Journal for the History of Analytical Philosophy

Volume 9, Number 9

Schelling, Cavell, and the Truth of Skepticism
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This paper argues that (1) McDowell wrongly assumes that "terror", Cavell's reaction to the radical contingency of our shared modes of knowing or our "attunement", expresses a skepticism that is antinomically bound to an equally unacceptable dogmatism because (2) Cavell rather regards terror as a mood that reveals the "truth of skepticism", namely, that there is no conclusive evidence for necessary attunement on pain of a category error, and that (3) a precedent for McDowell's misunderstanding is Hegel's argument for necessary attunement in a system of knowing, whose refutation Schelling holds it is the "merit of skepticism" to provide.

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G. Anthony Bruno

"[M]etaphysics is nothing else but the entire range of the universal determinations of thought, as it were, the diamond net into which everything is brought and thereby first made intelligible". (Hegel 2004, 11)

"The entire world, so to speak, lies caught in the nets of the understanding or reason, but the question is: How did it come into these nets?" (Schelling SW I/10, 143)

"We begin to feel, or ought to, terrified that maybe language (and understanding, and knowledge) rests upon very shaky foundations—a thin net over an abyss." (Cavell 1999, 178)

In "The Availability of Wittgenstein's Later Philosophy", Cavell argues that our confidence that we will project acquired words into appropriate contexts rests on "the whirl of organism", which he describes as our common "routes of interest", "modes of response", and "senses of humour and of significance", i.e., on our shared attunement. Cavell observes that we may find it "difficult" to conceive of mere attunement as the ground of our capacity for "speech and activity" and for exhibiting "sanity and community". If "nothing more, but nothing less", assures us of coordinated use of words than the logically contingent fact of the interests, responses, and senses that we hold in common with others, the concept of such a ground will indeed be, not just difficult, but "terrifying". (Cavell 1976, 52)

In *The Claim of Reason*, Cavell attributes philosophers' "absolute 'explanations' " of language, understanding, and knowledge in part to the "terrified" feeling that these capacities have "shaky foundations" in our being "mutually *attuned*". To show that our words convey meaning or represent a world, it seems that we must place confidence, not in the mere fact of "shared commitments and responses", but in "absolutely conclusive evidence" for what our words convey or represent. (Cavell 1999, 32, 178–79, 233-38) However, for Cavell, terror is not a threat to be neutralized. Terror is the effect of a critical response to an antinomy of knowledge in which absolutely conclusive evidence that, say, the world exists is either dogmatically asserted, perhaps by raising one's hand, or skeptically denied, perhaps by suspecting one is dreaming. Theses in the antinomy jointly err by appealing to evidence that lies beyond its condition of possibility, namely, beyond our shared attunement. (Cavell 1999, 233; Cavell 1976, 264) Critically resolving the antinomy requires supplanting this erroneous appeal with the terrifying recognition of the contingency of shared attunement.

McDowell endorses Cavell's image of the whirl of organism in "Virtue and Reason" and "Non-Cognitivism and Rule-Following". In both articles, McDowell adopts the term "vertigo" to signify the terror induced by the contingency of attunement, which he describes as the feeling that, e.g., extending a number series as one always has rests on a "congruence of subjectivities, with the congruence not grounded as it would need to be to amount to an objectivity". (1998a, 61) McDowell claims that this vertigo causes us to recoil into a dilemma in which we either dogmatically regard "going on in the same way" in counting to be evidence of our grasp of a rule that "transcends the 'mere' sharing of forms of life" or skeptically dismiss rule-following as impossible absent evidence of any such rule. (1998a, 62–63; 1998b, 209–10) The dilemma's horns are in fact locked in an antinomy whose theses jointly err by conceiving of rules for knowledge as transcending our shared ways of attunement.

McDowell explicitly agrees with Cavell that attunement explains the correctness of judging the next member in a number

series. But he disagrees with Cavell by viewing vertigo as a temptation to fall into the antinomy of knowledge, not as the effect of a critique of that antinomy. It is because McDowell attributes the antinomy's attraction to "the inability to endure the vertigo" induced by the contingency of attunement that he says it is best "not to have felt the vertigo in the first place". Specifically, he says, the "cure for the vertigo" is to reject any standpoint on knowledge that purports to transcend our shared attunement. (McDowell 1998a, 63; McDowell 1998b, 211) Not only does this overlook the standpoint from which Cavell registers terror, as I will show, it also assumes that we must escape this terror. By contrast, for Cavell, we must learn from terror what he calls the truth of skepticism—that our ways of knowing have their non-epistemic ground in shared attunement, for which there can be no evidence on pain of a category error. Skepticism's disturbing truth arises as a resolution of, not a temptation to, an antinomy about the grounds of knowledge. If Cavell is wrong to conceive of terror as he does, it is not for the reason McDowell offers.

I propose a conceptual and historical account of McDowell's disagreement with Cavell. In Section 1, I argue that McDowell's idea of terror confuses the truth of skepticism with a skeptical thesis in the antinomy whose critique yields this truth. By construing terror as tempting an antinomy of knowledge, rather than as arising from that antinomy's critique, McDowell neglects the truth that Cavell offers. In Section 2, I cite a precedent for McDowell's error in Hegel's neglect of a truth that Schelling describes in "Philosophical Letters on Dogmatism and Criticism". What Schelling calls the merit of skepticism is the insight that no philosophical system has "universal validity", i.e., that no system enjoys necessary attunement. A skeptic becomes a "true" philosopher by seeing that we are ensnared in an antinomy if we regard the desire for universal validity as either satiable or foolish—if we dogmatically confirm or skeptically deny attunement's necessity—for our being attuned to one system is always contingent on its "subjective value". (SW I/1, 307) Hegel exhibits the antinomy's dogmatic thesis in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* by

claiming to convert "*love* of knowing" into "*actual* knowing", i.e., to satisfy our desire for a system, our necessary attunement in which is expressed by the " 'I' that is 'We' and 'We' that is 'I' ". (Hegel 1977, 3, 110) Hegel's proposed speculative evidence for our forms of knowing accordingly neglects skepticism's true merit. In Section 3, I remark on the divergent post-Kantian legacies leading from Schelling and Hegel to Cavell and McDowell.

1.

We might expect to feel terror at the absence of attunement, at the idea that our ways of knowing follow mechanical causality and thus lack freedom and shared purpose. Why, then, does Cavell feel terror at its presence, at the idea that our knowing exhibits the "whirl" of organic activity? To answer this, we must see what draws him to the image of the whirl of organism.

A skeptic will, in a Cartesian dialectic, argue that we cannot know other minds or an external world. In support of a reading of Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*, Cavell observes that such a skeptic's conclusion is an invention, not a discovery. She begins from the intuitive idea that she knows an object's existence on the basis of sensory evidence and raises the question of whether, on that basis, she sees it with absolute certainty. She infers that she does not, given her senses' finitude and fallibility. But whereas a discovery depends on "fully natural" considerations that are "projected with a clear sense", the skeptic's suspicion that we see no objects with absolute certainty, while not "*fully* unnatural", is neither fully natural. This is because it has some sense, but no clear sense, given how superfluous absolute certainty is in ordinary experience. To motivate her suspicion, the skeptic must therefore fix the world so as to give meaning to her question of whether we certainly see the object. To this end, her idea of the senses is "made to order" with her idea of an object, such that only sensing secured against finitude and fallibility—nothing short of absolute certainty—counts as knowing that objects exist. But it is because these constructions entail

an epistemic ideal that no sensory evidence could actually satisfy that she concludes that we cannot know what exists. Cavell remarks that if one could show the skeptic that her conclusion is really an invention, one would achieve the "dissolution" of her position. (Cavell 1999, 160, 202–3, 222–28)

The idea of skepticism's dissolubility becomes complicated, however, when, recalling *The Claim of Reason* in *Contesting Tears*, Cavell claims that, for Wittgenstein, skepticism is "(not exactly true, but not exactly false either; it is the name of) a standing threat to, or a temptation of, the human mind—that our ordinary language and its representation of the world *can* be philosophically repudiated and that it is essential to our inheritance and mutual possession of language, as well as to what inspires philosophy, that this should be so". (Cavell 1996, 89) This claim disputes readings on which Wittgenstein aims to either refute skepticism or reject it as unintelligible, since nothing worth refuting is in any sense "true" and nothing unintelligible is "a standing threat" or a natural "temptation" of the mind.[1] In the recalled text, Cavell explicitly rejects readings of Wittgenstein on which skepticism is conceived strictly as the denial of certainty about what exists. Such a denial indeed follows from the "construction of criteria" that are "made to order" for the Cartesian suspicion above concerning sensory evidence, which accordingly must be refuted. (Cavell 1999, 37) For Cavell, however, a one-dimensionally Cartesian conception of skepticism ignores the "truth" of skepticism, what it "is, or threatens". (Cavell 1999, 7) What, then, is the difference between skepticism as a dissoluble position on knowledge and skepticism as an "essential" threat to our shared ways of knowing?

I suggest that Cavell employs a distinction between what I call *antinomial skepticism* and *truthful skepticism*, i.e., between a skeptical thesis locked in an antinomy with a dogmatic thesis about

knowledge and a skeptical insight into the non-epistemic ground of knowledge that resolves that antinomy. This distinction can show how it is that the skeptic invents her conclusion against knowledge yet allows us to see that shared attunement is contingent and revocable. As we will see, it explains why the Cartesian question of whether we know there is a world and the Wittgensteinian question of how we know a world at all are, as Cavell puts it, "different in spirit". (Cavell 1999, 225)[2] We cannot confuse the spirit of antinomial skepticism, which despairs of our capacity for knowledge, with the spirit of truthful skepticism, which resolves to face the contingency of the attunement that grounds knowledge. For Cavell, we cannot conflate resoluteness and despair, as McDowell does: truthful skepticism does not invite antinomial skepticism, but rather corrects it by revealing knowing's non-epistemic ground.

Cavell alerts us to an antinomy in "Knowing and Acknowledging" when he describes a "head-on effort to defeat skepticism" whereby, "in fighting the skeptic too close in, as it were, the anti-skeptic takes over—or encourages—the major condition of the skeptic's argument, namely, that the problem of knowledge about other minds is the problem of certainty". (Cavell 1976, 258) To oppose a skeptic's denial of certainty is to fight "too close in" if it is to adopt her argument's "major condition" or assumption that knowledge requires absolute certainty. In an antinomy, opposed theses share an illusory assumption, a spoiling factor that ensures an impasse.[3] As we saw, to motivate her suspicion that we lack knowledge, a skeptic constructs ideas about the senses and about objects that demand absolute certainty as an epistemic ideal. Her disputant ensures an impasse if he assumes the same ideal and, in a "head-on effort", confirms rather than denies that we can satisfy it. This, then, is a dispute that

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[1]For criticisms of such readings by Rogers Albritton, Gordon Baker, Peter Hacker, Norman Malcolm, Marie McGinn, Stephen Mulhall, Barry Stroud, and Michael Williams, see Shieh (2006) and Macarthur (2014).

[2]Compare this difference in spirit with the difference between what Conant (2004) calls Cartesian and Kantian skepticism.

[3]For Kant, parties to antinomies of pure reason entrench their dispute by conflating appearances and things in themselves. See A420/B448-A460/B488.

makes the existence of the world or of other minds a question of certainty, whether answered "affirmatively or negatively. It is a perspective from which skepticism and (what Kant calls) dogmatism are made in one another's image, leaving nothing for choice". (Cavell 1999, 46)[4] Parties to an antinomy resemble each other by their shared illusory assumption, mirroring each other by their opposed stance on it. Here, the illusory assumption that knowledge requires absolute certainty locks the skeptic and the dogmatist into a stalemate, blinding them to a better "choice". Why is their assumption illusory?

The antinomy of knowledge stems from assuming that we know what exists only if we have absolute certainty, which consequent the skeptic denies. We saw that her doubt that sensory evidence yields knowledge has some sense, as it begins from the idea that such evidence is required to know objects. But it lacks clear sense, for her suspicion that we do not see the object with absolute certainty demands somehow securing the senses against finitude and fallibility, a thought that is suited to certainty as an epistemic ideal, the impossibility of satisfying which yields her conclusion. As Cavell says, the skeptic's doubt is neither fully natural nor fully unnatural. We can follow how she projects her constructions into odd scenarios, but we have no use for them. This is because her conclusion, if it is to be a generic claim about knowledge, cannot be concrete. Only by depriving her claim of the intelligibility of a concrete context can she secure generality for her conclusion and so validate her suspicion.[5] The skeptic's assumption that knowledge is a matter of absolute certainty is

illusory, then, for she cannot deny it without referring to an *indeterminate context*.

Nor can this assumption be confirmed, as the dogmatist shows. The dogmatist argues *contra* the skeptic that we do have knowledge. Preserving their shared assumption, the dogmatist rejects the skeptic's conclusion. But it is no news to the skeptic that her conclusion conflicts with commonsense. (Cavell 1999, 136; Cavell 1976, 240, 247)[6] Worse, the objection that what the skeptic's conclusion envisions is unintelligible requires "exactly what the person who claims to envision it has to do—say what is envisioned". Indeed, we would expect that the dogmatist can envision the skeptic's denial of certainty, since it depends on projecting constructions that do have some sense, if no use. (Cavell 1976, 58, 249–50)[7] Worse yet, the dogmatist cannot refute the skeptic by appeal to how we usually speak of objects, since to make his appeal is to speak for others on the basis of how he usually speaks, i.e., "to say something about himself". Yet there is no fixed set of ways of speaking, no "most common concept" immune to divergent use. To the question of how I know that others speak as I do, Cavell says, "the answer is, I do not". (Cavell 1976, 66–67) The dogmatist's assumption that knowledge is a matter of absolute certainty is illusory, then, for he cannot confirm it without deferring to an *indeterminate authority*.

To clarify the illusion of assuming certainty as an epistemic ideal, consider a case of what Cavell calls absolute explanation. To justify my foundational belief in nature's uniformity, I can

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[4]Compare Putnam (2006, 125–28). Cavell often refers to the skeptic as the "traditional philosopher" or "epistemologist" and the dogmatist as the "ordinary language philosopher". Cavell's invocation of Kant is thus a reference, not to metaphysical varieties of dogmatism, but to what Kant regards as dogmatism's general features of prejudice, hubris, and despotism.

[5]"The combination of the fact that in the epistemologist's context a concrete claim cannot be under scrutiny, together with the fact that one must be imagined as being under scrutiny, ought to explain why he imagines himself to be saying something when he is not, to have discovered something when he has not." (Cavell 1999, 221) Compare (1999, 197–99, 212, 217–20).

[6]Compare: "it is *no* argument against [the skeptic's] application [of her words] to say that if [she] is allowed it an unwelcome conclusion follows". (Cavell 1976, 251)

[7]Compare: "Simply to say, with the ordinary language philosophers, that the question [whether we know] *does not arise* can only make the epistemologist feel that his question has been begged; because for him the question *has already arisen* (anyway no one has shown it hasn't) and using words in no obviously distorted sense (what sense do they now have?)... *What* is absurd about these grounds for doubt? It is important to realize that they are not somehow *in themselves* absurd". (Cavell 1999, 134, 136)

cite testimony and experiments. Such evidence affords reasons to believe in nature's uniformity. Yet a complete list of such reasons is neither possible nor necessary to justify my belief. It is impossible, since no particular list of reasons can remove doubt about nature's uniformity, and it is unnecessary, since reasons *qua* reasons are idle in the face of a foundational belief. (Cavell 1999, 217)[8] As Wittgenstein says regarding this very belief in the *Investigations*, "here reasons are not propositions which logically imply what is believed", since evidential reasons fall short of the necessity befitting a foundational belief, and yet "[j]ustification by experience comes to an end", since evidential reasons exhaust their explanatory force when faced with a foundational belief. (Wittgenstein 2009, §§481, 485)[9] But if knowledge by evidence cannot justify foundational propositions like "nature is uniform", we cannot assume that knowledge rests on certainty: "learning the particular ground they occupy", (Cavell 1976, 241) we find that such propositions neither admit of nor require evidence.

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[8]Compare: "to say that we have 'absolutely conclusive evidence' that houses do not turn into flowers is not merely too weak; such a remark is itself produced by the same hysteria against which it is struggling... But is it merely *in fact* the case that houses do not turn into flowers? What do we learn—what fact is conveyed—when we are told that they do not? What would it be like if the flowers and houses *did* turn into one another? What would 'houses' or 'flowers' mean in the language of such a world?" (Cavell 1999, 233–34)

[9]Compare Kant: "Such a tracing of the first endeavors of our power of cognition to ascend from individual perceptions to general concepts is without doubt of great utility, and the famous Locke is to be thanked for having first opened the way for this. Yet a deduction of the pure *a priori* concepts can never be achieved in this way; it does not lie down this path at all, for in regard to their future use, which should be entirely independent of experience, an entirely different birth certificate than that of an ancestry from experiences must be produced... The question now is whether *a priori* concepts do not also precede, as conditions under which alone something can be, if not intuited, nevertheless thought as object in general, for then all empirical cognition of objects is necessarily in accord with such concepts, since without their presupposition nothing is possible as object of experience". (A86/B118-9, A93/B125-6)

We use "evidence" out of context if we dogmatically seek conclusive verification of beliefs that play a grounding role in knowledge.[10] Cavell remarks that while this grants the skeptic's wish that no certainty lies at the ground of knowing, it "ought not" satisfy her, for it shows only that seeking certainty there is the illusory assumption that locks her into an antinomy with the dogmatist. (Cavell 1976, 253)[11] To resolve the antinomy, we must reject its spoiling factor. This requires grasping the "truth" or "moral of skepticism, namely, that the human creature's basis in the world as a whole, its relation to the world as such, is not that of knowing", but rather attunement to shared or acknowledged modes of knowing. (Cavell 1999, 241)[12]

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[10]See: "Today a photograph sent by the Roman police has arrived showing her standing in front of the Fontana Tartarughe. 'Now we have absolutely conclusive evidence!'... But such an example has *no* grip against the verificationist's position. For in that context it is perfectly reasonable to imagine further that the picture has itself been faked, that a picture of her taken in Miami against the clear sky has been superimposed on a photograph of the fountain. We can put it this way: 'Absolutely', in such contexts, works like the word 'know' itself. It means: we don't *need* any more evidence for all practical purposes; but not: there isn't any further evidence which would be relevant. But *that* is what would have to be shown to counter the verificationist's conclusion. Once admit the relevance of further evidence—i.e., allow that it would (sometimes) be reasonable to ask for more—and it will seem dogmatic to say that none *can* go against the statement". (1999, 235)

[11]Compare: "The verificationist's [skeptical] denial and Malcolm's [dogmatic] assertion that we can (sometimes) have conclusive evidence for an empirical statement, flat as their superficial disagreement is, both rest upon the same concept of what knowledge is, or must be: both picture knowledge as lying at the end of an appallingly long road of belief and evidence; both imagine the evidence for any given empirical statement to be constantly growing or diminishing or precariously maintaining a given credibility level as the number of human experiences increase—as though looking again and again and again at houses and flowers were seeing again and again and again the one *not* turning into the other. Both, in a word, use 'absolutely conclusive verification' out of its ordinary context". (Cavell 1999, 234–35)

[12]Compare: "*The Claim of Reason* suggests the moral of skepticism to be that the existence of the world and others in it is not a matter to be known, but one to be acknowledged". (Cavell 1988, 172).

Just after presenting the antinomy of knowledge, Cavell shifts from antinomial skepticism to truthful skepticism when he says that the dogmatist "neglects the fundamental insight of the skeptic. . . that *certainty is not enough*". (Cavell 1976, 258) While antinomial skepticism distorts this insight into a denial of our capacity for knowing, truthful skepticism registers certainty's insufficiency for an account of knowledge. Certainty is "*not enough*" in that epistemic terms cannot capture the non-epistemic ground of knowledge. For Cavell, the skeptic sees "*exactly*" that there are "special problems" of knowledge that "invoke a special concept of knowledge, or region of the concept of knowledge, one which is not a function of certainty". (Cavell 1976, 258) Truthful skepticism draws attention to the fact that attunement—our shared ways of knowing and our recognition of others in these ways—affords no certainty. Cavell describes attunement as a "background of necessities and agreements", such as that nature is uniform, and explains that the fact of attunement, not unlike the fact that there is a world, is "astonishing": there is no evidence for or against it because it conditions the possibility of evidence. (Cavell 1999, 14–15, 31)[13] Attunement is thus a necessary condition or *category* of knowledge, seeking evidence for which is a category error.[14] Yet its denial is thinkable, as antinomial skepticism and misrecognition show.[15] Like a Kantian

category, then, attunement's contingency is not merely empirical, yet its necessity is not formally logical. Given this modal peculiarity, we can say that attunement is, in Heidegger's sense, factical.[16] As Cavell puts the point: "nothing is deeper than the fact, or the extent, of agreement itself". (Cavell 1999, 32) It is not known. It is brute.

In grasping the facticity of attunement, we dispel the illusion that we must know with absolute certainty what exists. We thereby resolve the antinomy.[17] Rather than refute skepticism, here we "shif[t] its weight" to the "*undeniable*" thesis that "[o]ur relation to the world as a whole, or to others in general, is not one of knowing, where knowing construes itself as being certain". (Cavell 1999, 45)[18] Knowing presupposes that "when I say what we 'can' and 'cannot' say, I am indeed voicing necessities

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[13]Compare: "what such answers [to problems of philosophy] are meant to provide us with is not more knowledge of matters of fact, but the knowledge of what would count as various 'matters of fact'. Is this empirical knowledge? Is it *a priori*? It is a knowledge of what Wittgenstein means by grammar—the knowledge Kant calls 'transcendental'". (Cavell 1976, 64) See Wittgenstein (1969, §§378–85).

[14]See Cavell: "Kant's insight [is] that the limitations of knowledge are not failures of it" (1999, 241).

[15]See: "the actual use of language carries 'implications' which are of course not deductive, but which are nevertheless fully controlled in our understanding of one another: there is no reason in logic why *that* should be 'pointing to an object' and *that* 'pointing to a color', and a very good reason in logic why this should *not* be so (viz., because its notation is unsystematic, and useless for purposes of calculation)". (Cavell 1999, 213–14) and "The issues over which philosophers conflict with one another or with common sense are not 'beliefs'

which each has about the world. . . If I say that such ideas [about nature's uniformity or the world's existence] are the ground upon which any particular beliefs I may have about the world, or the others in it, are founded, this does not mean that I cannot find this ground to crack. (This is why the skeptic's knowledge, should we feel its power, is devastating: he is not challenging a particular belief or set of beliefs about, say, other minds; he is challenging the ground of our beliefs altogether, our power to believe at all.) Proceeding from what is ordinarily said puts a philosopher no closer to ordinary 'beliefs' than to the 'beliefs' or theses of any opposing philosophy, e.g., skepticism". (Cavell 1976, 240)

[16]See: "*Facticity is not the factuality of the* factum brutum *of something objectively present, but is a characteristic of the being of Dasein taken on in existence, although initially thrust aside. The 'that' of facticity is never to be found by looking*". (Heidegger 1996, 127) See: "there is a position which is totally different from mine in the matter of knowing whether he is in pain, different not only in being better. . . but in being decisive, making the best position I can be in seem second hand: namely, *his* position. . . I think everyone recognizes the experience which goes with it, that it is some terrible or fortunate fact, at once contingent and necessary, that *I* am not in that position; the skeptic merely comes to concentrate upon it". (Cavell 1976, 259) Compare (1976, 260–64) and : "If the connection between 'our words' and 'what we mean' is a necessary one, this necessity is not established by universals, propositions, or rules, but by the form of life which makes certain stretches of syntactical utterance *assertions*". (Cavell 1999, 208)

[17]Compare Cavell's solution to the psychologism/anti-psychologism dilemma in Bäckström (2017).

[18]Compare (Cavell 1976, 262).

which others recognize", i.e., I am appealing to our shared criteria. Moreover, "our uses of language are pervasively, almost unimaginably, *systematic*", i.e., no words intelligibly communicate thought or represent a world outside of mutually recognized modes of response. (Cavell 1999, 29–30) Since these are the modes that compose what Cavell calls the whirl of organism, we now begin to see the image's appeal. It denotes the purposive character of language as a rule-bound activity whose end is the collective disclosure of what exists.[19] It signifies that our ways of knowing are not caused by an external nature that annihilates responsibility for what is said, but instead are determined by an internal conception of how we speak—by an understanding, from inside our ways of knowing, that criteria "are always 'ours'", that it is "always *we* who 'establish' the criteria under investigation", and that an authority on them is "always, apparently, the human group as such". (Cavell 1999, 18)[20] Understanding from inside allows us to grasp the logical contingency of attunement first-personally, for even though we "had not realized, or had not known we realize", a system of agreement, the "truth of skepticism" reveals that the shared criteria that condition knowledge "are only human, nothing more than natural to us". (Cavell 1999, 30, 47)[21] To grasp facticity here is to gain a kind of self-knowledge.

We can now see why Cavell's organic image of attunement terrifies. In "The Availability of Wittgenstein's Later Philosophy", Cavell calls it terrifying to face the logical contingency of shared forms of knowing. In *The Claim of Reason*, he depicts this contingency as a net over an abyss. This terror is meant to encourage neither the dogmatic thesis that knowledge requires transcendent rules nor the skeptical thesis that knowledge is impossible. *Contra* McDowell, it does not tempt us into an antinomy. Rather, terror registers that if, at a "crossroads" with a skeptic, we appeal to our criteria for knowledge, the "only source of confirmation is ourselves. And each of us is fully authoritative in this struggle". No appeal to shared criteria is more than human. If not even philosophy can transcend this background of agreement, its skeptical and dogmatic varieties equally lack special authority on criteria. (Cavell 1999, 19)[22] Cavell adds that if this "disagreement persists, there is no appeal beyond us, or if beyond us two, then not beyond some eventual us". Truthful skepticism's insight that criteria are "only human" is thus more precisely the insight that an appeal to criteria is actually an appeal to a human community. And since my appeal has "nothing more to go on than my conviction, my sense that I make sense", it may isolate me: I may invoke an unrecognized community when I invoke 'how we speak' of objects. (Cavell 1999, 19–20)[23] If I do isolate myself,

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[19]See: "for there to 'be' such things as rules, we have to agree in our judgment that a rule has been obeyed (or not)…(The rule itself is dead)". (Cavell 1999, 36)

[20]Compare: "[English] speakers do not, in *general*, need evidence for what is said in [English]; they are the source of such evidence" (Cavell 1976, 4).

[21]Compare: "To confront beliefs, common or otherwise, with the human agreement in terms of which those beliefs propose to make sense—to bring anything that is said back into the basis upon which we have anything to say—is not a practice of common sense" (Cavell 1999, 34). Compare Kant: "That the understanding occupied merely with its empirical use, which does not reflect on the sources of its own cognition, may get along very well, but cannot accomplish one thing, namely, determining for itself the boundaries of its use and knowing what may lie within and what without its whole sphere; for to this end the deep inquiries that we have undertaken are requisite" (A238/B297). See Bruno (2018, 207–8).

[22]See Macarthur (2014).

[23]Compare: "To speak for yourself then means risking the rebuff—on some occasion, perhaps once for all—of those for whom you claimed to be speaking; and it means risking having to rebuff—on some occasion, perhaps once for all—those who claimed to be speaking for you". (Cavell 1999, 27). Compare Macarthur (2014): "If words as spoken today lack sense then there is nothing to stop someone giving them a sense tomorrow. This casts the question 'Who is the skeptic?' in a new and disturbing light since *any* projection of criteria might turn out to be an idiosyncratic projection that fails to be acknowledged by others" (2014, 15). Compare Shieh (2006): "In a failure of attunement the loss of intelligibility is mutual…Moreover, since the grounds of mutual intelligibility are not *given*, or not simply given, the philosopher proceeding from the ordinary must see that *she*, in her philosophizing, has a responsibility for achieving that ground" (2006, 161).

my appeal says nothing "false about 'us'", but only that "there is no us (yet, maybe never) to say anything about". (Cavell 1999, 20)[24] The facticity of our attunement—the truth that is revealed by skepticism—is in this sense a standing threat to thought and communication. (Cavell 1999, 14–15)[25] This is why it is terrifying that no more than shared attunement grounds our ways of knowing. Acknowledgment is never a finished fact.[26]

The Cartesian question of whether we know there is a world hazards a *double risk*. Assuming that we can only know if we have absolute certainty, it risks the skeptical despair of denying the consequent by referring to an indeterminate context to validate a suspicion about sensation. It equally risks the dogmatic hubris of rejecting the consequent's denial by deferring to an indeterminate authority to remove doubt about how we speak. The spirit of the Cartesian question is antinomial, then, because it invites an illusory assumption that ensures an impasse in which a dogmatist rightly interprets a skeptic as seeing ignorance where none is and a skeptic rightly interprets a dogmatist as seeing certainty where none is—both wrong because

certainty is not to be sought. Avoiding the antinomy's instigating illusion requires grasping the skeptical truth about the factical ground of knowledge. We grasp this truth by responding to a distinct, Wittgensteinian question of how we know a world at all, a question that seeks a necessary condition or category of knowledge.[27] Answering the Wittgensteinian question yields a *double terror*: criteria for knowledge are only human, and any appeal to them invokes a fragile community.[28]

For Cavell, terror is the difficulty of resolutely facing the facticity of attunement. For McDowell, by contrast, terror is the vertiginous despair over attunement's logical contingency that leads us to an antinomy of knowledge, which he depicts as a dilemma: either we follow a rule uniformly across cases only if we grasp it as transcending our forms of life, or we deny such a grasp and deem knowledge impossible. The dilemma stems from a familiar illusion about supramundane certainty, which McDowell thinks we avoid by grounding confidence in our ability to know in mundane, organic modes of attunement. Despite endorsing Cavell's image of the whirl of organism, then, McDowell holds that vertigo obscures, rather than arises from, this image. However, one ought to "make oneself safe from vertigo", as McDowell (1998b, 211) puts it,[29] only if terror is exclusively a response to inaccessibly transcendent rules, i.e., only if skepticism is one-dimensionally antinomial. This misreads Cavell, for whom terror is felt after we reject the illusion that invites antinomial theses and shift toward the skeptical truth that our basic relation to the world is non-epistemic. By asserting that we are "protected against" vertigo only if we avoid a conception of our relation to the world that is "extraneous" to our

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[24]See Kant on the "indeterminate norm" of commonsense in judgments of taste (AA 5, 239–40) and Fichte on the "problematic" nature of mutual recognition (SW III, 47, 124); compare Franks (2006, 177).

[25]Compare: "it is felt that Wittgenstein's view makes language too public, that it cannot do justice to the control I have over what I say, to the innerness of my meaning. But my wonder... is rather how he can arrive at the completed and unshakable edifice of shared language from within such apparently fragile and intimate moments—private moments—as our separate counts and outcalls of phenomena, which are after all hardly more than our interpretations of what occurs, and with no assurance of conventions to back them up". (Cavell 1999, 36)

[26]After arguing that there is no deeper fact than attunement, Cavell (1999, 32) states that a scientific explanation of it "may change everything or nothing". Either such an explanation removes attunement's radical contingency by grounding it in mechanical causality, remaking us in a machine's image in which we are devoid of the normative capacities exhibited in attuned thought and communication, changing everything. Or it presupposes attunement as a condition of thought and communication, including scientific explanation itself, changing nothing.

[27]See Conant (2004, 128–29).

[28]See: "Appealing to criteria is not a way of explaining or proving the fact of our attunement in words (hence in forms of life). It is only another description of the same fact; or rather, it is an appeal we make when the attunement is threatened or lost". (Cavell 1999, 34)

[29]Compare McDowell (1998a, 63).

"anchoring" in attunement, (McDowell 1998b, 211)[30] McDowell only deepens the confusion of Cavellian terror with the antinomy whose critique yields that terror as a response. This is because it is understanding our ways of knowing from inside, not from a transcendent or "extraneous" standpoint whose assumption ensures an impasse, that allows us to grasp their ground in attunement. We grasp this ground first-personally by ruling out its third-personal misconceptions.[31] It is precisely then that we resolutely feel terror at this ground's logical contingency.[32]

To say, with McDowell, that knowing's dependence on attunement "should not induce vertigo at all" (1998a, 63) is to conflate resoluteness with despair. To say that we feel vertigo "out of distaste" for the idea that our ways of knowing must be known first-personally, as he says, (1998a, 70) is to avoid the difficulty of this first-person knowledge, of reckoning with the truth-inaptness and bruteness of the ground of these ways.[33] It is to evade the "problem of society", which, Cavell explains, "is for me to discover my position with respect to [the] facts—how I know with whom I am in community, and to whom and to what I am in fact obedient". (Cavell 1999, 25) It is to shirk the daunting task of knowing ourselves.

My appeal to community can isolate me, for I cannot deduce that others speak as I do. As Cavell says, "[no] one can tell *a priori* who is implicated by me". (Cavell 1999, 22) If there is no untroubled claim to a 'we', then the organic whirl of language is a project for which I must and cannot be responsible—must, if I am to project recognized words, and cannot, as I cannot guarantee my own recognition. Thus, while Cavell's image depicts language as a purposive activity of collective world disclosure, it equally depicts an activity with an *indeterminate purpose*. Just how we speak, and just how our world is to be disclosed, is not antecedently fixed: "[l]anguage does not develop every way it *could* develop; and any way it develops, which becomes shared, will be 'natural' ". (Cavell 1999, 192) The naturalness of how we speak arises from the shifts in attunement that continually shape and reshape our ways of knowing. McDowell severs this naturalness from its source when he divorces Cavell's organic image from the terror of feeling these shifts.

We can agree with McDowell that knowledge depends, not on rails "traceable independently of the reactions of participants" in a practice, but on common forms of life. (1998b, 204)[34] But we cannot deny the contingency of the common. Cavell traces this denial to a tenacious disappointment with the bounds of the human standpoint. The disappointment is deceived, for these bounds are conditions of knowledge, not barriers to perfection.[35]

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[30]Compare McDowell (1998a, 63) and Rödl (2018, 94–95).

[31]Cavell (1999) underscores the first-personal character of terror when he says that the skeptical insight into attunement as condition of knowledge, from which insight terror arises, is a "*natural* possibility of that condition" and thus indicative of "the skeptic in oneself" (1999, 47). See Gutschmidt (2016, 143–44).

[32]McDowell is thus mistaken to claim that Cavell mentions "the grasping of universals" and "the grasping of books and rules" as doomed ways of avoiding vertigo, as if vertigo were despair that tempts hubris about our capacity to grasp mythically transcendent rules (McDowell 1998a, 73; see Cavell 1976, 52). Cavell's point is rather that vertigo is the affective result of ruling out such hubris as dogmatic: McDowell locates vertigo dialectically too soon. See: "It was always a mark of honour in a philosophy to be opposed. But it would miss the point to take reassurance from that; for that would mean that you conceive yourself to be exempt from the fear and pain which naturally oppose serious philosophy". (Cavell 1999, 21).

[33]Compare Gutschmidt (2016, 144).

[34]Compare McDowell (1998a, 61) and Lear: "Concepts get their lives through the lives we are able to live with them" (2006, 37).

[35]See: "It is as though we try to get the world to provide answers in a way which is independent of our responsibility for *claiming* something to be so (to get God to tell us what we must do in a way which is independent of our responsibility for choice); and we fix the world so that it can do this. We construct 'parts' of objects which have no parts; 'senses' which have no guiding function. . . And we take what we have fixed or constructed to be *discoveries* about the world, and take this fixation to reveal the human condition rather than our escape or denial of this condition through the rejection of the human conditions of knowledge and action and the substitution of fantasy". (Cavell 1999, 216) Compare Cavell (1999, 44, 206–8) and Cavell (1976, 61–62).

McDowell rightly views the disappointment as a misguided aversion to first-personal knowledge of our ways of knowing. Yet he inflates our confidence in these ways by shielding them from the difficult truth of their factical ground, from the moral that Cavell calls skeptical.[36] By rejecting terror as a response to the logical contingency of shared attunement, McDowell risks attributing to our ways of knowing an untroubled certainty, an oddly pure naturalness—as if these ways were mundane as opposed to supramundane rails. In doing so, he exhibits the *double irony* of confusing truthful skepticism with antinomial skepticism, while courting antinomial dogmatism.

2.

According to Cavell, truthful skepticism resolutely grasps the categorial necessity and formal-logical contingency of the attunement that grounds knowledge. It refuses to refer to a constructed context of seeing an object with absolute certainty, which suspects our ability to know, or to defer to an anonymous authority on how we speak, which vainly shields that ability from misrecognition. The space of reasons rests on no less, and no more, than our sustaining modes of response through continual acknowledgment. Thus, bound with Cavell's organic image of common forms of life, which McDowell endorses, is his existential image of the facticity of the common, which McDowell evades.[37]

The organic and existential images captivate the first generation of post-Kantians, who seek to deduce the system of the conditions of knowledge. Hegel holds that such conditions are absolutely knowable by reason, there being no other standpoint than reason, and absolutely necessary for reason, there being no other deduction than reason affords. The net formed by the sys-

tem of conditions, he says, is, like a "diamond", luminous and enduring.[38] For Schelling, by contrast, the net's brilliance and durability are compatible with both the facticity of its content, since different systems of conditions are thinkable, and the facticity of its value, since different systems find purchase on human life. Hence, on the assumption that the world "lies caught in the nets of the understanding or reason", he asks how it "c[a]me into these nets".[39] Like Cavell, for whom shared attunement is "a thin net over an abyss",[40] Schelling argues that a system's endorsement is radically contingent on our coordinated "practical decision". (SW I/1, 312) I will reconstruct Schelling's argument from the "Letters" in order to reveal the limits of Hegel's counterargument, which prefigures McDowell's misguided disagreement with Cavell.

The "Letters" defend the valid multiplicity of philosophical systems on the basis of a specifically skeptical insight into the contingent value on which any system rests. According to Schelling, a system "bears the stamp of individuality on the face of it because no system can be completed otherwise than *practically*, i.e., subjectively". (SW I/1, 301, 304) In other words, a system has only "subjective value" and is therefore only subjectively valid. (SW I/1, 313) The "merit" of the skeptic is her refusal to regard the desire for a "universally valid" system as either satiable or foolish, as if "establish[ing] a system" through coordinated "practical decision" or shared attunement is necessary or else impossible. For Schelling, the skeptic is a "true *philosopher*" because she rejects the claim to universal validity yet respects our desire for it. (SW I/1, 307, 312) She discerns an antinomy of systematicity whose spoiling factor is the assumption that a genuine system of conditions of knowledge has universal validity, which we dogmatically confirm by declaring this goal met by the one true system or skeptically deny by chid-

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[36]Compare Norris (2018, 89).
[37]See Cavell (1999, 111, 236).

[38]See Hegel (2004, 11).
[39]See SW I/10, 143.
[40]See Cavell (1999, 178).

ing even endless progress toward it.[41] Impasse is ensured by the illusion that a system is an "object of *knowledge*", an epistemic ideal whose satisfaction tempts hubris and despair. The skeptic dispels this illusion by recognizing that a system is an "object of *freedom*" and "the object of an endless task", a regulative ideal of action that exceeds possible knowledge. (SW I/1, 311, 331)[42] What makes this antinomy's core assumption illusory?

The antinomy of systematicity stems from the assumption that we can only deduce the system of the conditions of knowledge if we have absolute knowledge of a first principle to ground that system. We might begin with absolute knowledge, like Fichte's intellectual intuition of reason's form of acting, or end with it, like Hegel's determinate negation of reason's form of knowing.[43] Several motivating threats demand absolute knowledge: that our conditions of knowledge compose a rhapsody,[44] that they lack reality,[45] and that their justification falls on the Agrippan trilemma.[46] Satisfying the demand for absolute knowledge would yield a system that has universal validity and therefore enjoys necessary coordinated decision or shared attunement in its favour.

But the assumption that a philosophical system must rest on absolute knowledge is illusory. Its confirmation, Schelling ar-gues, consists in a dogmatic claim to absolute knowledge: "No proposition can be more groundless. . . than the one which asserts an absolute in human knowledge. Just because it affirms that which is absolute, no further ground can be given for the proposition. As soon as we enter the realm of proofs, we enter the realm of that which is conditioned and, vice versa, entering the realm of that which is conditioned—we enter the realm of philosophical problems". (SW I/1, 308–9)[47] Absolute knowledge is unconditioned, whereas human knowledge is conditioned in specific ways, arising in a "realm of proofs" that Schelling also calls "experience". Experience is an ineradicable presupposition of human knowledge, a field that is "common to all parties" to the pursuit of systematicity and that "would cease to be" were absolute knowledge realized. (SW I/1, 293) For Schelling, then, we use "proofs" out of context if we "despot[ically]" defend the universal validity of a system on the basis of a claim to absolute knowledge. (SW I/1, 306)[48]

While confirming the assumption that a system requires absolute knowledge is dogmatic, denying it is skeptical. A skeptic oversteps her "boundaries" if she "encroach[es] on the field of human freedom" by rejecting, not just absolute knowledge, but even the "*infinite enjoyment*" of its endless, regulative pursuit. (SW I/1, 307) Given the motivating threats above, the pursuit of absolute knowledge is intelligible even if its completion is impossible. To reject a regulative ideal for being unrealizable is excessively skeptical, for it restricts our freedom to value a system of conditions of knowledge and to indefinitely deduce our right to the concepts of such conditions.[49] By disowning this

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[41]For Schelling's distinction between dogmaticism, which he identifies with what Kant calls dogmatism, and dogmatism, which he identifies with Spinozism, see Bruno (2020).

[42]Compare: "from the *idea* of a system as such, the *Critique of Pure Reason* has first proved that no system, whatever its name, is, in its consummation, an object of *knowledge*, but merely an object of an *activity*, a practically necessary but infinite activity" (SW I/1, 305). Forster (2014) divides Schelling's evolving conception of skepticism into Fichtean, Hegelian, and Romantic phases, the last characterized by endless progress toward the ideal of systematicity. This is complicated by the fact that this characterization applies to the alleged Fichtean phase, during which the "Letters" fall.

[43]See Franks (2005, 373, 377).

[44]See Kant A81/B106-7, Kant AA 4, 322-4, Reinhold (2000, 67–68), Fichte (1994, 27), and Hegel (1991, 84).

[45]See Maimon (2010, 27, 42).

[46]See Schelling SW I/1, 162.

[47]This is not Schelling's permanent position; for an account of his varying view of absolute knowledge, see Bruno (2013).

[48]While Schelling implicitly critiques Fichte's claim to absolute knowledge in the "Letters", he explicitly critiques Hegel's claim to it in his Munich and Berlin lectures. On the former critique, see Bruno (2013, 2014); on the latter, see Bruno (2015).

[49]See: "The highest dignity of philosophy is precisely that it expects everything of human *freedom*. Hence, nothing can be more pernicious to philosophy

freedom, a skeptic renders her position antinomial, embroiled with a dogmatist who declares his system unrivalled in value and his deductions final. The skeptic thereby neglects the merit of skepticism, which is to reject this antinomy's spoiling factor by recognizing that a system's ground is not a matter of knowledge, but a matter of subjective—and intersubjective—commitment.

As a true philosopher, the skeptic sees that no system has final claim on any "we". A system presupposes, not only that there is experience, but also that we value how it makes sense of experience. Schelling argues that a system's first principle is valid, not in itself, but only through a "practical decision" that stands "at the beginning of our knowledge". Such a decision is not the result of deliberation, for deliberation assumes a set of relevant criteria, but rather a commitment to a framework of criteria. As we saw in the antinomy of systematicity, decisions to endorse a system of conditions of knowledge are not epistemic: "they are nothing but proleptic assertions" or "*original insuperable prejudices*. Consequently, no philosopher will imagine that he has done everything by merely setting up the highest principles. For those principles have only a subjective value as a basis of his system". (SW I/1, 312–13)[50] Schelling's respect for skepticism thus reveals itself as a respect for facticity: my freedom to endorse a system is a radically contingent act, one that can isolate me as easily as it can find kindred attunement. A first principle may be a particular system's necessary ground. But positing it is a non-epistemic and brute commitment, any proof of whose necessity would only presuppose commitment to a deeper principle.[51]

If a first principle is asserted rather than known, it cannot refute rival principles. Any system of conditions that this principle grounds consequently has subjective validity,[52] and any shared endorsement of or attunement in that system is thereby radically contingent on subjects who recognize its value. Striving for absolute knowledge demands skepticism's resoluteness in the face of this facticity, lamenting which only tempts the "fanaticism" that treats such knowledge as attainable. (SW I/1, 327) Our vocation is not to attain this goal, but to demand of ourselves the endless reaffirmation of our system of knowing. It is, as Schelling says, to commit to "be[ing] what we call ourselves".[53]

Early on, Hegel respects skepticism, but not facticity. If philosophy is to be a universally valid system of the conditions of knowledge or what he calls a science, it relies on skepticism to negate self-contradictory conditions and thereby secure a stable set.[54] This involves adapting an ancient skeptical method, as Michael Forster has shown. This method sets opposing arguments against each other in order to produce equipollence, suspend judgment, and attain tranquility, requiring no specific

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than the attempt to confine it within the limits of a system universally valid in theory. Whoever undertakes such a thing may have a sagacious mind, but the *true* critical spirit is not upon him. For this spirit means to quell the vain passion of demonstrations in order to save the *freedom* of science". (SW I/1, 306–7)

[50]Compare: "[philosophizing] means that I have to experiment in believing what I take to be prejudices, and consider that my rationality may itself be a set of prejudices". (Cavell 1999, 21)

[51]See Bowie (2014, 187–92) and Gabriel (2009, 51–52).

[52]See Schelling: "every *system* bears the stamp of individuality on the face of it, because no system can be completed otherwise than *practically*, that is, subjectively. The more closely a philosophy approaches its system, the more essentially *freedom* and *individuality* partake of it, and the less it can claim universal validity". (SW I/1, 304)

[53]Schelling: "We must *be* what we call ourselves theoretically. And nothing can convince us of being that, except our very *striving* to be just that. This striving realizes our knowledge of ourselves, and thus this knowledge becomes the pure product of our freedom. We ourselves must have worked our way up to the point from which we want to start: one cannot *reason oneself up to that point*, nor can others". (SW I/1,308)

[54]See Hegel: "The skepticism that is directed against the whole range of phenomenal consciousness... renders the Spirit for the first time competent to examine what truth is. For it brings about a state of despair about all the so-called natural ideas, thoughts, and opinions, regardless of whether they are called one's own or someone else's, ideas with which the consciousness that sets about the examination [of truth] *straight away* is still filled and hampered, so that it is, in fact, incapable of carrying out what it wants to undertake" (1977, 50).

belief to achieve this goal. Modern skepticism, by contrast, has neither method nor goal, beset instead by problems caused by dogmatically held beliefs. (Forster 1989, 10–12)[55] Crucially, science itself must escape the Agrippan trope of arbitrariness. As Forster argues, while philosophy subjects self-contradictory conditions to equipollence and shows that their concepts lack reality, the science that survives this procedure will be immune to these skeptical threats in that it has no coherent contrary and its concept is identical to its reality. (Forster 1989, 104–10)[56] If there is no science or reality against which this science can seem arbitrary, then the one true system cannot be logically contingent, i.e., factical. This is essential if, as Hegel says in the *Encyclopedia Logic*, science must start from "total *presuppositionlessness*" (Hegel 1991, 124) and if, as he says in the *Science of Logic*, to start from a presupposition is to "*start* from the *contingent*". (Hegel 2010, 484) Skepticism is accordingly vital for generating a universally valid system, attunement in which is necessary for all.

However, to this end, skepticism is strictly instrumental, for while skepticism

> is often regarded as an irresistible foe of any positive knowledge... it is only the finite and abstract thinking of the understanding that has anything to fear from skepticism, and that cannot resist it; philosophy, on the other hand, contains the skeptical as a moment within itself—specifically as the dialectical moment. But then philosophy does not stop at the merely negative result of the dialectic, as is the case with skepticism. The latter mistakes its result, insofar as it holds fast to it as mere, i.e., abstract, negation. When the dialectic has the negative as its result, then, precisely as a result,

this negative is at the same time the positive, for it contains what it resulted from sublated within itself, and it cannot be without it". (Hegel 1991, 131)[57]

On Hegel's adapted ancient method, skeptical demolition is in the service of speculative construction.[58] Skepticism negates a condition of knowledge that the understanding takes as given, revealing its "genuine nature" to be dialectical insofar as it "passes over, of itself, into its opposite", such as when the concept of being, lacking determinacy, leaves as little for thought as the concept of nothing. (Hegel 1991, 129, Hegel 2010, 59) But philosophy is not content with mere negation. It demands absolute knowledge in the form of a grounded, complete, and unrivaled system in which speculative thinking raises successive conditions' contradictory moments into a final, stable unity. Skeptical negation functions strictly to achieve this "*positive* result". (Hegel 1991, 131)[59]

By subordinating skepticism in this way, Hegel denies it intrinsic merit. Were I to derive a philosophical science, I would satisfy my desire for a universally valid system of conditions of knowledge, convert my love of knowing into absolute knowledge, and ensure that attunement in my system is necessary, i.e., that I appeal to our ways of knowing just if we do. However, we saw that there is no final claim on how we know. For Schelling, skepticism's merit is its recognition that even a purportedly complete derivation of a system of the conditions of

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[55]See Hegel: "*Hume's* skepticism... should be very carefully distinguished from *Greek skepticism*. In Humean skepticism, the *truth* of the empirical, the truth of feeling and intuition is taken as basic; and, on that basis, he attacks all universal determinations and laws, precisely because they have no justification by way of sense-perception. The old skepticism was so far removed from making feeling, or intuition, into the principle of truth that it turned itself against the sensible in the very first place instead". (1991, 80)

[56]Compare Houlgate (2006, 158–59).

[57]Compare Hegel (1975, 119).

[58]See: "the *logical* has three sides: (α) *the side of abstraction* or *of the understanding*, (β) *the dialectical* or *negatively rational side*, (γ) *the speculative* or *positively rational* one. These three sides do not constitute three *parts* of the Logic, but are *moments of everything logically real*; i.e., of every concept or of everything true in general". (Hegel 1991, 125)

[59]Compare: "the operations of skepticism are undoubtedly directed against the finite. But however much force these moments of its negative dialectic may have against the properly-speaking dogmatic knowledge of the understanding, its attacks against the true infinite of the speculative Idea are most feeble and unsatisfactory" (Hegel 1995, 367) and Hegel (2000, 345).

knowledge presupposes the value of endorsing that system, the recognition of which value, by me or by anyone, is contingent.[60] If science is at base a matter of commitment rather than knowledge, then the I that is We is a regulative ideal. A system's validity is at most intersubjective and attunement in it is at best fragile: it is an object of infinite striving. Schelling's argument thus avoids both Hegel's dogmatic claim to the satisfaction of the desire for systematicity and its antinomial counterclaim to that desire's foolishness.[61]

Schelling and Cavell converge on the idea that if knowledge has a non-epistemic ground in shared, mutual attunement, I can no more claim to know that I is We than I can guarantee my own recognition.[62] Given its categorial role, attunement is incapable of proof, whether speculative or evidentiary, and hence is factical. Insofar as this truth is skeptical, skepticism's merit cannot be strictly instrumental, *contra* Hegel. From skepticism's intrinsic merit follows the ineliminability of facticity from an account of knowledge. Reckoning with facticity is the effect of critiquing, not indulging, antinomous views about knowledge. It is fitting that Hegel's error on this point prefigures McDowell's, insofar as the latter's theories of knowledge and mind culminate in what in *Mind and World* he calls "a prolegomenon to a reading of the

Phenomenology". (McDowell 1996, ix)[63] Their shared attempt to eliminate the contingency of there being a shared space of reason, whether by dialectically producing absolute knowledge or by denying that our modes of response fall short of the facts, demonstrates neglect of the merit of skepticism.

3.

Terror is slumber disturbed, a critical response to guises of dogmatism that would ground knowledge on necessary attunement in our modes of response. The conflict here between critique and dogmatism reveals divergent post-Kantian legacies: an anthropic lineage leading from Schelling to Cavell and an absolutist lineage leading from Hegel to McDowell. According to the anthropic lineage, *contra* the absolutist lineage, nothing necessitates that attunement obtains. Attunement constitutes who we are in knowing, but that we are so constituted is a brute fact. It is radically contingent that I is We and We is I. Our shared attunement may be like nature to us. But, like nature's uniformity, this naturalness is factical—naturalness for us.

This parting of the ways after Kant is driven by a question about presuppositions. Kant's turn from general to transcendental logic is meant to determine conditions of possible experience that are necessary presuppositions for us, but for which there is no ultimate reason, as other conditions are thinkable. The Kantian turn prefigures Schelling's view of the subjectively necessary yet groundless prejudice of knowledge and prefigures what Cavell calls our "*faith*" in the world's existence and "wish" for a community of the faithful. (Cavell 1999, 20, 243) By contrast, Hegel aims to show that there is only one intelligible

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[60]Forster (1989) argues that the need for philosophy is no presupposition of Hegel's system if that need is a claim "distinct from or less than" that system, for such a claim, by purporting to transcend a system with no coherent contrary, is self-contradictory (1989, 110). But the desire for systematicity is neither distinct from a system, since desire conditions its possibility, nor less than it, since desire supplies its value.

[61]Forster (1989, 124) argues that one cannot object to Hegel's system without understanding and so believing it. But the system in question is neither an epistemic nor a doxastic object, for it articulates the conditions of knowing and believing. Endorsing it thus involves no more knowledge or belief than does objecting to it.

[62]See: "What is the presumption which asks us to look to ourselves to find whether we share another's secret consciousness? What gives one the right?" (Cavell 1999, 20)

[63]But consider that McDowell's preference for quietism puts him out of step with Hegel's view that the path to science is "complicated, tortuous", and disquieting, a "pathway of *doubt*" and "despair". (Hegel 1977, 7, 49–50) Whereas Kant thinks metaphysics depends on generalizing Humean skepticism, Hegel, unlike McDowell, thinks metaphysics depends on generalizing ancient skepticism.

standpoint from which to determine the conditions of knowledge, from which it would follow that these conditions are not presuppositions with thinkable alternatives, but emerge through "a necessary and complete process of becoming". (Hegel 1977, 20)[64] Hegel's argument for absolutely necessary conditions is at least consistent with, if more rigourous than, McDowell's view that the organic whirl in which we are inculcated ultimately "leaves no genuine questions about norms, apart from those that we address in reflective thinking about specific norms, an activity that is not particularly philosophical". (McDowell 1996, 95) In either instance, the Hegelian argument exhibits a divergent post-Kantian commitment to presuppositionlessness.

Although it may be surprising that Schelling and Cavell share a post-Kantian lineage, Sanford Shieh inadvertently indicates three aspects of their affinity. Shieh explains that, for Cavell, a conflict between philosophical systems is an opposition, not of theses, but of "fundamental *ways* of responding" in virtue of which there are such things as theses, such things "as saying, concluding, agreeing". (Shieh 2006, 157–58) As we saw, Schelling regards a dispute between systems as one between the practical decisions on which opposing views about cognition ultimately rest. Evoking Schelling's argument that a system has its non-epistemic ground in the prejudice that favours it, Shieh articulates Cavell's argument that since attunement "makes possible our practice of giving one another reasons", there are no "rationally compelling grounds for us to remain in our return to

attunement", on pain of a category error. (Shieh 2006, 159)[65] Even Shieh's claim that Cavell regards a philosopher's task as "an invitation to her audience to follow her ways, to acknowledge those ways as their ways as well", where "nothing ensures that this invitation will be taken up", (Shieh 2006, 160) reflects the form of Schelling's "Letters", which summon an addressee "without presumption" to recognize the equipossibility of opposing systems. (SW I/1, 301) Cutting across epoch and style, Schelling and Cavell champion an anthropic lineage that enjoins us to resist the urge for absolute explanations.

One easily locates Nietzsche within the anthropic lineage, given such anti-absolutist claims as that "the basis of all our judgments and 'knowledge'" is a "net" of our own weaving (Nietzsche 1997, 117)[66] and that "there is no 'presuppositionless' science—the very idea is unthinkable, paralogical: a philosophy, a 'faith' must always be there first, so that from it science can acquire a direction, a sense, a limit, a method, a *right* to exist". (Nietzsche 2006, 112)[67] Developing these claims after Hegel, Nietzsche envisions "a new breed of philosophers" who resolve to confront the "dangerous Perhaps!" that certainty, knowledge, and truth presuppose something wilful, prejudicial, even craven.

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[64]Stephen Houlgate (2015) argues that Hegel offers no transcendental argument in the *Phenomenology* insofar as he assumes as little as possible. While transcendental thinking feigns superiority over natural consciousness by presenting the latter with its necessary conditions, speculative thinking shows how natural consciousness derives its own conditions through its experience of self-contradiction and so leads beyond itself toward absolute knowledge. Speculation is "rigourously phenomenological" in that it traces the shape of this experience, rather than theorizing about (and outside) it. (2015, 192)

[65]Compare: "What sustains us, in belief as in action, is not reason or justification, but something more basic than these—for we go on in the same way even after we are convinced that the reasons have given out. If we tried to rely entirely on reason, and pressed it hard, our lives and beliefs would collapse—a form of madness that may actually occur if the inertial force of taking the world and life for granted is somehow lost. If we lose our grip on that, reason will not give it back to us". (Nagel 1971, 724)

[66]Compare Wittgenstein (2009, §§105–6).

[67]Compare: "[philosophers] act as if they had discovered and arrived at their genuine convictions through the self-development of a cold, pure, divinely insouciant dialectic. . . while what essentially happens is that they take a conjecture, a whim, an 'inspiration' or, more typically, they take some fervent wish that they have sifted through and made properly abstract—and they defend it with rationalizations after the fact. They are all advocates who do not want to be seen as such; for the most part, in fact, they are sly spokesmen for prejudices that they christen as 'truths'". (Nietzsche 2002, 8)

([Nietzsche 2002](), 6)[68] Such a vision is skeptical in Schelling and Cavell's sense, the vision of a truth that is as terrifying as it is difficult.

Acknowledgements

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[68]Compare: "There might even be puritanical fanatics of conscience who would rather lie dying on an assured nothing than an uncertain something. But this is nihilism, and symptomatic of a desperate soul in a state of deadly exhaustion, however brave such virtuous posturing may appear. With stronger, livelier thinkers, however, thinkers who still have a thirst for life, things look different. By taking sides *against* appearance and speaking about 'perspective' in a newly arrogant tone... who knows whether they are not basically trying to re-appropriate something that was once possessed even *more securely*, something from the old estate of a bygone faith, perhaps 'the immortal soul' or perhaps 'the old God', in short, ideas that helped make life a bit better, which is to say stronger and more cheerful than 'modern ideas' can do?... Here, I think, we should give these skeptical anti-realists and epistemo-microscopists their just due: the instinct that drives them away from *modern* reality is unassailable, —what do we care for their retrograde shortcut!" (Nietzsche 2002, 11–12)

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