

PREPRINT. Please cite the final version to be published in Skelac, I., Belić, A (eds.), *What can be shown cannot be said. Proceedings of the International Ludwig Wittgenstein Symposium, Zagreb, Croatia, 2021*, LIT Verlag, Münster 2023, 161-174.

Questioning the Body Certainties between Epistemology and Psychopathologies

Claudio Fabbroni¹

¹ Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Berlin School of Mind and Brain, Unter den Linden 6, Berlin 10099, Germany

`claudio.fabbroni@student.hu-berlin.de`

Abstract. Having a body is one of those unquestionable certainties of which we could not really understand the negation: the latter would not be a legitimate doubt in our linguistic, and therefore the epistemic game. In facts, according to Wittgenstein, contravening certain cornerstones of our language game implies that the used combination of words is being excluded from the game, withdrawn from circulation. The idea of this paper is that the external labelling of a behaviour as a mental illness, *prima facie*, comes from here. Seriously questioning whether someone else controls my actions or my thoughts or whether I am actually dead, then, are not just doubts, as Wittgenstein's critique of G.E. Moore shows: such beliefs are constitutively excluded from our way of seeing the world and characterized as illnesses, anomalies; otherwise, it would be the complete destruction of the language game we inhabit and therefore of the world as we know it, because we would not know on which bases something could be said truthfully or falsely if we did not even know that "this one is my hand". Therefore, even if mental illnesses objectify themselves in correlative physiological dysfunctions, such a discovery comes only after the external recognition of some symptoms, and to recognize the external symptoms of an illness we have to treat them as such; hereby is suggested that we do treat something this way when it threatens the certainties around which the language game we play revolves.

Keywords: Certainty, Doubt, Psychopathology, Wittgenstein, Moore

1. Introduction

Which role is to be given to certainties in a theory of knowledge is an important epistemological question. A notable reason for such a thing is that designating something as certain, as not-doubtable, shapes the world-view of a linguistic community.

Some crucial pages on the matter have been written in the famous debate between George Edward Moore and Ludwig Wittgenstein. They have shown, via different arguments, that there are some beliefs, some certainties, that cannot be questioned if we do not want our world knowledge to fall into the rabbit hole of scepticism and holistic cartesian doubt. However, something fundamental distinguishes Moore and Wittgenstein's epistemological views about certainty: to Moore, these certainties are part of our knowledge, even if they cannot easily and completely be proven; to Wittgenstein, instead, due to this difficulty of proof, they are not something that is possible to know, but something that founds our possibilities of knowing. These different characterisations lead to very different points of view on epistemology and rationality.

This paper's aim is twofold: on the one hand, to demonstrate, through analysing the debate between Moore and Wittgenstein, that certainties are indeed foundational, and therefore undoubtable, for every possible theory of knowledge. On the other hand, going from epistemology to rationality, it claims that the Wittgensteinian approach can shed some light on our social pre-scientific image of what a mental disorder is.

Moorean truisms such as that I have two hands, I am alive, I have a body or that I am the one who moves my own limbs cannot be sensibly doubted without completely uprooting our epistemic acting and so our world-view. In fact, as members of a linguistic community, we do not treat beliefs like the ones listed above as legitimate doubts in our language-game, but as pathological ones, as symptoms of mental disturbance — like Cotard's delusion or delusion of alien control, to refer to some of the previous examples.

The aforementioned claims will be articulated and defended in four sections. The first two sections are devoted to the presentation of Moore's "philosophy of common sense" and to the analysis of the underpinning epistemological stance. In the third one there will be a critical examination of Moore's arguments, presenting Wittgenstein's critique to them, as well as his account of what it means for us to know something and to be certain of something. It will be also discussed what role this last thing plays in our theory of knowledge and in our definition of rationality. The fourth and last section, through the example of some case-studies and mental disorders, will link Wittgenstein's epistemic proposals to the theme of the external recognition of psychopathologies.

PREPRINT. Please cite the final version to be published in Skelac, I., Belić, A. (eds.), *What can be shown cannot be said. Proceedings of the International Ludwig Wittgenstein Symposium, Zagreb, Croatia, 2021*, LIT Verlag, Münster 2023, 161-174.

3

2. The «scandal» of philosophy

At the beginning of his *Proof of an External World*, Cambridge's logician G.E. Moore quotes a famous passage from the *Critique of Pure Reason* in which Kant argues that it is «a scandal to philosophy» that anyone is unable to oppose «any satisfactory proof» to the one who would think of doubting «the existence of things outside us» [4, p. 34]. Moore is keen to emphasise two points in this Kantian view because, although in a different way, he also shares them: that it was (and is) really important that proofs be given, otherwise Kant would not have used the word «scandal», and that «the giving of such a proof was a task that fell properly within the province of philosophy» [10, p. 128].

About this issue, Moore argues that «the most important and interesting thing that philosophers have tried to do» in attempting to define the things outside us is to «give a general description of the *whole* of the Universe, mentioning all the most important kinds of things which we *know* to be in it» [9, p. 1]. In doing so, however, philosophers could not help but confront with the certainties of common sense, first and foremost that which leads us to the certainty that external objects and, therefore, the external world exist, from which «it follows that a description of the Universe that neglects to name or list the things that exist outside us would be at least *incomplete*, while a description that assumes their non-existence would be decidedly *false*» [13, p. 75]. In fact, if this were not the case, «it would then be impossible, in [Moore's] view, to formulate all the propositions we commonly use in everyday life, that are either about an external world, or about one's own and others' bodies and minds, or about space and time» [2, p. 13]. In addition to that, if the philosopher does not succeed in demonstrating these things, he finds himself at a crossroads that leads to two equally embarrassing — and in this sense scandalous — paths: the first is the one of mere faith, in which one simply relies on something whose truth one is not able to establish; the second, first possibility's other side of the coin, is that of radical doubt, in which one doubts everything, since nothing is capable of imposing itself justifiably and conclusively as true.

3. Moore's truisms

Starting from these ideas, in trying to go against such sceptic views, in *A Defence of Common Sense* Moore begins by listing «a whole long list of propositions, which may seem, at first sight, such obvious truisms as not to be worth stating» [10, p. 32]. And, yet, it is of these truisms that Moore is convinced he knows with certainty that they are true. To the set of truisms just outlined belong empirical propositions posed in the first person such as these: there exists at present a living human body, which is my body. This body was born at a certain moment in the past and, although it has

PREPRINT. Please cite the final version to be published in Skelac, I., Belić, A. (eds.), *What can be shown cannot be said. Proceedings of the International Ludwig Wittgenstein Symposium, Zagreb, Croatia, 2021*, LIT Verlag, Münster 2023, 161-174.

4

undergone changes, it has existed since then without interruption. There are also a large number of other living human bodies, which share the characteristics of my body. The earth on which I now stand already existed, and for many, many years, even before my body was born. I am a human being and, since my body has existed, I have had, at different times, many experiences of various kinds. The other human bodies are also bodies of human beings, each of whom, throughout the time of life in his own body, has had many different experiences of the same kind that I have had, *et cetera* [cf. 10, pp. 33-34].

To Moore, what he has said so far is known equally well by other human beings, showing that what the English logician knows is a knowledge shared by all: «Each has frequently [...] known, with regard to *himself* or *his* body and with regard to some time earlier than any of the times at which I wrote down the propositions [listed above], a proposition *corresponding* to each of the propositions [previously exposed], in the sense that it asserts with regard to himself or his body and the earlier time in question [...] just what the corresponding proposition in [that list] asserts with regard to *me* or *my* body and the time at which I wrote that proposition down» [*ibid.*]. Therefore, since the argument that he considers «absolutely conclusive» [*ivi*, p. 37] is simply that the propositions he has so far enumerated we *know* with *certainty* that are obvious, indubitable, *true* for him and for us, and so is the «Common Sense view of the world» [*ivi*, p. 44], Moore also believes that no philosopher who has argued theses that are incompatible with his propositions «has ever been able to hold such views consistently» [*ivi*, p. 40]. How can a sceptic answer to Moore's objections is not the topic of this paper, but it needs to be said that these ideas can be encompassed by radical sceptics in their reasonings without many problems.

In *Proof of an External World* Moore asks whether it is possible to prove the existence of any of the “things outside of us”; to him the answer is not only affirmative, but, actually, many proofs can be given and, indeed, «each of which is a perfectly rigorous proof». Immediately afterwards, he asserts that he «can prove now for instance, that two human hands exist. How? By holding up my two hands, and saying, as I make a certain gesture with the right hand, “Here is one hand”, and adding, as I make a certain gesture with the left, “and here is another”. And if, by doing this, I have proved *ipso facto* the existence of external things, you will all see that I can also do it now in numbers of other ways: there is no need to multiply examples» [*ivi*, pp. 145-146].

This “proof” has been widely discussed and again, for space reasons we will not do the same. What is important to notice, instead, is that to Moore this proof can be rigorous because, he argues, the premises are such that he *knows* with *certainty* that they are true, and does not merely believe it, because they cannot be consistently doubted if we still want to formulate all the propositions we commonly use in everyday life. Indeed, he writes that he has «no doubt conclusive reasons for asserting that I am not dreaming; I have conclusive evidence that I am awake»; but he also

PREPRINT. Please cite the final version to be published in Skelac, I., Belić, A. (eds.), *What can be shown cannot be said. Proceedings of the International Ludwig Wittgenstein Symposium, Zagreb, Croatia, 2021*, LIT Verlag, Münster 2023, 161-174.

5

adds, and this is crucial, «that [this is] is a very different thing from being able to prove it» [ivi, p. 149]. To Moore, «having conclusive reasons in favour of something [...] is not the same as being able to demonstrate it. For him *the field of knowledge is wider than the field of provable knowledge*» [13, p. 130, my italics]. The premises of Moore's proof, therefore, reveal here their strong consonance with the truisms of his previous work: they express precisely this knowledge without proof.

Moore, therefore, appeals to the Kantian position but contrasts it by arguing that it is possible for there to be an ultimately indemonstrable knowledge different from mere faith. Indeed, he argues shortly afterwards, «I can know things that I cannot prove» [10, p. 150]. From his point of view, lastly, the apparently counterintuitive absence of proof for a knowledge so obvious that it would be pointless to even bring up is not a reason for the raising of doubts: the knowledge thus characterised does not make this situation a source of embarrassment, since it itself, by its very constitution, dispenses us from having to demonstrate it.

4. Knowing and believing

These issues began to be critically put under focus by Wittgenstein in the notes he wrote in the last eighteen months of his life, which later took the name *Über Gewißheit (On Certainty)*.

First of all, the Viennese philosopher observes how Moore was «bewitched» by the word «to know» (OC 435), pointing out how he was fascinated by a certain image or model of knowledge that, so to speak, prevented him from really asking himself what «to know» means: that image according to which «“I know” is supposed to express a relation [...] between me and a given fact. So that the fact is taken into my consciousness» (OC 90). According to Wittgenstein, Moore essentially assumes two things: firstly, that «the statement “I know...” can't be a mistake» since it describes «a state of affairs which guarantees what is known [and] guarantees it as a fact»; secondly, that «there can be an inference from such an utterance [“I know that it is so”] to the truth of an assertion [“It is so”]» (OC 12, 21). In fact, from the very first lines of *On Certainty*, Wittgenstein reproaches Moore for having assimilated the concept of knowledge to completely different concepts such as believing or surmising.

When someone tells us that they believe something, it makes no sense whatsoever to doubt that they do not. Of course, one can always think that this person is *lying* to us, but it would be very strange to think that he is *mistaken*, that he is *wrong*, in telling us such a thing. This is true for the concept of believing, but not for the concept of knowing; indeed, the proof of the fact that I believe a certain thing is to say that I *believe* so, but the proof of the fact that I know a certain thing is certainly *not* the fact that I *say* I know it (cf. OC 487). Now, it is possible to say the same thing about

PREPRINT. Please cite the final version to be published in Skelac, I., Belić, A. (eds.), *What can be shown cannot be said. Proceedings of the International Ludwig Wittgenstein Symposium, Zagreb, Croatia, 2021*, LIT Verlag, Münster 2023, 161-174.

6

certainty (cf. OC 308), from which one does not derive at all the truth of what one says one is certain of: «When someone has made sure of something, he says: “Yes, the calculation is right”, but he did not infer that from his condition of certainty. One does not infer how things are from one’s own certainty. Certainty is *as it were* a tone of voice in which one declares how things are, but one does not infer from the tone of voice that one is justified» (OC 30). That is, in its correct use, the notion of «to know» refers to the idea of *compelling grounds* (cf. OC 18), since only these make certainty objective: «“I know” refers to the possibility of proving the truth» (cf. OC 243). What Wittgenstein wants to underline, and fragments like the number 42 of *On Certainty* show it clearly, is that «to know», as opposed to «to believe», «is a *factual* verb: it implies the truth of its complement» [7, p. 153].

Wittgenstein criticizes the mentalist assumption of Moore’s use of «I know», as the latter seems to make the credibility of knowledge depend on the fact that the one who knows has, so to speak, an internal experience of knowledge. In fact, as Annalisa Coliva points out in this regard, «on Wittgenstein’s view, Moore [...] conflates the *psychological* impossibility of doubting [his truisms] with their *logical* – that is to say, *objective* – certainty and treats both doubting and knowing with certainty as two mutually exclusive mental states. That is to say, [...] from realizing that he isn’t – in fact that he finds it psychologically impossible to be – in the mental state of doubting them, Moore concludes that he thereby knows them with certainty» [2, pp. 58-59]. But «an inner experience cannot shew me that I *know* something» (OC 569), and Roberto Casati explains this point particularly well: «We can imagine looking in our mind’s eye at the image of the clock striking five, and after a while — at the end of the event [of which we are keeping time] — going back to look at the image to see where the minute hand is. But what kind of information do we get when we go back to looking at the clock in our imagination? All we can say is that it seems to us that a few minutes have passed — but that is certainly not timekeeping. Why? *The explanation for the strangeness of these procedures is that they lack criteria for checking their results*» [1, p. 204, my italics]. So, when Moore lists everything he «knows» he makes «protestations» (OC 488) which prove nothing at all, except his subjective certainty. There is no point in claiming to know certain things, because every compelling ground that can be given in their favour actually presupposes them; indeed, a clear *petitio principii* can be seen throughout all Moore’s work since, for example, the conclusion he arrives at, according to which there is an external world, must already be assumed in order to have a perceptual defeasible warrant for the assertion «Here is a hand» in the first place.

From Wittgenstein’s point of view, Moore makes a *grammatical mistake* in his reasoning. In fact, in order to provide an adequate premise for his proof that the external world exists, he claims to know that there is a hand here, his hand. But, the Austrian philosopher asks himself, what distinguishes knowing that there is a hand here, my hand, from knowing, for example, that the planet Saturn exists? In the same

PREPRINT. Please cite the final version to be published in Skelac, I., Belić, A. (eds.), *What can be shown cannot be said. Proceedings of the International Ludwig Wittgenstein Symposium, Zagreb, Croatia, 2021*, LIT Verlag, Münster 2023, 161-174.

7

vein, he asks, «why doesn't Moore produce as one of the things that he knows, for example, that in such-and-such a part of England there is a village called so-and-so? In other words: why doesn't he mention a fact that is known to him and not to *every one of us*?» (OC 462). Moore would certainly claim that he knows the one and the other, but this would be a rather dangerous assertion; for why then is he not tempted to present the discovery of the planet Saturn or something even more specific and hitherto only known to him as proof that the external world exists? Perhaps because, Wittgenstein presses, «Moore want[s] to say that knowing that here is his hand is different in kind from knowing the existence of the planet Saturn?» (OC 20). Indeed, Moore's answer seems to *have to* be this. The two kinds of knowledge are different because one of them is indubitable and primary; the second one, in fact, takes on its physiognomy of knowledge only by standing out against the background of an already present language game. In *Proof of an External World*, Moore tries to say something similar, as if to claim that there is an *immediate* game which, given its immediacy, is unquestionable: «How absurd it would be to suggest that I did not know it [i.e.: that knowledge which is expressed in the gesture of raising one's hands saying "Here is one hand, and here and with another hand"], but only believed it, and that perhaps it was not the case!» [10, p. 146]; whereas, it seems to be implied, the hypothesis that I did not really know that there is a planet Saturn would not seem at all absurd since, as Wittgenstein observes in annotation 56, it is not difficult to imagine that one could discover that the luminous phenomenon we had associated with the planet Saturn originated in some other way. But why should the first hypothesis be absurd and the second one only highly improbable? Moore's answer seems to be that, admitting the first hypothesis, one could then «as well suggest that I do not know that I am now standing up and talking — that perhaps after all I am not, and that it is not quite certain that I am!» [*ivi*, pp. 146-147]. In short, Moore's answer could be articulated in the question that if I am not sure of *this*, of *basic* things like these, *what can I really be sure of?*

Here we enter into the heart of one of the most important points of Wittgenstein's last writing. It is to this question that the famous section 151 is connected, which observes that «Moore does not *know* what he asserts he knows, but it stands fast for him, as also for me; regarding it as absolutely solid is part of our *method* of doubt and enquiry». This observation underlies two very important theses of the late Wittgenstein: the idea «which is destructive of an image that represents knowledge as a series of isolated relations between the self and individual facts» [13, p. 147], that what we adhere to in our saying and acting is «not a proposition but a nest of propositions» (OC 225) and that we therefore believe, «not a *single* proposition» but «a whole system of propositions» that «give one another *mutual* support» (OC 141, 142); and, secondly, the interdependent fact that there are propositions from which I cannot depart if I wish to continue playing the language game, propositions which form the foundations of the game and which cannot be denied without, by so doing,

PREPRINT. Please cite the final version to be published in Skelac, I., Belić, A. (eds.), *What can be shown cannot be said. Proceedings of the International Ludwig Wittgenstein Symposium, Zagreb, Croatia, 2021*, LIT Verlag, Münster 2023, 161-174.

8

uprooting from their place all the others and their judgements. Some propositions, from Wittgenstein's point of view, are therefore indubitable and incontestable not because they are «entirely true», but because to contest them would be to «knock from under [our] feet the ground» (OC 492) on which we base our judgements.

The difference between questioning that those are my hands and that the planet Saturn is there, then, consists in the fact that the former does not, as the latter does, bring into play a determinate truth or a particular cognitive content, but rather the very *criteria* of our giving ourselves a cognitive content. In other words, what Moore says he knows to be true with absolute certainty is indeed something fundamental, but a different kind of fundamental from the way he understands it, insofar as questioning it or declaring it false means that one no longer knows «what are “true” or “false” any more», «what is meant by “true” and “false”» (OC 514, 515). Moore's truisms thus appear in a different light: they are propositions that are not “higher” than the human language-game, but propositions that *exhibit its backgrounds, horizons, limits and contours*. In short, truisms draw attention to «what stands fast» (OC 58) for Moore as well as for us, that is to say, to those propositions and judgements that are «exempt[ed] from doubt», that «lie apart from the route travelled by enquiry» (OC 88). In fact, what makes the above particularly interesting is that if Moore doubted that what he was moving were his own hands, we would basically not even be able to understand him, because we would have no idea what it would mean and «what it is like» to discover an error in this sense (OC 32). We would not really be able to understand someone who doubted that he had a body or that his thoughts were really thought by him; if we had these doubts, if we really could not possess these certainties, none of our linguistic and even existential games would be of any value, because everything would slip into the oblivion of doubt and there would no longer be anything of which we could be sure. In fact, Wittgenstein writes that «I cannot doubt these propositions without giving up all my judgement», and, in the same spirit, that «here a doubt would seem to drag everything with it and plunge it into chaos» (OC 494, 613). Such propositions «are indubitable not because they are *proved beyond the shadow of a doubt*, but because they are *not subject to doubt at all*» [11, p. 86], because «about certain empirical propositions no doubt can exist if making judgments is to be possible at all» (OC 308).

That is to say, such certainties have a pivotal role in our language-games, and we implicitly agree on them. For judgements to be possible at all, that is, for deciding that something is true or false, there are some implicit rules of our language-game, neither true or false, but the base on which anything can be labelled as “true” or “false”: «if the true is what is grounded, then the ground is not *true*, nor yet false» (OC 205). Indeed, «a grammar [and so a logic] imposes itself not by conventional choice, but rather because it is grafted onto the natural relations of individuals» [14, p. 49]. *We* agree on these “hinges”, given that we live in and by a certain language game, since «to imagine a language is to imagine a form of life» (PI 19). In Wittgenstein's terms,

PREPRINT. Please cite the final version to be published in Skelac, I., Belić, A. (eds.), *What can be shown cannot be said. Proceedings of the International Ludwig Wittgenstein Symposium, Zagreb, Croatia, 2021*, LIT Verlag, Münster 2023, 161-174.

9

«it is not only agreement in definitions but also (odd as it may sound) in judgments that is required» (PI 242), and this is «agreement not in opinions, but rather in form of life» (PI 241).

Let us try, then, to describe what language-games are and why their relating to forms of life is important. In the first place, it is not possible to give a precise definition of what is a language-game to Wittgenstein, given that it is an *open concept*. (i.e., a notion for which the connotation cannot be precisely specified, such that the things that fall under it do not fulfil defining characteristics). That is to say, there is not an *essence* of the language-game, but a plurality of things that we call “language-games” which are variously waived together: we cannot give a final, essential definition of “game”, and we cannot find «what is common to all these activities and what makes them into language or parts of language [...] but [...] they are related to one another in many different ways. And it is because of this relationship, or these relationships, that we call them all “language”» (PI 65; cf. also PI 66). Therefore, the expression “language-game” is used by Wittgenstein, in the *Philosophical Investigations*, in a non-uniform way, referring, i.e., to imaginary and very simplified situations of very rudimental languages which are useful to underline some aspects of *our* actual language (cf. PI 2, 6, 7); to «specialized» uses of language, connected to some goals or activities (cf. PI 21, 23, 37); but it interests us when it refers to an overall use of language: *our* use of language, as part of our form of life (cf. PI 238, 264). To speak of language as a set of heterogeneous language games emphasises its *praxeological* character [cf. 14, p. 40]: «Here the term “language-game” is meant to bring into prominence the fact that the *speaking* of language is part of an activity, or of a form of life» (PI 23). «In other words, to speak of the use of a word, of an utterance, of an entire language as a linguistic game alludes to the fact that the use of language is not the use made of it by a disembodied subject, but is the use that takes place in a context of activities and customs whose character is eminently *social*» [*ibidem.*], in which therefore a community follows and adheres to certain, even implicit, rules of communication. Of these, the aforementioned certainties are perhaps the most fundamental, cornerstones that are neither written nor necessarily enunciated, but without which the language game we know and experience would collapse.

5. On being in the world, outside of the world

«There cannot be any doubt about it for me as a reasonable person. - That's it. -» (OC 219). In other words, reason shows itself not only in asking and doubting something, but above all in *not* asking and *not* doubting something else, since there are things about which one cannot be mistaken or have false beliefs if one wants to remain within the horizon of meaning. Faced with errors, even disconcerting ones, one could

PREPRINT. Please cite the final version to be published in Skelac, I., Belić, A. (eds.), *What can be shown cannot be said. Proceedings of the International Ludwig Wittgenstein Symposium, Zagreb, Croatia, 2021*, LIT Verlag, Münster 2023, 161-174.

10

still continue to treat them as errors, assuming that there are still reasons why they occurred. In fact, as long as we are talking about an error, when someone makes it, it «can be fitted into what he knows aright» (OC 74). Therefore, writes Anthony J.P. Kenny on this subject, «the difference between the two is [...] that reasons can be given for a mistake — and thus fit the mistake within the realm of what someone knows aright because of, perhaps, a rational justification but unacceptable in our game — but only causes for a mental disturbance» [5, p. 164]. Kenny speaks here of a «mental disturbance» because, if those mistakes become increasingly puzzling or even systematic, I could, or indeed should, stop treating them as mistakes. Perhaps I could begin to think that the person making them is joking, or, rather, I could begin to treat his words as pathological manifestations, as symptoms of some mental issue: «If my friend were to imagine one day that he had been living for a long time past in such and such a place, etc. etc., I should not call this a *mistake*, but rather a mental disturbance, perhaps a transient one» (OC 71). In this case, my behaviour towards him would certainly change: I could ask myself what could be the cause of his reverie, but I would certainly not seriously evaluate its content, since it would not be *what* he is saying that would be investigated, but the one *who* is saying those things. His words would not make any sense to us, they would not be accepted as legitimate moves in our language game because they would undermine some of the hinges on which our game is grounded (cf. PI 500).

««If someone said to me that he doubted whether he had a body I should take him to be a half-wit. But I shouldn't know what it would mean to try to convince him that he had one. And if I had said something, and that had removed his doubt, I should not know how or why» (OC 257). Having a body is one of those unquestionable certainties whose denial we could not really understand; it is, albeit in an unreflective way, at the basis of all our actions as human beings. Proprioception is in fact something indispensable to *our sensing ourselves*, and, indeed, «the body, normally, is never in question: our bodies are beyond question, or perhaps beneath question – they are simply, unquestionably, there» [12, pp. 42-43]. As Maurice Merleau-Ponty puts it: «Bodily space can be distinguished from external space and it can envelop its parts rather than laying them out side by side because it is the darkness of the theater required for the clarity of the performance, the foundation [...], the zone of non-being *in front of which* precise beings, figures, and points can appear» [8, pp. 102-103]. Corporeality is the root, «the first coordinates» [*ibid.*], of our being in the world, and no one can sensibly question this; yet Oliver Sacks expresses himself by saying that «*normally*» this is not in question. But when is it? The neurologist's answer is the same as the one to which Wittgenstein — and Merleau-Ponty as well — is leading us: when reason fails, when, perhaps, a psychopathology arises; in short, when we depart entirely from the normal order of sense. In seriously questioning certain things, Wittgenstein suggests, *we can no longer participate in the language game*, and *within it* we enter the realm of illness. In fact, our «body schema», as Merleau-Ponty

PREPRINT. Please cite the final version to be published in Skelac, I., Belić, A. (eds.), *What can be shown cannot be said. Proceedings of the International Ludwig Wittgenstein Symposium, Zagreb, Croatia, 2021*, LIT Verlag, Münster 2023, 161-174.

11

underlines, is, in the end, «a manner of expressing that my body is in and toward the world» [8, p. 103]; but, to paraphrase Edmund Husserl, we can say that the ones who are mentally ill *do not have* the world as we mean, because without those basic «structures of perception» the «world would not be there for us» [6, p. 51]: we would lose that darkness of the theater required for the clarity of the performance.

Indeed, in the third chapter of his most famous book, *The Man Who mistook His Wife for a Hat*, Oliver Sacks tells the story of Christine, the «disembodied» woman (which very closely resembles the case of Schneider described by Merleau-Ponty [cf. 8, p. 109 ff.]). We are told about her that even after recovering from a «polyneuritis» that had completely taken away her proprioception, «she continues to feel, with the continuing loss of proprioception, that her body is dead, not-real, not-hers – she cannot appropriate it to herself. She can find no words for this state, and can only use analogies derived from other senses: “I feel my body is blind and deaf to itself... it has no sense of itself” [...] in some sense, she is “pithed”, disembodied, a sort of wraith. She has lost, with her sense of proprioception, the fundamental, organic mooring of identity – at least of that corporeal identity» [12, pp. 49-51]. Christine suffers from a neurological impairment, and she has ended up *outside* the language game of people with reason, on the margins, in that logical category of abnormality which in our game falls under the concept of “pathological”. With regard to this discussion, Sacks adds that «her situation is, and remains, a “Wittgensteinian” one. She does not know “Here is one hand” – her loss of proprioception [...] has deprived her of her existential, her epistemic, basis – and nothing she can do, or think, will alter this fact. She cannot be certain of her body» [ivi, p. 52].

On the same wavelength, the one according to which, then, contravening certain cornerstones of our language game implies that the «combination of words is being excluded from the language, withdrawn from circulation» (PU 500), Martin Davies and Max Coltheart point out that the belief — and *pathological* hyperbolic doubt — that I am not alive, that a person who died was standing in line at the Post Office with me and then walking around town, that all my loved ones, despite having the exact same external appearance and behaviour, are in fact replaced by impostors, that someone else is in control of my actions, or that the thoughts in my head are not my own but are inserted by a third person, are *not legitimate doubts* about the world but, in our game, are *symptoms* of psychiatric issues such as, in order, Cotard delusion, delusion of reduplicative paramnesia, Capgras delusion, delusions of alien control and thought insertion, often linked with schizophrenia [3; cf. 11 on wittgensteinian links between 3 and 12]. In short, such doubts are constitutively excluded from our way of seeing the world and characterised as illnesses, anomalies, otherwise it would be the total destruction of the language-game we inhabit and therefore of the world as we know it, making us “loose” the world in that Husserlian sense. That is, what we label as “pathological” is not such in itself, but it is something that we cannot let enter in our epistemic game if we do not want to lose the ungrounded grounds, relied in our

PREPRINT. Please cite the final version to be published in Skelac, I., Belić, A. (eds.), *What can be shown cannot be said. Proceedings of the International Ludwig Wittgenstein Symposium, Zagreb, Croatia, 2021*, LIT Verlag, Münster 2023, 161-174.

12

«ungrounded way of acting» (OC 110), that make each of our linguistic and epistemic acts as they are. And, so, even if psychopathologies have some objective features and damages that can be identified, this discovery comes only after the implicit decision of our being in the world to test those people that go against the foundations of that being in the world; that are, paradoxically, in the world, but somehow outside of it.

Then, these kind of implicit certainties are something that we *need* to found our epistemic behaviour, they are «what shows itself in all our saying, in all our affirming and denying, before any searching and therefore also of every finding and every losing» [13, p. 12]. From here, any kind of doubt that undermines the ungrounded grounds of our world-picture become *pathological doubts* and define the boundaries of psychopathologies, which can be seen as those doubts that, if taken seriously, would make every epistemological, logical and linguistic inquiry senseless, because there would not be anymore something that we can rely on to understand what is the case of. Therefore, for our language game to continue existing, these doubts are banished, and whoever states them seriously and continuously enters in the realm of illness, in the realm of the ones who lost the world.

6. Conclusion

The aim of this paper was two-fold: 1) to demonstrate, via the illustration of the debate between Moore and Wittgenstein, that certainties are not something that we know but something foundational, and therefore undoubtable, for every possible theory of knowledge and 2) to suggest that this approach could also be useful in understanding the way in which we, as human communities, have defined what falls under the concept of “psychopathology”. Regarding the first point, we have seen in the first sections that certainties are not a kind of knowledge, as Moore wanted them to be, because we cannot doubt them or discover them to be false. In fact, to seriously doubt such things and maybe also believe their negation, are not legitimate moves in our language-game since, if they were, our whole epistemic acting would be uprooted, since we could not be sure of anything anymore. Starting from here, regarding the second aim of the paper, we have suggested that, if certainties are those beliefs that cannot be denied if we still want our language-game to make sense — since they found it — the line between “normal” and “abnormal” gets traced when these cornerstones of our language-game get seriously questioned. That is to say, this epistemic treatment could explain our pre-scientific understanding of mental disorders, given that some persistent and hyperbolic doubts are treated by our linguistic community as pathological. This line of reasoning has been shown by analysing through Wittgenstenian lens case-studies such as the “disembodied woman” described by Oliver Sacks and delusions such as Cotard’s or Capgras’ delusion.

PREPRINT. Please cite the final version to be published in Skelac, I., Belić, A. (eds.), *What can be shown cannot be said. Proceedings of the International Ludwig Wittgenstein Symposium, Zagreb, Croatia, 2021*, LIT Verlag, Münster 2023, 161-174.

13

References

1. Casati, R.: Il linguaggio psicologico. In: Marconi, D. (ed.) *Guida a Wittgenstein*, pp. 194-239, Laterza, Roma-Bari (1997); when quoting, translations are mine.
2. Coliva, A.: *Moore and Wittgenstein. Scepticism, Certainty and Common Sense*. Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke (2010).
3. Davies, M., Coltheart, M.: Introduction: Pathologies of Belief. In: *Mind and Language*, 15(1), pp. 1-46, (2000).
4. Kant, I.: *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*. Riga (1787); trans. by Kemp Smith, Macmillan and Co., London (1929).
5. Kenny, A.J.P.: *Wittgenstein*. Penguin, London (1973).
6. Husserl, E.: *Erste Philosophie II (1923-24): Theorie der phänomenologischen Reduktion*. Nijhoff, Den Haag (1959); when quoting, translations are mine.
7. Marconi, D.: *L'eredità di Wittgenstein*. Laterza, Roma-Bari (1987); when quoting, translations are mine.
8. Merleau-Ponty, M.: *Phénoménologie de la perception*. Gallimard, Paris (1945); trans. by D.A. Landes, Routledge, New York (2012).
9. Moore, G.E.: *Some Main Problems of Philosophy*. George Allen & Unwin Ltd., London (1953).
10. Moore, G.E.: *Philosophical Papers*. George Allen & Unwin Ltd., London (1959).
11. Moyal-Sharrok, D.: *Understanding Wittgenstein's On Certainty*. Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke (2004).
12. Sacks, O.: *The Man Who Mistook His Wife For a Hat*. Duckworth, London (1985).
13. Perissinotto, L.: *Logica e immagine del mondo. Studio su Über Gewißheit di L. Wittgenstein*. Guerini e Associati, Milano (1991); when quoting, translations are mine.
14. Voltolini, A.: *Guida alla lettura delle Ricerche Filosofiche di Wittgenstein*, Laterza, Roma-Bari (1998); when quoting, translations are mine.
15. Wittgenstein, L.: *Philosophical Investigations*. G.E.M Anscombe, G.H. von Wright and R. Rhees (eds.); trans. by G.E.M. Anscombe. 2nd edn., Blackwell, Oxford (1958) [PI].
16. Wittgenstein, L.: *On Certainty*. G.E.M Anscombe, G.H. von Wright (eds.); trans. by D. Paul and G.E.M. Anscombe., Blackwell, Oxford (1969) [OC].