is the sense in which these certainties function as hinges, as they provide the framework within which rational evaluations take place. Moreover, Wittgenstein argues that this is not an incidental feature of the structure of rational evaluation, but rather essential to it: all rational evaluations take place against a backdrop of hinge certainty. The result is that fully general rational evaluations—i.e., which take in all of one's commitments at once—are simply incoherent, since they assume that one's hinge commitments are also open to rational evaluation. Since radical scepticism presupposes the coherence of universal rational evaluations—as, for that matter, does traditional *anti*-scepticism—it follows that embracing hinge commitments offers a decisive strike against such scepticism.⁷

Our hinge commitments are not only excluded from rational evaluations (still less are they acquired via rational processes), but are also immune to rational critique, in the sense that one's certainty in them is unaffected by being made aware of such opposing reasons. It follows that they constitute a very different kind of propositional attitude to most of our everyday beliefs. While they involve an all-out conviction in the truth of the target proposition, and hence to that extent qualify as beliefs in the permissive folk sense of the term (which covers a wide range of propositional states), they are very different to the kind of belief state that epistemologists are primarily interested in—*viz.*, that propositional attitude that is a constituent part of rationally grounded knowledge. Call this *K-apt believing*. K-apt believing is distinct from the folk conception of belief in virtue of having certain basic conceptual connections to reasons and truth. One of these connections is particularly salient for our purposes—*viz.*, that one cannot K-apt believe that *p* while simultaneously being aware that one has no rational basis for the truth of *p*. Of course, one can K-apt believe a proposition while lacking a rational basis for that belief, but the point is that one cannot consistently K-apt believe a proposition while recognizing that one has no rational basis for its truth. In contrast, one's hinge commitments clearly fail to satisfy this requirement, as one's conviction in them is completely unaffected by the recognition that one has no rational basis for their truth (though this recognition can generate a certain kind of intellectual anxiety, as explained below). Thus, while hinge commitments count as beliefs in the loose, everyday sense of the term, they are not K-apt beliefs.⁸

Quasi-fideism is the view that a subject's most fundamental religious commitments are hinge commitments. Just as one's everyday certainties can encapsulate fixed nodes of one's overarching worldview, such that error here would call that worldview as a whole into question, so—the thought goes—the same applies to a subject's most fundamental religious commitments, which also capture core features of one's overarching worldview. It follows that these fundamental religious commitments are essentially arational, which is the fideistic element of the position. Notice, however, that on this view it does not follow that religious commitments are in general arational, since this only applies to the subject's most fundamental religious commitments—the rest of their religious beliefs can be K-apt beliefs in the usual way. This is why quasi-fideism is very different from a straightforward fideism.

Another crucial difference in this regard is that quasi-fideism, unlike a standard form of fideism, does not treat the religious domain any different from ordinary beliefs. The claim is that just as our beliefs in general presuppose arational hinge certainties that capture our fundamental convictions, so the religious domain also presupposes arational fundamental hinge certainties. There

is thus no suggestion that religious belief should be epistemically evaluated differently from ordinary belief, as is normally the case with standard formulations of fideism.⁹

Like traditional fideism, however, quasi-fideism captures the distinctive kind of propositional attitude involved in religious conviction, at least in its most fundamental respect. In particular, that this is a kind of certainty that bears a distinctive relationship to reasons, in that it is not the kind of conviction that is responsive to reasons in the usual way, nor does it demand rational support.¹⁰ Indeed, quasi-fideism seems particularly well-placed to capture the distinctive fulcrum role that religious conviction can play in a subject's life. We have already noted how such a view embraces the thought that one's basic religious commitments can no less represent core features of one's worldview as one's everyday certainties, such that error about either would be devastating to that worldview. One's basic religious commitments, *qua* hinge commitments, also play a fulcrum role in the sense that they provide a structure for one's K-apt beliefs, and hence serve a different function to those other commitments. For example, a religious individual and a non-religious individual may respond very differently to the very same set of experiences, with the former imbuing religious significance in them that simply would not occur to the latter. If one's basic religious conviction is a hinge commitment, then this is just what we would expect, as one's hinge commitments structure one's rational evaluations, and thus determine what will count as a reason for what. It is no wonder, then, that people with different hinge commitments might respond to the same experiences by forming distinct K-apt beliefs.¹¹

Once we treat fundamental religious conviction in this way, however, then the puzzle that concerns us seems to naturally arise. If religious conviction is, at root, the kind of optimal certainty at issue in an arational hinge commitment, then can that be compatible with the possibility of honest doubt regarding this same religious commitment?

4. EPISTEMIC VERTIGO

I think the way to answer this puzzle is to first examine how a parallel phenomenon of honest doubt might arise with regard to our everyday (non-religious) hinge commitments. There are some important differences between these quotidian certainties and fundamental religious convictions, which is why there is at least the option to theorize hinge commitments in such a way that they could only apply to the former, and not also the latter.¹² In particular, one is not normally aware of

one's everyday hinge commitments *qua* hinge commitments (i.e., that they are optimal certainties that play this special framework role). As Wittgenstein puts the point, "they lie apart from the route travelled by inquiry." (OC, §89) Relatedly, one is not usually explicitly taught one's quotidian hinge commitments either; one instead 'swallows them down' (OC, 143) with other things that one is taught (e.g., one is not taught that one has hands, but rather to do things with one's hands, which presupposes the existence of one's hands). Basic religious convictions are very different in these regards. One is usually explicitly aware of them, including the fact that they play a special role in one's system of religious belief (even if it is not clear that they play the specific role of being a hinge commitment). Indeed, one is normally taught these convictions, and there is typically an ongoing practice involving their affirmation.

With these significant differences in mind, we would expect the phenomenon of doubt, honest or otherwise, to arise in distinct ways as regards quotidian and religious hinges. In the case of the everyday hinge commitments, for example, there simply isn't a normal context of inquiry where doubt of the hinge arises. There is no normal inquiry in which, relative to the ordinary circumstances in which it functions as a hinge commitment, one doubts that one has hands; the issue simply never arises.¹³ Indeed, normally it takes a peculiarly philosophical context of inquiry to prompt agents to scrutinize such a commitment. In contrast, just as religious believers are often explicitly aware of their most fundamental religious commitments, so it's common to find them engaging in a kind of intellectual scrutiny of these claims that we might naturally classify as doubt.

I think these differences between quotidian and religious hinge commitments, while certainly important, are apt to cause us to overlook some important commonalities. In order to see this, we first need to recognize that there is a certain kind of intellectual anxiety that can naturally concern even one's quotidian hinge commitments. I have elsewhere described this intellectual anxiety as *epistemic vertigo*.¹⁴ Epistemic vertigo arises when one becomes aware of one's hinge commitments *qua* hinge commitments. In the case of quotidian hinge commitments this will involve realizing that these apparently mundane commitments are in fact playing a quite surprising role in one's rational practices, not least in terms of being outright certainties that are neither grounded in nor responsive to rational considerations. For example, one will ordinarily take the existence of one's hands entirely for granted, and if one is ever prompted to consider the rational standing of one's belief to this effect one might naturally suppose that it has an excellent rational grounding, as befitting the certainty that one has in it. Coming to recognize that it in fact has no rational standing at all,

however, but is instead a hinge commitment, will thus be somewhat unsettling, to say the least. That which is most ordinary thus becomes uncanny.¹⁵

This is what gives rise to the epistemic vertigo. The idea is that such vertigo arises when one is in a certain sense disengaged from one's ordinary practices, so that one is able to see them in a different light (when attuned to one's ordinary practices it simply isn't possible to recognize one's quotidian hinge commitments *qua* hinges). In this 'elevated' state (hence the moniker 'vertigo'¹⁶), one becomes aware of the arational nature of a fundamental commitment that one hitherto didn't realize lacked a rational grounding. Note that this is not to say that one previously thought that it had a rational grounding—the point is rather that the issue of its rational status simply doesn't arise in normal inquiry. This is why the recognition comes with a kind of epistemic insecurity, though it is important to note that this is a kind of epistemic anxiety that is distinct from ordinary doubt. It obviously doesn't lead to doubt of the hinges in any normal sense, as being aware of one's hinge commitments *qua* hinge commitments doesn't alter the fact that they are one's hinge commitments, and hence optimal certainties that are manifest in one's actions. One's certainty in one's worldview, as expressed by one's certainty in one's hinge commitments, is necessarily unchanged. Nonetheless, realizing that one's most certain convictions are lacking rational support entails acknowledging that one's worldview as a whole is not rationally grounded. That is what prompts the intellectual anxiety, even if this is not an intellectual anxiety that can lessen one's certainty in one's worldview.

Indeed, even if one is fully convinced of the Wittgensteinian point in response to radical scepticism, whereby one recognizes that it is in the very nature of being a rational subject that one's rational support is essentially local (such that no worldview could be rationally grounded), it still remains that one might be naturally intellectually perturbed by the recognition of one's hinge commitments *qua* hinge commitments. Just as one can be up high without any risk of falling and yet still feel phobically anxious about one's situation, so one can recognize that there is nothing inherently problematic with one's most basic certainties lacking in rational support and yet feel intellectually anxious nonetheless about the overall nature of one's epistemic position. In this sense, epistemic vertigo can be an entirely natural response to one's epistemic situation.

5. HONEST DOUBT REVISITED

As we've noted, epistemic vertigo is a very different phenomenon to ordinary doubt. Even so, if one were speaking loosely one might be tempted to refer to it as a kind of doubt (to the extent that any intellectual anxiety is a form of doubt). With this point in mind, I want to return to the religious phenomenon of honest doubt. We noted above that this was distinct from ordinary doubt too, in that it has distinctive properties. Not only is honest doubt distinct from ordinary doubt, however, but it is also an expression of epistemic vertigo within a specifically religious setting. That is, honest religious doubt, properly conceived, is in fact a kind of intellectual anxiety about the overall rational standing of one's religious worldview that arises insofar as one recognizes the distinctive hinge nature of one's basic religious commitments.

Consider again the four features of honest doubt that were noted earlier. First, that the doubt had to be fundamental in nature. This is naturally understood as the honest religious doubt being concerned with one's religious hinge commitments. Moreover, notice that this must be so anyway for these religious doubts to be in even *prima facie* tension with quasi-fideism. After all, according to quasi-fideism most of one's religious commitments are ordinary K-ap_t beliefs, and hence can be doubted just as one's ordinary non-religious K-ap_t beliefs can be. Honest doubt is thus not ordinary doubt but religious hinge doubt.

Second, that honest doubt doesn't actually undermine the religious conviction in play. Recall that this is meant to be a form of doubt that is perfectly compatible with living a faithful life. In fact, as we noted, the guiding idea is that we would expect doubt of this kind to be manifest in any intellectually rich form of faithfulness. This condition is clearly satisfied if we conceive of honest religious doubt as being concerned with one's religious hinge commitments, as of course the certainty that is in play in this regard is not responsive to rational considerations. Just as being doubtful about the rational standing of one's everyday certainty that one has hands doesn't lessen that certainty one iota, so the same goes for being doubtful of one's religious hinge commitments. Again, this is not ordinary doubt (which would lessen one's certainty).

Third, that honest doubt is genuine and not a mere artifice. Since the doubt doesn't undermine the life of faith (*modulo* the second point just noted), it would be natural to think that it must be a mere artifice, since how can fundamental religious doubt be genuine and yet coexist with genuine religious conviction? I think that conceiving of such religious doubt as a form of epistemic vertigo helps us resolve this issue. Epistemic vertigo, after all, is clearly a genuine form of intellectual

anxiety about the lack of a rational grounding for one's worldview, even if, given the nature of one's hinge commitments, it simply cannot result in a weakened commitment to that worldview. The same goes for religious epistemic vertigo.

Fourth, that honest doubt is in a sense naturally arising; that it can be part of an authentic religious life that it involves doubt of this kind. We have already noted that epistemic vertigo as applied to one's quotidian hinge commitments can be naturally arising, at least to the extent that once one is in the relevant sense disengaged from one's everyday practices, then one can be in a position whereby the oddity of one's hinge commitments can reveal itself. Once revealed, however, it is natural to succumb to the intellectual anxiety about one's worldview that epistemic vertigo represents. Epistemic vertigo in the case of quotidian hinge commitments thus satisfies this condition, albeit in a way that presupposes that one is in a certain sense already in an unnatural position of not being fully attuned to one's everyday practices.

The epistemic vertigo that arises in the religious context, in contrast, does not require the same degree of detachment from one's everyday practices. This is because it is often the case that special nature of fundamental religious conviction is not hidden at all within the religious life, but brought explicitly to the fore. Of course, often such basic religious commitments are expressed in ways that might obscure their hinge status. Indeed, it might be part of the religious practice to treat them as fully grounded in reasons. Nonetheless, even in this case, the point remains that the believer is explicitly aware that they have these fundamental religious commitments and that they are playing a special role in their worldview. It is thus natural at least that a reflective religious believer will be inclined to scrutinize their rational standing, and in this way they may thereby come to see that they are hinge commitments. This is the sense in which it may be expected that a reflective religious individual might be led to recognize the hinge nature of these basic religious commitments and in doing so grasp the ultimately groundlessness of their worldview: that nothing grounds the worldview as a whole (but only elements within it).¹⁷

6. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The upshot is clear: honest doubt, properly understood, is religious epistemic vertigo. With this conception of honest doubt in play, I think we see that there is no essential tension between such doubt and quasi-fideism, any more than there is a tension between the certainty that attaches to

one's quotidian hinge commitments and the epistemic vertigo that one might be led to once one recognizes that they have this status. Rather than honest doubt posing a challenge to quasi-fideism, the broader embedding of the quasi-fideist proposal within a Wittgensteinian epistemology puts this position in a unique position to understand what the phenomenon of honest doubt involves, including why it is so different to ordinary doubt.

I want to close by commenting further on the claim made at the end of the last section, to the effect that epistemic vertigo arises more naturally in the religious case than with regard to our quotidian hinge commitments. I think this is actually a very interesting feature of the religious life, in that it tends to bring into sharper relief how our worldview as a whole is lacking in rational standing, something that is otherwise normally obscured. If the Wittgensteinian picture is correct, then it is inevitably the case that one's overarching worldview is lacking in rational standing: the certainty that permeates one's worldview, on this picture, is by its nature ungrounded. The non-religious life is thus not exempt from this kind of arationality. And yet the non-religious life tends to obscure its existence: the quotidian hinge commitments, as we've noted, are in sense hidden in plain view in our ordinary practices. I think this explains how it is so tempting in a largely secular world to indulge in the fantasy that one's reasons 'go all the way down', and hence regard the non-religious worldview as fully grounded in a way that previous, religious, conceptions of the world were not.¹⁸ I think it also explains how the religious life can be in one sense at least a more authentic response to our epistemic predicament, as by bringing the arational commitments at the core of one's worldview to the fore it helps us to embrace a feature of our epistemic condition that is ordinarily hidden from us.¹⁹

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NOTES

¹ This seems to be Tennyson's thinking, at any rate. In the poem he is explicitly rejecting the charge that 'doubt is Devil-born' and extolling the virtues of a faith that incorporates honest doubt. For a recent edition of this poem, see Tennyson (2020/[1850]).

² I defend quasi-fideism in Pritchard (2011*a*; 2015*b*; 2017*a*; 2018*a*; 2021*b*; 2022*a*; 2022*c*; 2023; 2024; 2025*a*; 2025*b*; *forthcominga*; *forthcomingb*). For some recent critical discussions of the proposal, see di Ceglie (2017; 2022, *passim*), Radenovic & Kostic (2017), Bennett-Hunter (2019), de Ridder (2019), Gascoigne (2019, *passim*), Boncompagni (2022), Gomez-Alonso (2021; 2025), Smith (2021), de Ridder & Rannali (2022), Vinten (2022), Aquino & Gage (2023), Coliva (2023), and Williams (*forthcoming*).

³ See, Newman (1979/[1870]). For further discussion of the influence of Newman on Wittgenstein in this respect, see Barrett (1997), Kienzler (2006), and Pritchard (2015*b*; *forthcominga*). For further discussion of Newman's epistemology, see Ferreira (1986), Kenny (1990), and Aquino (2018).

⁴ See especially Wittgenstein (1966). For two key discussions of a straightforward fideistic reading of the later Wittgenstein, see Nielsen (1967) and Philips (1976). See also Bell (1995).

⁵ These are often described as 'Moorean certainties' as they are famously enumerated by Moore (e.g., 1925; 1939), though the idea that these everyday certainties play an important role in our rational practices did not originate with Moore (this is also a theme, for example, in Newman's work (1979/[1870])). Wittgenstein's treatment of these certainties is very different to Moore's, as we will see. For a comparison of Moore and Wittgenstein in this specific regard, see Pritchard (2021*c*). Note that not all the certainties described in *On Certainty* are to be treated as hinge commitments—for more on this exegetical point, see Pritchard (2022*b*).

⁶ Elsewhere—see, for example, Pritchard (2015*a*, part 2)—I describe this overarching certainty as the *über hinge commitment*, which all rational agents share. On this view, one's hinge commitments to specific propositions, such as that one has hands, are manifestations of one's overarching *über hinge commitment*.

⁷ I develop my account of hinge commitments and their relevance for radical scepticism in a number of places, but see especially Pritchard (2015*a*). For some of the other key discussions of hinge commitments in the contemporary literature, see Strawson (1985), McGinn (1989), Williams (1991), Stroll (1994), Moyal-Sharrock (2004), Wright (2004), Coliva (2015; 2022), and Schönbaumsfeld (2016). For two surveys of this literature, see Pritchard (2011*b*; 2017*b*).

⁸ For further discussion of the claim that our hinge commitments are not K-apt beliefs, see Pritchard (2015*b*, part 2).

⁹ Indeed, one can regard quasi-fideism as putting forward an epistemic parity argument in this regard, whereby so long as we hold the religious domain to the same epistemic standards as ordinary belief, then there are no specific grounds for scepticism about it. (Such epistemic parity arguments are usually associated with *reformed epistemology*, which is an alternative account of the epistemology of religious belief—see especially Plantinga (1983; 2000), and Wolterstorff (1983). See also Alston (1982; 1986; 1991)).

¹⁰ According to quasi-fideism, then, fundamental religious convictions are not K-apt beliefs, though they are beliefs in the ordinary folk sense of the term (in that they involve a commitment to the truth of the target proposition). It follows that quasi-fideism is incompatible with a fictionalist account of religious commitment. For contemporary discussion of the relationship between faith and belief, see Pojman (1986), Audi (1991), Alston (1996), and Howard-Snyder (2016).

¹¹ This kind of variability in how a subject might respond to the very same experiences depending on their hinge commitments naturally gives rise to concerns about epistemic relativism. In particular, why doesn't hinge epistemology lead to the possibility of epistemically incommensurate epistemic systems? While this is an issue for hinge epistemology in general, given that the religious hinges are not widely shared it is arguably an even more pressing issue once one applies hinge epistemology to the religious case via quasi-fideism. For some discussions of hinge epistemology and epistemic relativism, see Williams (2007), Pritchard (2010; 2018*b*), and Kusch (2016). For discussion of quasi-fideism and epistemic relativism more specifically, see Pritchard (2022*c*).

¹² Indeed, this would be a natural consequence of certain accounts of hinge commitments—for example, Wright's (2004) entitlement account, or Coliva's closely related (2015) extended rationality account. On both of these proposals, hinge commitments are—broadly speaking anyway—essential prerequisites of rational inquiry, but that would clearly not apply to fundamental religious claims.

¹³ Of course, there are abnormal circumstances in which one might be led to doubt the truth of this proposition, but in such cases it would no longer be functioning as a hinge commitment. For example, when waking in hospital after a serious car accident, one might well doubt that one has hands, and have that doubt assuaged by seeing one's hands, but that's because this proposition is not functioning as a hinge commitment in these abnormal circumstances, but rather as an ordinary proposition, one that is K-apt believed, or doubted, in the usual way.

¹⁴ See Pritchard (2015*a*, part 4; 2019; 2020; 2021*a*).

¹⁵ This claim could arguably be a motif of Cavell's (e.g., 1979; 1988) work, as expressing one of his fundamental responses to Wittgenstein's later writings. See, for example, Pritchard (2021*a*). See also Gutschmidt (2016).

¹⁶ I am aware, of course, that this isn't the right word to describe a fear of heights. I use it only because it is widely assumed that vertigo describes this fear. (The pedantic reader should feel free to make the relevant substitution).

¹⁷ The foregoing is not to suggest that coming to recognize one's basic religious commitments as hinge commitments is straightforward, only that it is more straightforward than is the case with regard to one's quotidian hinge commitments (on account of them being explicit to the practice). I discuss what is involved in a subject being led to a state of religious epistemic vertigo in more detail in Pritchard (*forthcoming*), where I consider in detail two cases from literature: Shusaku Endo's *Silence* and Anthony Burgess's *Earthly Powers*.

¹⁸ On this point, see Tanesini's (2004) powerful description of how Wittgenstein is a profoundly anti-modernist thinker (where the idea of reasons 'going all the way down' is a key tenet of the modernist worldview).

¹⁹ I am grateful to Anna Boncompagni, Annalisa Coliva, Modesto Alonso Gomez, and Michael Williams for discussions on related topics. This paper was written in collaboration with Nuno Venturinha's project at the NOVA University of Lisbon, 'Epistemology of Religious Belief: Wittgenstein, Grammar and the Contemporary World' (PTDC/FER-FIL/32203/2017, funded by the Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology). It was also written while a Senior Research Associate of the *African Centre for Epistemology and Philosophy of Science* at the University of Johannesburg.