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James Conant and Andrea Kern

Introduction: From Kant to Cavell

This volume brings together work by a number of contemporary philosophers, all of whom share the conviction that there is much philosophical gain still to be had from reflection on the sources and nature of skepticism. One might wonder what distinguishes this collection from any number of other volumes on the same subject. After all, the topic of philosophical skepticism has constituted a central part of the professional fare of contemporary philosophers since at least the 1970 s. Whole volumes, conferences, and journals continue to be devoted to it. Yet throughout these copious discussions, one rarely encounters a sense that there is anything deeply *disquieting* about the problem of skepticism. It is generally treated as just one philosophical puzzle among others, a puzzle upon which a professional philosopher might or might not sharpen her analytical teeth. One of several respects in which the contributions to this volume resemble one another more than they do a great deal of other contemporary work on skepticism is that they all share, as a fundamental aspect of their philosophical standpoint, the conviction that the problem of skepticism is *not* just any old philosophical puzzle. Their many disagreements notwithstanding, the philosophers brought together in this volume are united by the following two thoughts: first, that a proper appreciation of the depth of the skeptical challenge must reveal it to be deeply disquieting, in the sense that, although it is first and foremost an *intellectual* puzzle, skepticism threatens not just some set of theoretical commitments, but also—and fundamentally—our very sense of self, world, and other; and second, that skepticism is the proper starting point for any serious attempt (a) to make sense of what philosophy is, and (b) to gauge the prospects of philosophical progress.

Though “skepticism” means different things to different philosophers, it is no mere accident that these varieties of philosophical puzzlement have all come to be labeled “skepticism.” The contributions to this volume are primarily concerned with exploring three such problems: (1) the possibility of knowledge of the external world, (2) the possibility of knowledge regarding the meanings of words and hence the possibility of mutual comprehension (and the related problem of our capacity to go on in the same way in attempting to follow a rule), and (3) the possibility of knowledge of other minds (and thus of our capacity to acknowledge the thoughts and feelings of others). The first of these problems takes center stage in Part One of this volume, the second in Part Two, and the third in Part Three. However, many of the articles contained here draw attention to all

three problems, with those in the final part most consistently concerned to keep all in view at once.

There are three figures in the history of modern philosophy whose work represents the polestars by which our authors navigate their way through this philosophical terrain. Those figures are Kant, Wittgenstein, and Cavell. The essays contained in this volume have been sorted according to their relation to these figures: those concerned most with Kant can be found in Part One, those concerned most with Wittgenstein in Part Two, and those concerned most with Cavell in Part Three. This is not to say that the division is clear-cut. Over half of the contributions bear, prominently, the stamp of all three figures. Thus, judging into which part of the volume a given essay best fits generally came down to weighing the comparative degrees to which the essay manifests the imprint of our three guiding figures. Furthermore, this is not to say that sorting the contributions according to their relation to Kant, Wittgenstein, and Cavell presupposes some clear, overarching understanding of what it means to bear the stamp of one of these figures. On the contrary, a central point of contention in Part One is what it means to claim of a particular philosophical treatment of skepticism that it can properly be said to bear the stamp of Kant. Likewise, the essays in Part Two assume different stances on what it means to take Wittgenstein's teaching about skepticism to heart. Perhaps this kind of disagreement is most explicitly thematized in Part Three, where the central issue in several of the essays is just that of what fidelity to Cavell's response to skepticism requires of its philosophical audience.

These points of contention among our authors are related to another point on which they have differing views—namely, the question of what would constitute a satisfying response to skepticism. To what extent is the philosophical task here primarily a *therapeutic* as opposed to a *theoretical* one? Does philosophical skepticism so much as admit of a theoretical refutation, or does it require some other form of philosophical response? If so, is the response in question one that reveals it to be nonetheless in some way false or mistaken? Or, if skepticism is to be turned back, then is it on some other ground than that of its claim—or lack thereof—to truth? Should the philosophical skeptic's doubt be regarded even as making sense? If not, what does it mean to charge the skeptic with speaking nonsense? What sort of philosophical views does such a charge presuppose? With respect to one or more of these questions, each of our authors disagrees with at least several of the others. In some cases, these disagreements take the form of explicit engagements among or between our contributors. For the most part, however, such disagreements remain implicit, but no less pointed for that.

Part I

The first part of this volume investigates different ways to understand and articulate the lesson to be learned from a Kantian perspective on the problem of skepticism. A central concern of the papers in Part One is the problem of how to understand the very possibility of knowledge, especially knowledge regarding the so-called “external world.” All of the authors in Part One agree on the following point: it was Kant’s ambition to solve external-world skepticism by setting out to undermine its fundamental premise. Our authors disagree, however, not only on how to characterize the supposed premise in question (which, on each of these versions of Kantianism, is taken to constitute the root of epistemological skepticism), but also on the extent to which Kant himself achieved, or the extent to which some modified form of a Kantian position can hope to achieve, its goal, namely, to liberate us from such skeptical problems.

Our authors are at best only secondarily concerned with purely exegetical questions concerning how to interpret the writings of Kant and various post-Kantians. Their primary aim is, first, to develop an account of the skeptical problem that takes its cue from such authors and, second, to offer their own diagnosis of the root of skepticism. In each case, the result is a novel philosophical contribution to the literature, yet one of a form that can be seen to contain either an implicit interpretation of the central point of the Kantian philosophy or an attempt to bend the letter while preserving the spirit of that philosophy. A common thread running through these papers is the effort to develop a philosophical position that manages to avoid skepticism by adumbrating of a *third* (critical) position, one that shows the way beyond the central dilemma haunting this area of philosophy. Put in Kantian terms, the dilemma is that of empiricism and rationalism. Put in more contemporary terms, the dilemma is that of foundationalism and coherentism. For all of their differences, our authors appear, therefore, to be united in the following thought: In order to escape skepticism, one must first find a way to render non-obligatory the apparently inescapable problem of having to choose between the horns of the aforementioned dilemma. The individual philosophical differences between our authors first come strikingly into view at the moment in which each seeks to characterize what is involved in the possibility of maintaining such a “third” position, a position supposedly free of the problematic philosophical commitments that give rise to skepticism. The disagreements here go quite deep. They disagree regarding both how to characterize the details of any properly Kantian diagnosis of the skeptical problem and how to elaborate the details of a successful Kantian treatment. They also differ widely regarding the exegetical question of the extent to which Kant himself managed to furnish the philosophical materials required for such a diagnosis

or treatment. Therefore, the question that lies at the heart of Part One, in the first instance, is not merely whether Kantianism can lay claim to having developed a philosophical route out of or beyond skepticism; rather—and above all—the central question is how we ought to characterize and understand any philosophical approach that is to merit the title of Kantianism.

In his article, “Skepticism After Kant,” Paul Franks explores three forms of skepticism that emerged in the wake of the publication of Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason* in the late-eighteenth century. Franks argues that although Kant intended his transcendental idealism to abolish skepticism, certain central features of his philosophical project turned out to have the opposite effect: they directly contributed to the rise of even more radical forms of skeptical thought than those Kant had sought to answer. In addition, Franks argues that all three of these forms of skepticism remain of contemporary philosophical interest. That this is the case has often been missed because these early reactions to Kant tend to be underestimated in most contemporary narratives of the history of post-Kantian thought.

The first of the three forms of post-Kantian skepticism that Franks brings to our attention is the one thematized by one of Kant’s earliest and most vocal critics, Friedrich Jacobi. Jacobi himself shared Kant’s thought that it was a central task of philosophy to help us avoid skepticism. But he thought Kant had radically failed in this regard. According to Franks, Jacobi’s central point tends to be misunderstood. Jacobi is often mistakenly read as accusing Kant of himself championing a position that amounts to a form of what Kant calls, in “The Refutation of Idealism,” problematic idealism, i.e., the sort of philosophical position that Kant associates with Cartesianism. Against such a reading, Franks reconstructs an interpretation of Jacobi that emphasizes the central role played by the problem of rational justification in his critique of Kant. Jacobi, on this reading, accuses Kant of pushing the demand for justification too far. According to Jacobi, Kant overreaches when he attempts to extend the demand for rational justification to our everyday knowledge-claims. In doing so, Kant destroys our everyday faith in our immediate perceptions of ordinary things, reducing them to mere appearances, whilst bringing it about that the supposedly true “things in themselves” are caused to recede to a position forever beyond our cognitive grasp. Franks suggests that Jacobi’s overall approach to the problem of skepticism is helpfully compared with that of Stanley Cavell. Both philosophers, on Franks’s reading of them, seek to highlight a moment at which philosophical questioning—in attempting to press a demand for the justification of ordinary knowledge-claims beyond the point tolerated by our ordinary practices for entering and assessing such claims—comes upon a point where the demand becomes empty: the philosopher oversteps the moment where such a demand still makes

sense. On this criticism of a certain approach to answering the skeptical challenge—a criticism Franks finds in both Jacobi and Cavell—a form of philosophical questioning that seeks to avoid skepticism by answering its demand for justification is unmasked as in fact, contrary to its own aim, contributing to the intensification of skeptical nihilism—making it seem as if skepticism is the only possible outcome of philosophical reflection.

The problem of rational justification is treated in all the papers that figure in this part of the volume, including Michael Williams's contribution, "Knowledge, Reasons, and Causes: Sellars and Skepticism." In contrast to Franks, who follows Jacobi and Cavell in holding that the problem of skepticism cannot be solved by rational means, Williams undertakes to show that it can be. His paper seeks to uncover an anti-skeptical line of argument inspired by the work of Wilfrid Sellars, whose philosophical approach in turn is explicitly rooted in Kant's theoretical philosophy. In following Sellars, Williams's ambition is to chart a course between the two horns of a fundamental dilemma in epistemology, that of a dogmatic foundationalism, on the one hand, and a coherence theory of knowledge on the other. Just as Kant sought to overcome the dilemma between empiricism and rationalism by developing a third, critical alternative, so Sellars wants to overcome the dilemma between dogmatic foundationalism and a coherence theory of knowledge by developing his own variant of a third way. According to Williams, however, the version of the dilemma Sellars confronts presents a specific kind of obstacle to any such approach. The official position that Williams finds in Sellars is one that concedes a great deal to the empiricist/foundationalist thought that observational knowledge is fundamental to all of our knowledge insofar as it provides a necessary external constraint on the formation of the worldview of the knower. The problem with which Sellars struggles is that a subject of an observational belief must know that her belief-forming mechanism is reliable. She must be able to draw a *reliability inference*. However, the only way she can justifiably do this is on the basis of the very sort of knowledge—i.e., perceptual knowledge—that, we are given to understand, becomes available to her only *through* her drawing such an inference. This difficulty would seem to indicate that Sellars has not actually managed to find a way between foundationalism and coherentism. His account of observational knowledge tilts in a coherentist direction insofar as it would appear to require the following justificatory circle: on the one hand, perceptual knowledge presupposes some prior form of explicit knowledge of the reliability of the subject's belief-forming mechanism, while, on the other hand, the latter sort of knowledge would appear to require perceptual knowledge as its source. Sellars's solution to this problem consists in proclaiming that reliability-knowledge is essential to thinking beings. But this still leaves the question open whether a thinking

being must merely *believe* that she knows herself to be reliable or whether she must actually *know* herself to be reliable. Williams suggests that the proper way to resolve this difficulty is to appreciate the locally situated default-and-challenge character of epistemic justification. The resulting position, which Williams finds intimated in some of Sellars's remarks, is one according to which reliability-knowledge is seen to play a continuously essential role as a background condition on the possibility of perceptual knowledge without necessarily always being relevant as part of the explicit justification of particular instances of such knowledge. Its relevance depends on the context in which the claim to knowledge is made.

A variant of this general form of argumentative strategy, which we might call *epistemological contextualism*, is also adopted by Hilary Putnam in his essay, "Skepticism, Stroud, and the Contextuality of Knowledge." Putnam's primary concern in his paper is to respond to a particular form of objection which has been advanced against such contextualist accounts, most famously by Barry Stroud. The argumentative aim of Putnam's article is to demonstrate that if Stroud's attack on the very possibility of the contextual character of knowledge were to go through, it would entail a form of wholesale skepticism that we ought to find untenable. Putnam is happy to concede that under ordinary circumstances we take the claim, "I know that p," to imply the further commitment that the speaker is in a position to exclude possible doubts concerning the truth of p. The key to a sane contextualism, according to Putnam, is to appreciate that this commitment extends not to every possible doubt that might overturn p, but only to a certain class of contextually relevant doubts. Since every reasonable doubt presupposes a determinate question, each ground for doubt must rest on a reasonable basis; in this respect, grounds for doubt function just as claims to knowledge do. In objecting to this form of contextualism, Stroud argues that even if one has the most favorable grounds for the claim, "I know that p," it is still possible that p will be overturned by an unlikely and unforeseeable event E, in which case the corresponding knowledge claim will be rendered false. Hence, the mere conceivability of E suffices to defeat the knowledge-claim. We may say that the speaker's claim was perfectly reasonable when assessed by our everyday standards for entering such claims, but this does not gainsay the fact that it turned out to be false. Since we are never in a position to exclude every possibility of overturning p (e. g., the possibility that we may be dreaming, or that we are deceived by Descartes's evil demon), Stroud's point would seem to concede the game to the epistemological skeptic. (It should be noted that Stroud's own point is not that epistemological skepticism is true, but only that contextualist approaches underestimate the strength of the skeptic's position.) Putnam claims that the manner of deploying the expression "to know" that Stroud goes in for in

his attempt to bring out the strength of the skeptic's position is in fact a case of language going on a holiday: The expression is here employed outside of any determinate context of use that could confer a definite meaning on it. Why would language ever contain an expression whose employment requires truth conditions of such a sort that they obviously can never be met? The skeptic's understanding of "to know" seems to rely on a conception of the meaning of the expression that transcends every actual employment of the term, while at the same time failing to specify how it is that we are so much as able to understand something determinate by the expression in question.

The papers by Andrea Kern and Sebastian Rödl are united in taking up an equally critical perspective towards both skepticism, on the one hand, and contextualist responses to the skeptic, on the other. They both take their cue from the Kantian thought that the deadlock between skeptical and anti-skeptical philosophical positions are to be traced to common philosophical assumptions shared by both parties in the dispute, making the truth in each apparently unreconcilable with the truth of the other. Thus, the fundamental task remains one of diagnosing the philosophical root of the dispute.

Andrea Kern's paper, "Why Do Our Reasons Come to an End?", critically examines the idea present in much contemporary philosophy (and exemplified in this volume by the positions advocated by Franks, Williams, and Putnam), namely, the idea that the crucial misstep that plunges the skeptic into doubt consists in his misconceiving the ideal of knowledge. The skeptic, according to this line of criticism, operates with an overly demanding conception of justification, one in which the ideals of certainty and indefeasibility are accorded a false privilege. For finite beings such as us, this cannot be an appropriate ideal of knowledge. Our ideal of knowledge is to be properly adumbrated in more modest terms—for example, in the sorts of terms that the contextualist allows for, when she proposes that something less than an indefeasible form of warrant may suffice to justify our knowledge-claims. Andrea Kern argues that one cannot overcome philosophical skepticism by correcting its conception of the ideal of knowledge in this way. Following a line of thought she traces back to Kant, Kern suggests that the skeptic does not entertain a false conception of our *ideal* of knowledge. Rather, he goes wrong in his manner of conceiving of our *finitude*. On Kern's reading, Kant wants to say that the skeptic is a skeptic not because he overestimates our ideal of knowledge, but because he underestimates our finitude. The skeptic considers our susceptibility to error to be the deepest characteristic of our finitude, and therefore thinks of our finitude as an epistemological matter, one which characterizes the nature of our grounds for knowledge. According to a proper Kantian perspective, Kern argues, we are finite not (merely) because we are capable of error, as the skeptic (as well as the contextualist) concedes, but

rather because we depend on the world to provide us with sensory appearances in order to be so much as able to entertain beliefs about the world in the first place. That the human intellect has finite knowledge does not mean that he can only finitely justify his beliefs; rather, it means that his beliefs have the sort of content they do only in virtue of a justification that ends in a claim about the world, a claim whose standing depends upon the fact that the world itself has first sensuously impressed something upon him.

In a different but related vein, Sebastian Rödl argues against the contextualist answer to the problem of how to deal with the so-called regress of justification we seem to face whenever we try to justify our knowledge-claims. On a contextualist's view, as Rödl presents it, the skeptic falsely assumes that a subject cannot know anything if she cannot exclude all grounds for doubting that which she purports to know. Knowledge merely requires that she be capable of excluding those grounds that are relevant or justified. Rödl rescues the skeptic's assumption from the contextualist's attack by showing that grounds for knowledge cannot claim to be sufficient when they exclude some but not all grounds for doubt. If a putative ground of knowledge leaves some grounds for doubt untouched, as it sometimes must (e.g., regarding claims to know how the dice will roll), it cannot be considered a sufficient ground for knowledge. Rödl locates the skeptic's mistake elsewhere, namely, in the assumption that one's ground for knowledge may be the same in situations in which one has knowledge and in situations in which one fails to know. A sufficient ground for knowledge must be a ground for thinking that a general truth bears on a particular case (e.g., that in general, one's faculty of perception operates normally, and that this is an instance of its operation). When a particular situation is not as the general truth specifies, then one does not have a sufficient ground. Whether I have a sufficient ground thus depends on the situation in which I find myself. The finitude of human knowledge, Rödl suggests, consists not in any inability to exclude grounds for doubting whether one has knowledge, as both the skeptic and the contextualist assume, but in the situation-dependence of all (empirical) grounds for knowledge.

Part II

Part Two of this volume investigates Wittgenstein's contribution to our understanding of the problem of philosophical skepticism. The particular form of skepticism that lies at the heart of Cora Diamond's article is the same as that which concerned our authors in Part One, namely, epistemological skepticism. The other papers in this part of the volume—those by Wellmer, Stone, and Bridges

—focus instead on skepticism about meaning and rule-following. All four papers, however, are concerned to one extent or another with the general philosophical question of the nature of skeptical problems and what is involved in making progress with them, as well as with the more narrowly focused exegetical question of whether Wittgenstein himself managed to furnish us with the philosophical resources required to make such progress. Wellmer thinks that Wittgenstein's suggestion for how to make progress with such problems is in an important respect flawed. The other three authors are concerned to bring out how certain apparent flaws in Wittgenstein's treatment of skeptical problems arise from a misunderstanding of both what he thought those problems were and what would count as offering a satisfactory response to them. (Stone, in particular, is concerned to bring out how something Wellmer sees as a flaw in Wittgenstein's response to skepticism about rule-following is essential to its success.) Though none of our four authors in this part of the volume draw explicit connections between Kant and Wittgenstein, there are numerous parallels in philosophical concern and approach that unite the essays in Part Two with those in Part One, not least their common effort to provide a diagnosis of the true source of skeptical perplexity that is sufficiently deeply grounded to permit certain familiar forms of philosophical impasse to come to an end.

Cora Diamond's paper concerns Wittgenstein's ideas about skepticism at the time he was writing his early *Notebooks* and the *Tractatus*. According to Diamond, Wittgenstein means to respond in these texts to Russell's attitude towards skepticism, i. e., to his claim that universal scepticism is irrefutable. Wittgenstein links this skeptical claim with Russell's conception of philosophical method, both of which he seeks to reject. In particular, Russell thinks of skepticism on the model of a hypothesis considered within the sciences, which may or may not fit the data. The mistake here is not merely that Russell models philosophy on scientific method, but that he also misunderstands scientific method as working with 'ordinary generalizations.' According to Wittgenstein's early philosophy, the generality of scientific statements, like those to which philosophy aspires, is different in kind. Unlike ordinary generalizations, scientific generalizations are not complete specifications of truth-conditions, but rather serve a different sort of use. This shifts the question about skepticism away from a dispute about what entities there are to a dispute about the use served by talk about what entities there are. This yields quite a different account of Wittgenstein's response to skepticism than that which is commonly found in the secondary literature on his philosophy. Wittgenstein's response to skepticism does not involve first assuming that the skeptic is attempting to make an ordinary generalization about the non-existence of objects, and then going on to object to that generalization on the grounds that it violates some supposed principles about meaning-

fulness whose special standing Wittgenstein seeks to uphold. Rather, what Wittgenstein wants us to see is that the skeptic has not determined the use that his words are intended to have and has thus failed to say anything with them. Such a form of criticism of the skeptic does not require that we first ascribe to Wittgenstein an attachment to some general set of principles for when words mean something and when they do not.

In his essay "Skepticism in Interpretation," Albrecht Wellmer discusses the hermeneutic skepticism concerning the possibility of understanding the true meaning of the spoken and written word within a linguistic community. Wellmer's discussion takes its point of departure from Wittgenstein's arguments against a form of skepticism that makes it appear as if there is no such thing as genuinely sharing in a common understanding of what words mean and in what it would be to go one using them in the same way. Wittgenstein's approach to avoiding the skeptical impasse is to insist that there is a way of grasping a rule that is not an interpretation, and that in such cases we follow the rule blindly. Wellmer parts ways with Wittgenstein on this point, however, insisting that interpretation is indeed the key to understanding how it is that we are able to share a language. Recalling arguments by Kripke and Davidson, Wellmer argues that the concepts of meaning and understanding presuppose the priority of the second-person perspective, hence that meaning is always subject to contextual interpretation. As a skeptical consequence, the plurality of perspectives and ambiguous contexts lead to the possibility of infinite misunderstanding. Consequently, hermeneutic skepticism expresses the concern that we can never get a grip on the real meaning of words and thus that our interpretative understanding could always appear to be nothing more than arbitrary. Wellmer's rebuttal of this hermeneutic skepticism is twofold. First, he denies its core presupposition of objective meaning existing behind linguistic representation. If understanding always asks for an act of interpretation, why should we assume the existence of real meaning beyond interpretation? The presupposition of objective meaning needs justification before it can provide the ground for a skeptical doubt. Secondly, in order to meet the concern of arbitrariness, Wellmer discusses the possibility of a standard of correctness for interpretation. Our understanding follows the hermeneutic principle of intelligibility that only allows for content that is subject to debate within our social space of reason. This space limits interpretation in a threefold manner: through our use of words, through the particular communicative situation, and through a narrative context. Wellmer denies the existence of an Archimedean point with which to judge understanding outside of this very process of interpretation; rather, he relies on the internal normative standard of a linguistic community to disarm the hermeneutic skeptic.

Whereas Wellmer holds that no understanding is possible without interpretation, Martin Stone, in his paper, denies precisely this. He discusses the claim implicitly shared by many authors that an act of interpretation (of rules, texts, etc.) is a condition for every act of understanding. This is the position that Stone calls “interpretivism.” While Wellmer is of the view that it must be possible to develop a form of interpretivism that is free of skeptical consequences, Stone is concerned to show, on the contrary, that merely conceding the opening assumption of interpretivism is already sufficient to give the skeptic what he most desires. Interpretivism, according to Stone, is based on the thought that rules are, in a fundamental sense, unable to determine the particular case that falls under them. Stone argues that interpretivism is based on a misunderstanding of the nature of rules. He argues that it is constitutive of rules that we consider them as immediately guiding, i.e., as applicable without interpretation. If there are no cases with respect to a rule for which it is immediately guiding, then we cannot think of there being any rule in play at all. Hence, the idea that rules are as such indeterminate with respect to particular cases mistakes a secondary phenomenon for the general case. Rules do sometimes require interpretation. This is a phenomenon that is made possible against the background of cases in which it would be possible for us to follow the rule in question without interpretation. The interpretivist misunderstands this basic concept of ‘rule’ because she regards uncertainty about the sense of a rule as generally operative in the understanding of rules. Stone suggests, following Wittgenstein, that one source of this misunderstanding is a “queer picture of rules,” according to which the way in which they are to determine an action is not “normative,” but “mechanical.” Stone attempts to clear up this misunderstanding by suggesting that the correct manner in which to conceive of the clarity of rules has to do not with the way in which they determine each particular action, but in the sense in which they prescribe an “action type.”

Jason Bridges is concerned to understand and lay bare the philosophical importance of the same stretch of sections in Wittgenstein’s *Philosophical Investigations*, those on rule-following, that play a central role in Wellmer’s and Stone’s papers. His focus and interest, however, lie to some extent elsewhere. In his contribution, “Rule-Following, Properly So Called,” Bridges takes on Saul Kripke’s famous “rule-following paradox.” On his view, the real source and nature of Kripke’s skeptical paradox have been largely misunderstood. In contrast to previous commentators, he claims that the central target of the paradox is the idea of rational explanation, i.e., explanations that account for what people do by giving their reasons for doing so. More particularly, he argues that the paradox arises from what he calls “the guidance conception” of such explanations, according to which a person’s grasp of her own reasons involves a mental item

that guides her performance. According to Bridges, conceiving of the skeptical paradox in these terms not only yields a better understanding of Kripke's text, it also allows for an appreciation of the real scope and depth of the skeptical problem. Moreover, it allows us to understand Wittgenstein's appeal to practices and customs in his own discussions of rule-following as challenging the intuitions that fuel the guidance conception of rational explanation.

Part III: After Cavell

Part Three of this volume investigates the understanding of skepticism at work in the writings of Stanley Cavell. The first two papers, by Stephen Mulhall and Steven Affeldt, are in direct conversation with each other (and, indeed, represent a continuation of an ongoing dialogue). Their topic is directly related to the papers by Wellmer, Stone, and Bridges in Part Two, namely, the place of rules in Wittgenstein's vision of language. This aspect of Wittgenstein's work takes on a remarkable and renewed significance in the light of Cavell's interpretation of Wittgenstein's account of how criteria allow us to share our lives in and through language. Yet, as the first two papers in this section clearly bring out, there is considerable space for disagreement about what the role of criteria are in this vision of language and how it relates to Cavell's overall response to skepticism. Whereas both Mulhall and Affeldt seek to defend Cavell's account of criteria (while disagreeing with one another over what Cavell's view of the matter actually is), the last paper in this part of the volume, by Simon Glendinning, takes issue with a fundamental aspect of that account. Christoph Menke, in his contribution, is also interested in Cavell's treatment of skepticism, but rather than concentrating on Cavell's interpretation of Wittgenstein (as our other authors in this part of the volume do), Menke shifts the focus to Cavell's reading of Shakespeare and the light it sheds on the nature of skeptical problems. The penultimate paper in this part of the volume, by Arata Hamawaki, nicely ties together themes that run not only through this section of the volume, but through the volume as a whole, revealing the degrees of alignment and misalignment between Cavell's treatment of skepticism and those of Kant and Wittgenstein.

In his paper "Inner Constancy, Outer Variation: Stanley Cavell on Grammar, Criteria, and Rules," Mulhall seeks to flesh out the vision of language in the work of Wittgenstein and Cavell by showing how this vision of language is at work in their responses to a particular form of skeptical perplexity, namely, that which arises from reflecting on how it could be that we are entitled to use words in one way rather than another. Mulhall argues that many critics of Wittgenstein's view of language as normative, i. e., as rule-governed, tend to misunderstand the

form of normativity in question. Both defenders and critics of Wittgenstein alike tend to presuppose that Wittgenstein envisions our use of words as guided by the sort of rules that could be codified in a book. Mulhall follows Cavell in seeing this as a misunderstanding of the sort of normativity Wittgenstein has in mind. The misunderstanding makes it appear as if it were possible to adjudicate disagreements over the legitimacy of the use of a word by appealing to an external, impersonal authority. Mulhall claims that, on the contrary, what is needed—and what Wittgenstein and Cavell both seek to provide—is a way of looking at our lives with language that is able, on the one hand, to accord a proper place to the ways in which a speaker must herself assume responsibility for the particular uses of language she makes and accepts in others, while, on the other hand, remaining sensitive to the almost unimaginable range and systematicity that govern these exercises of responsibility. According to Mulhall, such a conception is found in Cavell's notion of the grammatical schematism of words. It entails that concepts essentially possess both 'inner' constancy and 'outer' variation. Concepts possess 'inner' constancy in that they implicitly possess criteria locating them in a system of concepts that informs and is informed by our human forms of life. They possess 'outer' variation in that judgments regarding the correct projections of concepts are highly context-specific and dependent upon the speaker's individual capacity to justify her uses of concepts in these contexts.

In his paper, "The Normativity of the Natural," Affeldt scrutinizes Mulhall's account of Wittgenstein's and Cavell's philosophies of language. Affeldt claims that Mulhall's focus on rules and rule-following misinterprets Wittgenstein and Cavell and also fails to provide an adequate representation of the normativity of language-use. Affeldt aims to reject Mulhall's theses on the basis of three objections. First, Affeldt denies Mulhall's claim that Wittgenstein's discussion of rule-following is meant to provide an account of linguistic meaning. According to Affeldt, it is no part of Wittgenstein's ambition to provide a substantive philosophical theory of such matters. Such a theory would try to solve problems and answer questions that are themselves based on an unjustified skepticism regarding our natural practices. Second, Affeldt questions Mulhall's claim that our uses of language are essentially cases of rule-following. Rather, Affeldt takes Wittgenstein and Cavell to argue that rule-based conceptions of language fundamentally distort our understanding of human language and of our life with and in language. There are many types of normative practices that can be retrospectively described by rules even though rules play no role in our partaking in these practices. Third, Affeldt argues that Mulhall's conception of rules is incoherent, since Mulhall oscillates between a strong characterization of rules as essential determinants of our uses of language and a weak characterization of rules as open, flexible, and without any final authority. Affeldt argues that this view leaves us with

no resources for understanding how disagreements about how to use language are to be resolved. For Affeldt, any such approach to problems in the philosophy of language remains locked within a form of skepticism unable to come to terms with the way in which language simply is part of our natural history as human animals and is spoken essentially by embodied, desiring creatures—a form of skepticism against which Wittgenstein’s work is recurrently directed.

In his essay “Tragedy and Skepticism: On *Hamlet*,” Menke’s engagement with Cavell’s work is less explicit than is that of the other three authors in their contributions to Part Three, but it is no less indebted and sustained. Menke not only shares Cavell’s interest in the relation between skepticism and tragedy, and more particularly in the particular understanding of the sources and nature of skepticism that are in play in Shakespearean tragedy, but he also follows Cavell in thinking that Shakespearean tragedy itself constitutes nothing less than an investigation of the modern skeptical attitude. In this essay, Menke seeks to highlight the complex contours of the form of skepticism on display in Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*. According to Menke, tragedy in general “replaces trust and confidence with doubt and uncertainty” and, in this sense, gives expression to and has consequences for a certain form of skepticism. In classical tragedies, skepticism takes on a particularly *practical* form, calling into question our ability to act successfully and to lead a self-determined life. Modern tragedies, on the other hand, seem to be concerned, not with our practical capacities, but with the failure of our epistemic capacity to know; they give expression to an *epistemic* skepticism. On the surface, what seems to corrode Hamlet’s capacity for successful action is his epistemic uncertainty, his lack of secure knowledge. According to Menke, however, the relationship between practical and epistemic skepticism in *Hamlet* is far more complex. For, he argues, *Hamlet* presents a kind of genealogy of modern epistemological skepticism. In a first step, epistemic uncertainty is shown to be the consequence of what Menke calls Hamlet’s “attitude of reflective spectatorship.” Such a reflective attitude makes the search for certainty both necessary and, at the same time, unrealizable. It is thus the ground of epistemic skepticism. In a second step, however, this attitude is itself traced back to a form of *practical* uncertainty. For, on Menke’s view, the question as to what role we should accord to the attitude of reflection is itself a practical question; and the essential tragic experience in *Hamlet* consists in the absence of any ground upon which this question could be rationally decided.

In his paper “Cavell, Scepticism, and the Idea of Philosophical Criticism,” Arata Hamawaki undertakes to draw a parallel between Kant’s treatment of the problems of special metaphysics in the transcendental dialectic and Cavell’s treatment of skepticism. Just as for Kant the idea of definite answers to metaphysical questions is based on a transcendental illusion that leads to unavoida-

ble contradictions when trying to answer them, so skepticism and traditional attempts at its refutation rest on the illusion that the skeptic can make himself intelligible by means of criteria that govern the use of his concepts. Hamawaki's aim in drawing this parallel is to lay bare the precise extent of Cavell's inheritance of the idea of Kantian critique. He makes perspicuous just where Cavell follows Kant's model and locates the exact moments at which Cavell is compelled to depart from it, and why. He thereby seeks to illuminate both the nature of Cavell's unique engagement with skepticism and the special conception to philosophy that arises from and informs this engagement.

In the final paper in Part Three, "Cavell and Other Animals," Simon Glendinning expounds his understanding of human finitude on the basis of an appreciative yet critical reading of Cavell's interpretation of Wittgenstein's conception of the role of "criteria" in our understanding of concepts. On the one hand, Glendinning follows Cavell in rejecting the standard, or epistemological, interpretation of Wittgensteinian criteria. According to this interpretation, the point of Wittgenstein's appeal to criteria is to provide for a novel form of refutation of skepticism concerning other minds, enabling us to attain *certainty* about inner states or events on the basis of outer states or events. As opposed to this, Cavell sees the role of Wittgensteinian criteria as one of determining the application of concepts employed in statements about the inner states of others rather than as one of establishing some form of certainty with regard to the existence of those states. Glendinning's dissatisfaction with Cavell's account of these matters sets in at the point in Cavell's account where he insists that the capacity to convene and master such criteria is something that is exclusively the concern of human animals. As Glendinning sees it, this is a sign of the extent to which Cavell continues to be captivated by a traditional classical humanist picture—one which introduces an overly sharp distinction between human and non-human animals—a picture which renders the nature of our own human animality incomprehensible. In contrast, Glendinning wants to get clear about a dimension of our lives that, while not being exclusive to human beings, is central to our animal finitude and which can neither be accounted for by reductive naturalism nor by classical humanism. This dimension can be seen in forms of interaction between humans and non-human animals that display an uncanny mutual understanding and thereby suggest that criteria have application beyond the human province.

The volume as a whole seeks to bring out the varieties of forms of philosophical skepticism that have continued to preoccupy philosophers for the past of couple of centuries, as well as the specific varieties of philosophical response that these have engendered – above all, in the work of those who have sought to take their cue from Kant, Wittgenstein, or Cavell – and to illuminate how these various philosophical approaches are related to and bear upon one another.