

Article

The ‘Local’ Nature of Religious Hinges and the Problem of ‘Honest Doubt’

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Abstract

I briefly address Duncan Pritchard’s ‘parity argument’ and argue that it should be pared down to parity between religious hinges and *local* hinges. I then object to Pritchard’s notion of ‘honest doubt’ as ‘religious epistemic vertigo’ to account—in the context of a Wittgensteinian epistemology—for the doubt that is often at the heart of religious belief. I argue that the ‘local’ nature of religious hinges offers a more plausible account.

Keywords: *On Certainty*; hinge epistemology; religion; relativism; epistemic vertigo

[Wittgenstein] was impatient with ‘proofs’ of the existence of God, and with attempts to give religion a rational foundation. (Norman Malcolm 2018, p. 650)

1. Pritchard’s Parity Argument

Hinge epistemology is a relatively new branch of philosophy inspired by Ludwig Wittgenstein’s view in *On Certainty* that ‘the questions that we raise, and our doubts, depend on the fact that some propositions are exempt from doubt, are as it were like hinges on which those turn’ (OC 341). As Wittgenstein concludes, our foundational, indubitable certainties—or ‘hinges’, as they have come to be called—are not objects of knowledge. Not arrived at through reasoning, they are neither true nor false but rather constitute the arational (as in ‘not founded’ (OC 253) ‘ungrounded’ (OC 110) or ‘animal’ (OC 359)) ground (basis) from which we can reason, doubt and inquire (OC 151; 115)¹.

In recent publications, Duncan Pritchard has applied hinge epistemology to the epistemology of religion, seeing a parity between the arational foundations of religion and Wittgensteinian hinge certainties, inspiring what he calls ‘quasi-fideism’:

[...] quasi-fideism argues that a subject’s basic religious commitments are hinge commitments and hence, like all hinge commitments, are essentially arational. (Pritchard 2022, p. 1)

The parity argument offered by quasi-fideism [...] appeals to the fundamentally arational nature of everyday belief in order to defend the fundamentally arational nature of religious belief. Yes, religious belief has at its heart arational hinge commitments, but this cannot be an objection to the rationality of religious belief if it is true that belief in general has at its heart arational hinge commitments. (Pritchard Forthcoming, note 9)

And so, just as all our questions and answers can only be formulated on the basis of some indubitable, arational certainties, so can fundamental religious beliefs be considered arational, without this being a flaw or a unique trait:



Academic Editor: Sebastian Sunday Grève

Received: 14 August 2025

Revised: 7 September 2025

Accepted: 8 September 2025

Published: 15 September 2025

Citation: Moyal-Sharrock, Daniele. 2025. The ‘Local’ Nature of Religious Hinges and the Problem of ‘Honest Doubt’. *Religions* 16: 1185. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel16091185>

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We are thus led to a distinctive account of the epistemology of religious commitment, which I call quasi-fideism. Like fideism, it holds that the epistemology of religious commitments must allow for the fact that fundamental religious convictions are essentially arational in kind. But unlike fideism, it does not epistemically ‘ghettoise’ religious belief, but rather treats it as analogous to believing more generally. (Pritchard 2018, p. 10)

Quasi-fideism, then, ‘demand[s] that ‘religious belief be held to no more demanding an epistemic standard than we would apply to non-religious belief’ (Pritchard 2015, p. 8).

Annalisa Coliva objects to Pritchard’s parity argument by pointing to the difference in consequence between relinquishing a hinge commitment and relinquishing a religious belief:

[. . .] clearly, in the non-religious case, if it turned out that we cannot hold on to our hinges, this would open the door to forms of radical skepticism which would drag with them all our epistemic methods by means of which we form epistemically rational beliefs. By contrast, in the religious case, we would certainly receive an existential blow, but nothing detrimental to the proper exercise of our rational faculties. That is, one might lose hope or faith in the meaningfulness of life, or in the possibility of being reunited with one’s loved ones in an afterlife. Yet, one would not lose the ability to form evidentially justified belief and, with it, a grip on epistemic rationality altogether. [. . .] Thus, there is no real ‘parity argument’ on offer between religious and non-religious belief capable of salvaging the epistemic rationality of the former, which we may evince from Pritchard’s interpretation of Wittgenstein’s OC. (Coliva 2025, p. 4)

I think two distinctions need to be made in reply to Coliva in order to save the day for Pritchard. Pritchard makes one distinction but not the other. The distinction he makes is that between ‘incidental religious beliefs’ and ‘religious hinge commitments’. Not all arational religious beliefs are comparable to hinge certainties, but only religious *hinge* commitments/certainties. This distinction partially saves the day in that it shows that Pritchard’s parity argument is a tighter fit than Coliva claims for it ensures that not all religious hinges are as easily giveupable as she suggests. This takes us to the distinction Pritchard does not make. It is a distinction I make, based on *On Certainty*, between ‘local’ and ‘universal’ hinges². On my view, religious hinges are ‘local’, not ‘universal’. That distinction, then, saves Pritchard’s parity argument, albeit in a pared down version, from the pitfalls described by Coliva. As I will argue, even religious *hinges* are not comparable to Wittgensteinian hinges *generally*; they can only be compared to ‘local’ hinges. Seeing parity between religious hinges and local hinges—or, indeed, understanding that religious hinges can only be local hinges, not universal hinges—will not only leave our ‘grip on epistemic rationality’ unimpaired but also prevent the unleashing of radical scepticism otherwise rightfully feared by Coliva.

I develop the two distinctions needed to save the probity of Pritchard’s parity argument in the next two sections. In the final section, I describe Pritchard’s introduction of ‘honest doubt’ to accommodate religious doubt in hinge epistemology of religion and find that it does not do the job. Here again, I argue, *local* hinges save the day. Because local hinges are giveupable through erosion, they suffice to cater to the emergence of doubt in hinge epistemology of religion.

2. What Can Be Called a Religious Hinge?

Pritchard makes a distinction between ‘incidental religious beliefs’—which can be rationally scrutinised—and ‘religious hinge commitments’ (or ‘religious convictions’) (Pritchard 2018, p. 9):

By this, I have in mind those religious commitments that are fundamental to a religious life, as opposed to merely incidental religious beliefs that come with a religious life. For example, that God exists, or that miracles can occur would be natural instances of the former, whereas beliefs about, say, the more arcane elements of religious teaching would be natural instances of the latter. (Pritchard 2018, pp. 1–2)

Note that Pritchard’s distinction is a staple of hinge epistemology. The distinction appears in *On Certainty* as Wittgenstein distinguishes ‘subjective’ from ‘objective’ certainty. Ordinary belief or certainty is what he calls ‘subjective certainty’—where ‘[w]ith the word “certain” we express complete conviction, the total absence of doubt, and thereby we seek to convince other people’ (OC 194); whereas objective certainty is a certainty that *logically* excludes mistake:

But when is something objectively certain? When a mistake is not possible. But what kind of possibility is that? Mustn’t mistake be *logically* excluded? (OC 194)

While some readers of *On Certainty* speak of ‘objective certainty’ either exclusively or in alternance with ‘hinge certainty’, I prefer to speak only of ‘hinge certainty’³. But let us return to Pritchard’s distinction between religious hinge convictions and incidental religious beliefs:

The point is that one’s religious convictions play an indispensable part in what it is to be a religious believer at all, such that one cannot lose very many of them (if any) without losing one’s faith altogether. One’s incidental religious beliefs are not like this. One can alter quite a lot of these—and, indeed, over the course of one’s life one probably will—while still retaining one’s faith. [...] in order to develop a suitable epistemology of religious belief we need to be sensitive to this distinction. (Pritchard 2018, p. 2)

Pritchard’s distinction between incidental religious beliefs and religious convictions narrows down his parity argument in that it excludes the former. Incidental religious beliefs are not like hinges; they do not make or break one’s faith. Whereas religious convictions, unlike religious beliefs, are a necessary, or logical, component of one’s faith, losing them is losing one’s faith. So that, *contra* Coliva, there is ‘a real “parity argument” on offer between religious and non-religious belief capable of salvaging the epistemic rationality of the former, which we may evince from Pritchard’s interpretation of Wittgenstein’s OC’ (Coliva 2025, p. 4). However, as I shall argue in the next section, the argument needs to be finessed: the parity is not between religious convictions and all hinges, but only between religious convictions and local hinges.

Before moving to the next section, we should note that Pritchard has recently changed his mind regarding ‘God exists’, preferring something ‘more visceral’, like ‘God loves me’, to represent religious hinge commitments:

It is usually assumed that if there are religious hinge commitments, then one of them will be a commitment to the proposition ‘God exists’⁴. I don’t think this is a plausible candidate to be a hinge commitment, however, as it is far too abstract and theoretical in nature. Accordingly, I doubt that the kind of visceral certainty that Wittgenstein is describing, and which on a quasi-fideistic view would be manifest as regards fundamental religious commitments, would

attach itself to this claim. A more promising example would be something that captures the personal relationship one bears to God, such as that God loves me. (Pritchard Forthcoming, note 9)

But I don't see that the visceral nature of hinge certainty is any more or less visceral depending on its object: hinge certainty is visceral/animal *period*, but its object needn't be visceral. The non-visceral nature of the laptop I am using to type these words does not lessen my hinge certainty of its existence.

There are many definitions of religion but let us narrow down the field to 'theistic religion' which, by definition, implies the belief that (at least one) god exists⁵. This would make the belief that (at least one) God exists *sine qua non* to being religious. So let us consider 'God exists' as our token religious hinge.

3. Religious Hinges Are Local

In 'God Unhinged? A Critique of Quasi-Fideism', Zoheir Bagheri Noaparast (2025) argues that inasmuch as the non-circular rational criticism of God's existence is possible (as, for example, in discussions of the rational problem of evil), God's existence cannot be a hinge commitment. He then suggests that Wittgensteinians would do better to consider belief in God as a subjective rather than objective (or hinge) certainty. Neil O'Hara similarly argues that beliefs such as 'God exists' do not merit hinge status because, inasmuch as they are 'treated as open to evidence and justification', they should be considered as objects of 'psychological certainty, not [...] logical certainty' (O'Hara 2025, pp. 8, 12).

I take these extreme 'unhinging' moves to be unwarranted. A less drastic one is available in the distinction between local and universal hinges⁶. Universal hinges delimit the universal bounds of sense for us: they are, outside of pathological cases, ungiveupable certainties for all human beings. Religious beliefs cannot be *universal* hinges for they are not logical certainties appertaining to the belief system of all human beings. Examples of universal hinges are 'There exist people other than myself', 'Human babies cannot look after themselves'; 'Human beings require nourishment to survive'.

Local hinges, on the other hand, belong, or have belonged, to the world picture of a community of people at a given time—so, for example: 'The earth is flat'; 'The earth is round'; 'God exists'; 'Jesus Christ is the son of God'; 'The Rain God makes it rain'. Some of these hinges—for example 'The earth is round'—have an empirical origin, but it is not *qua* empirical propositions that they become bounds of sense or logico-grammatical rules; rather, they have *fused into* the conceptual bedrock of a community of human beings (more on this below). Unlike universal hinges, local hinges are giveupable.

While some religious beliefs (e.g., 'God exists') are *local* hinges—disputing them would render untenable genuinely belonging to a certain religion (e.g., Judaism) other than culturally⁷ or even nominally—others are incidental beliefs, and so, not hinges at all. This might be the case for a rule such as 'one must not eat pork'. Whereas in some cases—say, in the case of orthodox Judaism—this would be a hinge the transgression of which would preclude Jewishness, in other cases—for example, that of liberal Jews, where transgressing it would not preclude Jewishness—such a rule, if adopted, would count as a religious belief, not a religious hinge.

All religious hinges (whether 'God exists' or 'one should not eat pork'⁸) are local—they are acquired via absorption through enculturation or repeated exposure (OC 143), persuasion (OC 262, 612) or conversion (OC 92)—and can be rejected without this being due to pathology. For, unlike universal hinges, all local hinges can undergo *erosion* or *liquefaction*. I italicise these words to underline that the obsolescence of hinges is as little due to reasoning as is their acquisition. As Wittgenstein puts it: 'I have not 'consciously arrived at the conviction by following a particular line of thought' (OC 103). To convey the idea that hinges

are not the result of ratiocination or justification, Wittgenstein uses images such as ‘fusion’: ‘This fact is fused into the foundations of our language-game’ (OC 558); or ‘hardening’; and their obsolescence is consequently referred to as erosion or as fluidification:

It might be imagined that some propositions, of the form of empirical propositions, were hardened and functioned as channels for such empirical propositions as were not hardened but fluid; and that this relation altered with time, in that fluid propositions hardened, and hard ones became fluid. (OC 96)

Just as we do not acquire local hinges through reasoning but through the ‘hardening’ of some facts (that is, for example, their being drilled into us through repetition or repeated exposure, in the way rules are), we do not give up hinges through reasoning, but through the erosion of those facts that were fused into the foundations (such as, ‘It isn’t possible to get to the moon’ (OC 286)). As Wittgenstein puts it: a ‘shift’ occurs in the riverbed of our thoughts (OC 97)⁹.

O’Hara applies such occurrences of solidification and erosion to the case of the pig prohibition for the Second Temple Jew—showing how the belief had its source in an ethno-political move; became a religious (or moral) hinge; and ultimately eroded into a mere religious belief. He documents how the pig prohibition arose from the conflict between early or proto-Israelite religion and the religion of the Canaanite city states existing in Palestine at the time of the tribal migrations of the Israelite tribes into the land¹⁰. The prohibition arose from a desire to separate from the Canaanite cultic practices. So that ‘at the time the prohibitions were developed, the context provided clear cultural and religious reasons for them, such as cultural separation and religious purity.’ By the time we get to the Second Temple period, reasons had dissipated. The prohibition had become a ‘Law’; it had, O’Hara writes: ‘developed into something more absolute, and floating freer from its historical origins. The importance of context in justifying [this prohibition] had been superseded by a sense of [its] eternal validity, regardless of context’ (O’Hara 2018, p. 124). In other words, the pig prohibition had fused into the religious bedrock of Second Temple Jews, thereby becoming a religious hinge¹¹.

O’Hara also describes, with the help of documentation, how the prohibition shifted from bedrock and became obsolete for many Jews, such that: ‘few today would, like Mattathias the Maccabee, slay their fellow Jews . . . for improper use of pig meat (1 Macc 2:15–26) [Nor] would such an action be approved by the Jewish community at large’ (O’Hara 2018, p. 126). And though the pig prohibition is still taken very seriously by some, it has ‘for many Jews today, been dislodged from its place in the bedrock of Jewish identity’ (O’Hara 2018, p. 126), and holds the place of a religious incidental belief—questionable by some, justifiable by others. The fact that some local religious hinges have eroded into incidental beliefs—thus becoming susceptible of questioning and rejection—for some people, does not make them any less hinge beliefs for others. While a local hinge can—for some people—suffer erosion/become fluid (OC 96) and go from being treated as ‘a rule of testing’ to ‘something to test by experience’ or argument (OC 98), it can, for others, remain a rule of testing: something that is not susceptible of doubt. This is the case not only for the pig prohibition but also for ‘God exists’. Both hinges have become eroded for some Jews, but this does not alter their status as local hinges for others.

Religious hinges are local and so their erosion is possible. But this does not give way to full-blown relativism¹². The toppling of a *local* hinge does not affect our *universal* hinges. As previously noted, universal hinges are not susceptible of erosion, and seriously questioning a universal hinge (e.g., ‘There exist people other than myself’) is not a sign of scepticism but of pathology: the unreliability of the questioner’s cognitive faculties. The logical indubitability/ungiveupability of universal hinges ensures that epistemic

relativism is not thoroughgoing or radical. The spectre of epistemic relativism evoked by Coliva (2025, sec. 3)—

[...] if (epistemic) rationality is not absolute but dependent on a system of a-rational hinges, and if different, potentially incompatible, systems of a-rational hinges could exist, then ordinary beliefs based on them would also be rational, despite their incompatibility. (Coliva 2025, p. 7)

—cannot affect universal hinges, and so we are not threatened by radical relativism. Indeed, Pritchard’s attempt at avoiding epistemic relativism goes in the right direction when he appeals to ‘a wide-ranging overlap in [...] hinge commitments’:

Provided that there is a wide-ranging overlap in the hinge commitments held by both parties, then resolving deep disagreements, while it may face practical hurdles, is not in principle impossible. Call any form of epistemic relativism that entails epistemic incommensurability strong epistemic relativism, and any form of epistemic relativism that doesn’t entail epistemic incommensurability weak epistemic relativism. The point of the foregoing is that hinge epistemology in itself only seems to entail weak epistemic relativism, as while it might entail the possibility of divergent hinge commitments, this is compatible with such a divergence being peripheral rather than substantial. (Pritchard 2022, pp. 8–9)

However, what I call ‘universal hinges’ amounts to even more than a *substantial* overlap: a *universal* overlap.

4. Doubting a Hinge?

In ‘Honest Doubt: Quasi-Fideism and Epistemic Vertigo’, Pritchard considers how hinge epistemology of religion can accommodate doubt. For, he rightly asks, can it not also be an important ingredient of the religious life—even the deeply religious life—that it involves religious doubt? (Pritchard Forthcoming, note 1). Of course, doubt can have an important role to play in religious belief, but how can it be accommodated in a hinge epistemology of religion, where religious hinge certainties must by definition be—as are all hinge certainties—arational? Does arationality not preclude the possibility of doubt?

In an attempt to make hinge epistemology compatible with doubt, Pritchard introduces a species of doubt—‘honest doubt’—that ‘aligns with’ what he considers ‘an important kind of intellectual anxiety which naturally arises in the context of a Wittgensteinian epistemology: epistemic vertigo’:

While we might loosely characterize epistemic vertigo as doubt, it differs in some important respects from ordinary doubt. The honest doubt that concerns us in the religious case [...] is not ordinary doubt but rather epistemic vertigo as it arises in a religious context. [...] honest doubt is meant to be compatible with religious conviction. Indeed, the guiding idea is that honest doubt can be a natural manifestation of a reflective religious life. If so, then honest doubt and religious conviction must at least be compatible. Honest doubt is thus distinct from the kind of doubt that actually undercuts one’s religious conviction (call this ordinary doubt). The honest doubter isn’t in the process of losing their faith, and certainly hasn’t lost it, but is rather simply entertaining honest doubts about it (albeit [...] of a fundamental kind). [...] although [honest doubt] is not a doubt that undercuts one’s religious conviction, it is nonetheless a genuine form of doubt, and not merely (3) some form of intellectual artifice.’ (Pritchard Forthcoming, notes 3–4)

If ‘honest doubt’ is not a doubt that undercuts religious conviction, then it is probably not meant to be the kind of doubt that undercuts a religious hinge certainty. So is it a doubt

that undercuts a mere ‘incidental’ religious belief? Well, that wouldn’t address the problem of doubt in hinge epistemology of religion. In fact, is ‘honest doubt’ doubt at all? To assimilate it to ‘epistemic vertigo’ as Pritchard does (‘honest doubt, properly understood, is religious epistemic vertigo’ (Pritchard Forthcoming, note 11), suggests to me that it cannot be a genuine form of doubt for epistemic vertigo is not a genuine form of doubt, or any form of doubt. Epistemic vertigo, as Pritchard conceives it, is the giddiness that occurs to epistemologists who have come to the realisation that at the foundation of knowledge is arational certainty. Although *intellectually* persuaded by the fact that knowledge does not go all the way down, epistemologists are *psychologically* unsettled by this, and this disquiet manifests itself in the form of vertigo. So that epistemic vertigo, as Pritchard describes it, is a feeling of unease or disquietude, not an occurrence of doubt:

[...] our epistemic situation, even after we have resolved the problem of radical scepticism, is not the same as the folk who have never engaged with that problem in the first place. I think that this explains why even when we have successfully dealt with the radical sceptical difficulty we nonetheless feel a sense of unease with our epistemic position. I call this anxiety epistemic vertigo. The use of a phobic term is deliberate. The idea is that while one may be aware that the sceptical problem is resolved, and thus no longer poses an epistemic threat [...] one can nonetheless feel a kind of epistemic ‘giddiness’ at surveying one’s epistemic situation from the detached perspective whereby the hinges are in view. [...] Just as one can be aware, while up high, that one is secure, and yet be anxious nonetheless, the same goes for epistemic vertigo when we become aware of the hidden role that hinge commitments play in our rational practices. (Pritchard 2019, p. 8)

Epistemic vertigo arises from the unsettling—because unquestionable—realization that knowledge does not go all the way down; that at the basis of knowing is not more knowing but an ungrounded, arational, logical certainty—a certainty that is impermeable to doubt. Epistemologists are so unsettled by the fact that arationality is at the basis of knowledge that they lose footing—experience epistemic vertigo. I have never felt this vertigo myself but can understand that others might, for whom justified true belief or some other understanding of knowledge which puts ‘knowledge first’ in some way, is paramount. What I fail to see is how this makes epistemic vertigo a form of doubt, however ‘loosely characterize[d]’, and how ‘honest doubt, properly understood, is religious epistemic vertigo’ (Pritchard Forthcoming, note 11).

Epistemic vertigo is not doubt, nor does it arise from doubt. It is not doubt about something (be it that knowledge does not go all the way down or that God exists) but is rather the disquietude arising from one’s unquestioning awareness that these things (i.e., knowledge does not go all the way down or God exists) are the case. This kind of disquietude cannot be doubt in that it results from disquietude or anxiety about the object of belief and therefore presupposes its existence.

Just as the unswerving recognition of certainty can bring disquietude to some epistemologists, anxiety about one’s religious worldview can arise in the midst of one’s certainty regarding the existence of God—indeed, because of it. The problem of evil or of God’s unfairness, for example, can prompt uneasiness about God without threatening one’s faith or one’s belief in the existence of God. Take Job’s protestations: they express anxiety and dissatisfaction but not doubt for they are hinged on, and indeed fueled by, Job’s faith (including his very certainty that God exists¹³). Of course, in other cases, uneasiness about God (e.g., His inaction in the face of evil or injustice) can lead to uneasiness about one’s faith to the extent of eroding one’s hinge belief—that is, allowing doubt about one’s faith

and/or the existence of God to seep in. But this doubt about one's faith is not the religious equivalent of epistemic vertigo.

What Pritchard calls 'honest doubt' may be a kind of revolt or disquietude at the state of things *given* the existence of God, but the description of this disquietude as 'doubt' doesn't work. As Pritchard concedes, it isn't 'ordinary doubt' in that it does not undercut one's religious conviction, yet he insists that it is a 'fundamental' kind of doubt (Pritchard *Forthcoming*, notes 3–4). A fundamental kind of doubt may not undercut one's religious conviction but it should at least be involved in questioning it. This is the point at which I fail to see the link—indeed, the alleged synonymy between epistemic vertigo and honest doubt: 'honest doubt, properly understood, is religious epistemic vertigo' (Pritchard *Forthcoming*, note 11). For, epistemic vertigo is not a questioning stance; it is one hinged—unhappily, but unquestioningly—on the epistemic certainty that 'at the foundation of well-founded belief lies belief that is not founded' (OC 253).

There is, as I have suggested in this paper, a more plausible way to account for doubt 'in the context of a Wittgensteinian epistemology', which Pritchard is rightly seeking to do. And that is, to recognize that religious hinges are local: they can erode. So that for *real doubt* to occur—say, about the existence of God—one's hinge belief in the existence of God would have to have eroded into a mere incidental belief: a belief susceptible of rational scrutiny and doubt. Yes, doubt is compatible with the 'arational hinge commitments' at the heart of religious belief, but that is not because arational hinges cause epistemic vertigo but because religious hinge commitments—being 'local'—can erode¹⁴.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: No new data were created or analyzed in this study. Data sharing is not applicable to this article.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflicts of interest.

Notes

¹ For a more elaborate description of 'hinges', see Moyal-Sharrock and Pritchard (2025).

² For a description of my taxonomy of hinges based on *On Certainty*, see Moyal-Sharrock (2005) or Moyal-Sharrock and Pritchard (2025).

³ See, for example, Svensson (1981, 84ff) and Stroll (2002, 449ff) who refer exclusively to 'objective certainty'; Nigel Pleasants uses both expressions (Pleasants 2025); I initially referred to both 'objective certainty' and 'hinge certainty' (e.g., Moyal-Sharrock 2005), but have since used the latter exclusively.

⁴ Pritchard himself assumes this in the first passage quoted in this section (Pritchard 2018, pp. 1–2).

⁵ See, for example, the definitions offered by the Oxford English Dictionary (OED): religion is 'belief in or acknowledgement of some superhuman power or powers (esp. a god or gods) which is typically manifested in obedience, reverence, and worship'.

⁶ For a more elaborate description of this distinction—and its source in *On Certainty*, see Moyal-Sharrock (2005) or Part I of Moyal-Sharrock and Pritchard (2025).

⁷ Indeed, even some atheists consider themselves Jewish out of a sense of socio-cultural and historical belonging to the Jewish people. This would imply a very liberal extension of the concept of religion which would not be admissible on the definition of religion (OED) we have assumed here.

⁸ As noted above, though not a hinge for liberal Jews, it would be one for conservative or orthodox Jews.

⁹ For more on the acquisition and erosion of local hinges, see Moyal-Sharrock (2005).

¹⁰ Though as O'Hara notes (in conversation), it is a matter of scholarly controversy whether some/all the peoples that became Israel migrated or were 'natives' of the land.

¹¹ O'Hara uses documentation to argue that 'for a Second Temple Jew, the eating of pork, and more so the use of pork in a cult setting was unthinkable impious. Its wrongness was ... a basic moral certainty for them' (O'Hara 2018, p. 122). For a Jew to sacrifice a pig on the altar in the Jerusalem Temple would be 'so impious that its wrongness would be indubitable. So the Jew

who did such a thing would have to be thought of as an infidel or a heretic. For a Second Temple Jew, to deliberately sprinkle pigs-blood on the altar of the Jerusalem Temple, would have been in the same category as murder' (O'Hara 2018, pp. 122–23; 123n5).

¹² For a more extended argument on the subject of relativism, see Moyal-Sharrock (Forthcoming).

¹³ As I am reminded by Neil O'Hara, though Job's faith in God's existence is usually thought to remain unshaken, this is sometimes contested (see, for example, N. K. Verbin 'Uncertainty and religious belief', *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 51: 1 (2002, pp. 1–37). Granted, but I feel the main point about Job is that he retains his faith in spite of all the vicissitudes God unleashes on him.

¹⁴ I am extremely grateful to Neil O'Hara for his comments and for our discussion of this paper.

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