Kripke on Wittgenstein on Rules

by

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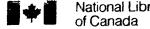THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

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Abstract

This is an essay on Saul Kripke's *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*. It consists of four main parts: 1) The presentation of a sceptical argument about rules and linguistic meaning, an argument which Kripke claims Wittgenstein invented after he discovered a paradox in trying to make sense of ordinary statements about linguistic-meaning; 2) The presentation of what Kripke takes to be Wittgenstein's "sceptical solution" to the problem posed by the sceptic; 3) Critical discussions of: a) the sceptical solution, irrespective of whether the argument is Wittgenstein's; b) Kripke's exegesis of some key passages in Wittgenstein's writings which according to Kripke form the basis for the sceptical interpretation of Wittgenstein's discussion of rules; 4) An account of Wittgenstein's relation to philosophical scepticism. Wittgenstein's conceptions of doubt and knowledge, and his method of investigation, are contrasted with those of Descartes, and significant differences are identified.

I make no attempt to provide a rival to Kripke's interpretation of Wittgenstein's 'private language argument'. In fact I rarely use that locution in the course of my discussion. I also ignore Kripke's postscript on Wittgenstein and the problem of other minds. My purview is Kripke's portrait of Wittgenstein on rules and meaning, painted against the backdrop of an alleged preoccupation with scepticism. Kripke's sees the

Wittgensteinian landscape in a sceptical light, and this colours his interpretation of many of its features. I argue that Wittgenstein was not a philosophical sceptic of any kind, and that in fact he repudiated as self-defeating the conception of doubt employed by Kripke's sceptic. I conclude that Wittgenstein did not see philosophical problems through the eyes of a sceptic, but rather that he endeavoured to reveal the cracks in the lense that refracts the spectre of scepticism.

For the most part the vast literature spawned by Kripke's book is not discussed. However, I do draw on the work of a few Wittgenstein-scholars in attempting to show where Kripke's sceptical interpretation of Wittgenstein differs from the non-sceptical interpretation I advocate.

I dedicate this work to my late sister Karen, and my late brothers Donald and Jeffrey. They always showed me that they cared about what I was doing, even though they thought me wierd for having any interest in it. Strange as it may seem, I always felt inspired by this judgement.

We say: if a child has mastered language--and hence its application--it must know the meanings of words. It must, for example, be able to attach the name of its colour to a white, black, red or blue object without the occurrence of any doubt.

And indeed no one misses doubt here; no one is surprised that we do not merely *surmise* the meaning of our words.

Ludwig Wittgenstein
On Certainty, 522-23

Acknowledgments

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Contents

Abbreviations

Works by Wittgenstein

P.I.   *Philosophical Investigations*, tr. G.E.M. Anscombe, Blackwell, 1953; 3rd edition, 1984. References are to section numbers.

O.C.   *On Certainty*, eds. G.E.M. Anscombe and G.H. von Wright, trs. Denis Paul and G.E.M. Anscombe, Blackwell, 1969. References are to section numbers.

Tractatus   *Tractatus Logico Philosophicus*, trs. D.F. Pears and B.F. McGuiness, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1961.

P.O.   *Philosophical Occasions*, eds. James Klagge and Alfred Nordmann, Hackett, Indianapolis, 1993.

L.W.W.P *Last Writings on the Philosophy of Psychology*, Vol. 2, Blackwell, 1993. References are to section numbers.

R.F.M.   *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*, revised edition, MIT press, 1983.

Introduction

Wittgenstein's philosophical magnum opus, according to Kripke, was the invention, explication, and extraction of consequences of "the most radical and original sceptical problem philosophy has seen to date."(Kripke, p.60). Wittgenstein's extended discussion of rules and 'private' language in *Philosophical Investigations* constitutes his most refined presentation of his achievement. On Kripke's account Wittgenstein develops a paradox that results from an attempt to make sense of ordinary claims about meaning; a paradox that threatens to show that there is no such thing as meaning anything by any word, no such thing as a meaningful use of any sign or sound—stated most strongly it is the view that language is impossible.

According to Kripke, Wittgenstein showed that there is no philosophically sound solution to this paradox. The only available 'solution' to the paradox must be a "sceptical" one, analogous to Hume's sceptical solution to his problem of induction. Hume thought his argument against belief in causal efficacy was sound, yet impotent when it came to eliminating the *practice* of attributing causal efficacy. And he attempted to explain why this is so. His explanation, a kind of "we can't help ourselves" account, can be thought to act also as a form of *justification* of the ineluctable practice of attributing causal efficacy to things. Likewise, Wittgenstein is said to have attempted to provide an alternative account of the practice of attributing

meaning to utterances. Wittgenstein must explain how, given his sceptical argument, we are nevertheless somehow justified in saying things like: "Bill means addition by 'plus'." While he establishes that such sentences do not pick out facts in the world he acknowledges that they nevertheless play an important role in our lives. It is the role they play, not the facts they have been thought to pick out, that justifies their use. Wittgenstein's sceptical solution to the paradox is more a "this is how we organize ourselves" than a "we can't help ourselves" solution but the essential similarity to Hume's remains: the sceptic is right, but our use of expressions about meaning is nevertheless 'justified'.

Those familiar with Wittgenstein's work may want to stop right here and ask how we are to see our way clear to saddling Wittgenstein with the view that a 'sceptical paradox' constitutes a *genuine* problem; i.e., a problem that can not be shown to be founded on a misunderstanding. Wittgensteinians might be expected to react sceptically to Kripke's presentation of Wittgenstein as a sceptic. Doesn't Wittgenstein hold that what is embedded in our practices as a paradigm of knowledge just *is* a paradigm of knowledge, and that there is no other properly constituted court of appeal? How can we reconcile this with the fact that sceptics generally reject as unknowable what in practice we actually use as a paradigm of knowledge? And isn't it the point of this sceptical argument—indeed of most sceptical arguments—that something everyone would agree is known, e.g., that we mean things by the words and sentences we use, is in strictest truth something we cannot know? There is

undoubtedly a tension here but in his initial presentation of the sceptical paradox of meaning Kripke does not address this issue. For now, this issue will have to be put aside. I shall stick to presenting Kripke's account of the so-called "Wittgensteinian paradox" and leave questions of its exegetical accuracy for later treatment. I will refer to the proponent of the sceptical argument and the sceptical solution as 'K-W', and later compare K-W's views with those I take to be have been held by the 'real' Wittgenstein. Similarities and differences will then be identified.

Once I have presented K-W's paradox I will show how K-W defends it against proposed "straight" solutions. A straight solution is defined as one which shows that because the sceptic's reasoning is somehow faulty, there is no paradox after all. After having given K-W's argument as clear and sympathetic a reading as I can, I will try to show both that K-W's argument is not Wittgenstein's and that, irrespective of whether K-W's argument is faithful to Wittgenstein, it is open to serious objections. I hope it will turn out that these two birds will be killed with one stone; i.e., that a correct reading of Wittgenstein will show both that Kripke's reading of Wittgenstein is inaccurate in important respects, and that in fact Wittgenstein challenged the philosophical assumptions essential to making (apparent) sense of K-W's scepticism.

Before I present the details of Kripke's account of how this paradox of rule following arises, a few more preliminary remarks are in order. He develops the paradox initially with respect to a mathematical example though, he claims, "it applies to all meaningful uses of language."(p.7). The paradox can be (is) developed with

respect to a *single* language user and his encounter with a "bizarre sceptic". The problem is firmly rooted in the Cartesian tradition in philosophy. It is best appreciated, it seems to me, by supposing the single language user to be in a position similar to the Cartesian who retreats from the hurly burly of social life to reflect upon that which he would ordinarily claim to know, in order to separate the wheat of certain truth from the chaff of conceivably false belief. Suppose the sceptic to be the voice of doubt that comes from within the scrupulous individual, the voice that perniciously asks: "What justifies me in claiming that I know...; whereupon follows an ordinary claim, in the present case a claim about what one means by some word.

Kripke seems to believe that such a Cartesian perspective on the matter is one appropriate for assessing Wittgenstein on rules and private language: "Wittgenstein's challenge can be presented to me as a question about myself: was there some past fact about me—what I meant by "plus"—that mandates what I ought to do now?"(p.15). This is a question the Cartesian sceptic might ask, perhaps upon being struck by the fact that his private philosophical musings themselves presuppose that he knows what he means by the words he uses in his discourse. And if one is to remain faithful to the demands of the Cartesian method of doubt one must answer this question: "Do I know what I mean by the words that I use?"

The sceptic is the supreme censor in the Cartesian theatre. His primary concern is with the justification of what are taken to be fundamental, i.e., foundational, beliefs. In this case the subject matter is not one's belief in the external world or other minds, but

one's belief that one knows what one means by one's utterances. Such a belief could be said to lie at the foundation of all human inquiry. If this belief were undermined then no application of any putative word or sign would have any more legitimate claim to being meaningful than would the arbitrary utterance of a mere noise; indeed there would be no basis for a distinction between meaningful and meaningless sounds or marks. In that case there would be no way of knowing the content of ordinary beliefs (if such could be said to exist under such circumstances).

One more preliminary step to set the stage for the presentation of the sceptical argument. I want to explain how the Cartesian sceptic can get into the position of asking about whether he knows what he means by what he says, and taking the question seriously. He began his quest for the foundation of knowledge by pledging to take nothing for knowledge that is the least susceptible to doubt; if a doubt is possible then no knowledge can be justifiably claimed on the matter in question. As is well known Descartes conceived of the possibility that an evil demon had deceived him about everything (except, of course, his own existence), even allowing that he might have been deceived into falsely believing that 2+2=4. Perhaps there is nothing outside (or independent of) the sceptic's mind that is as it seems from the inside; perhaps none of the sceptic's beliefs are true.

The astute sceptic will have reflected that his argument has been given in language (how else?!) and that this is something he remembers having been mistaken about on occasion, e.g., he always gets the words "inequity" and "iniquity" mixed up. So the

really scrupulous sceptic will seek to provide a sound answer to the question: How do I know what I mean by the words and sentences I utter with confidence? I seem to understand the words I utter when I hear myself say them, but I also remember occasions when I thought I knew what a word meant but I was mistaken. Even statements expressing apparently necessary truths, e.g., "a bachelor is an unmarried eligible male", could be misunderstood; one could be wrong about their meaning, and therefore about their truth. Such statements are said to be true by definition, but it is surely conceivable that I have made a mistake by joining the wrong definition to the word. If I can not find a foundation of knowledge of linguistic meaning I could be sure of nothing.

Chapter One

K-W's Sceptical Problem

Suppose I want to explain what it is to mean something by a word, even if only to assure myself that my present conviction that I know what I mean is well founded. Any attempt to do so faces insurmountable difficulties. The argument is as follows. Begin with an ordinary example of a meaningful word, say 'plus'. The word is used to denote a mathematical function, namely, addition. Let us say then that we mean addition[1] by the word 'plus'. Whenever someone means addition by the word 'plus' or the symbol '+', that person means the same thing as anyone else who uses these signs in the same way. It seems obvious too that speakers of languages other than English mean the same as we do, whatever words they use to denote the addition function. Addition is a particular function, distinct from any other function. In claiming to know the meaning of the word 'plus' one is claiming to know what distinct function is referred to by that word, viz., the addition function. To know the identity of a function is to know the rule which defines it. In claiming to know the identity of the function

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[1] I, like Kripke, am aware of no "accepted felicitous convention to indicate the object of the verb 'to mean'" (Ftn. P.10). I share Kripke's confidence that in practice readers will not be confused , and so I will not try to be careful about this.

referred to by the word 'plus' one is claiming to know the rule that defines the addition function.

To use a word according to a rule is closely analogous to computing according to a certain function. An important aspect of the analogy is the following: In the same way as the addition function (for example) is defined for *all* pairs of positive integers, the meaning of the word 'plus'—the rule(s) for its use—determines for *every* possible use of it whether or not that use is correct. Since there is no limit to the number of times a word can be used, the rule for its use is infinite in scope. Though it may not seem obvious, this applies to all words. The word 'plus' provides a good example for analysis because it denotes a function that is *obviously* unlimited in its applicability—obviously unlimited since it is applicable to a domain which is itself obviously unlimited, viz., the domain of positive integers. But even a proper name, e.g., 'Neptune', though its correct application doesn't appear isomorphic with a *function,* conforms roughly to a rule something like: For any X not identical to Neptune, it is true to say "X is not Neptune"; and this rule is as unlimited in scope as is the number of objects which could be the argument for 'X'. Goodman could be said to have shown the applicability of Wittgenstein's argument to predicate terms such as 'green'. In fact Kripke claims something stronger, viz. "that serious consideration of Goodman's problem, as he formulates it, may prove impossible without consideration of Wittgenstein's." (Kripke, p.59).

It is the infinitude of possible applications of a word that seems to necessitate explaining knowledge of its meaning as the grasping of a rule. Even though one could have used the word 'plus' or the symbol '+' only finitely many times, the rule one followed determines the correctness or incorrectness of infinitely many uses one has never previously considered. Analogously, even though one could have computed only finitely many sums, the rule one followed in computing those sums determines a unique correct answer for infinitely many sums one has never previously considered. The scope of the rule, one might say, exceeds the range of anyone who might employ it. The rule has the content it has, prescribes what it does, independently of its being grasped and applied by any particular person (or population) and independently of its application to any finite set of cases, no matter how large. Despite the apparent human-independent identity of the rule of addition, we tend to be quite confident that we limited humans know what rule we denote when we use the word 'plus'. (We know what we mean by the word 'plus' and the symbol '+'). On what foundation does our confidence rest? What *justifies* our confidence?

Suppose one encounters a "bizarre sceptic" who tries to call into question one's certainty about the correct application of a rule. Take for example the application of the rule for addition to a problem one has never previously encountered, one containing numbers larger than any one has previously added; suppose this problem is '68+57=X', or 'what's sixty-eight plus fifty-seven?'. Suppose that after computing and checking the sum one confidently answers '125'. The sceptic challenges you to

show that only '125' is the answer you *should* give, given what you mean by 'plus' and '+'. The sceptic wants your *justification* for answering '125'. He does not question the correctness of your *calculation*, but whether there is some rule for your use of 'plus' (and '+') that ensures that the function you intend to denote is the same function you have always intended to denoted by 'plus' and '+'. Only if you are computing in accord with a particular function, the same function you claim to have previously denoted by 'plus', can it be said that you *should* answer '125'. If you now denote some other function by 'plus' then the answer '125' might not be justified.

Now, the challenge of K-W, Kripke's "bizarre sceptic", will not be appropriately understood if one does not grasp the following point: When one claims to have added correctly, i.e., in accord with the rule for addition, one's claim implies more than just that one believes one has arrived at the arithmetically correct answer. It also implies that one believes one understood the order "add 68 and 57" (even if one gave oneself the order). Understanding an order and carrying it out are equally dependent on one's having grasped the rule(s) that determine the order's meaning. When one understands an order one interprets it by employing rules for the use of the signs that compose the order. When one carries out an order one employs these rules also as a guide, i.e., as determining what one must do if one is to act in accord with one's interpretation (understanding) of the order. *Meaning* something by a word is no less dependent on the existence of rules than is understanding a word or acting on an order; if I do mean something by a word then there must be some rule(s) that determines that I mean

some one thing as opposed to another. The purpose of these claims about meaning, understanding, and acting in accord with an interpretation, is to bring out that my claim to have answered the question '68+57=X' correctly carries an important implication underlying the claim to *arithmetical* correctness, viz., that "as I intended to use the word 'plus' in the past it denoted a function which, when applied to the numbers I called ' 68' and ' 57', yields the value 125"(Kripke, p.8).

K-W is concerned with what Kripke calls the "metalinguistic sense" in which my answer can be queried for correctness. This is the sense in which the sceptic challenges my certainty of having gotten the correct answer. He asks me to consider that "as I used the word 'plus' in the past, the answer I intended for ' 68+57' should have been '5'!"(p.8). How this could be needs to be explained. The sceptic introduces another function, calling it the 'quus' function and symbolizing it by '*'. It is defined by: $X*Y = X+Y$, if $X,Y < 57$; $= 5$ otherwise. Now, the possibility that the answer I *should* give is 5 can't be ruled out on the basis of the claim that, in the process of coming to understand the rule for addition, I gave myself specific instructions regarding this problem, since by hypothesis this is a problem I have never previously encountered. Rather, I would try to argue that by *applying the same rule* as I did in the past, the rule I previously denoted by the word 'plus' and the sign '+', I arrived at the answer I take to be correct. But the sceptic challenges me to cite that rule and *show* that it mandates the answer '125' and excludes the answer '5' (He presses me further for a justification of *this* claim). Perhaps all along I have been denoting the quus rule by

'plus' and now, perhaps for the first time, I denote the addition rule? How can I show that I know the difference between denoting the one and denoting the other?

The question (problem to be solved) here is not: How could I be mistaken as to what a specific rule demands of me at any particular point? The sceptic could tentatively agree that, *if* I have got a hold of a particular rule then I can't be mistaken about what *it* demands at any particular stage. The bizarre sceptic isn't here concerned with the possibility of doubting whether there is a definite connection between a rule and its correct application. His present concern is a doubt as to whether one can have adequate grounds for believing one is following *a particular* rule—whether one has correctly ascertained a connection between one's (allegedly) rule-guided behaviour and some *particular* rule. Can one know whether, in a particular instance, one is applying the same rule as one applied on previous occasions when one used the word 'plus' to denote the rule one intended to follow? To know that one is applying the *same* rule as one applied on previous occasions one must at the very least know how to identify *a particular* rule.

Suppose, says the sceptic, that a disturbance of some sort has caused you to change your previous usage of the word 'plus' so that while you now use it to denote the plus function, this is not what you previously denoted by that word. It is perfectly possible that previously you denoted the quus function by 'plus', but that now as you reflect on your past uses of the word you interpret those past uses as having denoted the addition function.

What could make it uncertain whether some number of instances of the use of a sign denote this function or that? It will help make this question clearer to think of a number of instances of the use of a sign as itself a kind of sign, one that denotes a rule for the use of the word-sign. As a simple analogy, take any finite segment of any series of numbers; there will be *numerous distinct* rules that could account for the production of that segment. For the *further* development of the series according to each particular rule there will be divergence from the series as it is developed according to all the other rules. We can even imagine (invent) differing interpretations of each rule such that under each interpretation a different series results. The different series are themselves compatible with numerous different rules that could rationally (consistently) be supposed to have produced them. Take the two series one gets by starting at zero and, on the one hand adding two, and on the other hand 'quadding' two. The two series are identical up to a point, after which they are quite distinct. For any given rule follower there will be some finite set of computations he has performed. These can be thought of collectively as a sign denoting the rule he has been following. There will be no way, according to the sceptic, of showing that this set is the *unique* result of computing according to a particular rule. The sceptic will always be able to cite some rule that is distinct from that specified by the rule-follower in question, but compatible with the set of examples that is alleged to be the unique result of computing according to his rule.

Now, to defeat the sceptic's suggestion I have, as evidence that I do know what I mean, only a finite set of examples that allegedly instantiate the function I meant by 'plus'. But, given the above argument, it should be clear that the mere citation of some finite set of examples is insufficient to determine which function I meant. Nor will it help to accompany the set of examples with the expression of a rule by means of which the computations were carried out, since differing interpretations of this rule would yield differing continuations of the series of examples. Just as a single series is compatible with numerous distinct rules for its development to any given point, a single expression of a rule is compatible with numerous distinct interpretations that yield different patterns of application. And, by the same token, every interpretation is itself variously interpretable. If neither a set of examples, nor the expression of a rule, nor an interpretation of the expression of a rule, nor any combination of the three, determines meaning, what is left to do the job? This is the challenge posed by K-W: If it is ever true to say of someone: "she means addition by 'plus'"—and surely no one doubts that such claims are sometimes true—then we ought to be able to cite some facts corresponding to such claims that makes them true. K-W's initial challenge: "How can one know whether or not one means the same thing now by a word as one meant in the past?", has led to an apparently more fundamental question: "What fact must obtain for it to be true of someone on a particular occasion that she meant one thing as distinct from all else it is possible for her to have meant?".

Initially Kripke describes the candidate for such a fact, and the demands it makes on future use, rather vaguely: "By means of my external symbolic representation and my internal mental representation I 'grasp' the rule for addition" (p.7). This 'grasping' is said to issue in my "intentions regarding addition" (p.8). The carrying out of such intentions in particular cases is said to consist in "follow[ing] directions I previously gave myself " (p.10). The fact that determines what is meant is thought to 'contain' something that will "*tell* me what I ought to do in each new instance."(p.24). The fact in which meaning something consists, if there be such, must 'embody' "my past intentions regarding addition" (p.8), it must 'contain' "the directions I...gave myself" (p.10). The question is: What must these "directions I gave myself" be like in order that they do in fact determine what I ought to do to act in accord with them? These somewhat vague stipulations must be further explained. In order to satisfy K-W's sceptic one must: 1) give an account of what fact it is (about my mental state)[2] that constitutes my meaning plus not quus. 2) in some sense, show how I am justified in giving the answer '125' to '68+57' (p.11).

Is there such a thing as a set of directions, a rule, for the use of a word that determines of its own accord what counts as following them correctly at any given stage, such that reference to the rule justifies a unique set of applications of the word?

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[2]Kripke claims that how one conceives of the mental will make no crucial difference to the success of the sceptical argument. He insists that there should be "no limitations, in particular, no *behaviourist* limitations, on the facts that may be cited to answer the sceptic."(p.14). The problem is presented "from the inside", so it is not the problem faced by Quine's field linguist. Kripke does not want his formulation of the problem to beg any questions against dualism or platonism, so he employs a broad notion of what is to count as the mental.

This seems to be what the concept of meaning demands. But the sceptical argument is aimed at showing that *no* set of directions meets this requirement. This requirement could be met only if one could rule out the possibility of interpreting a set of directions in more than one way. If I am to use a word to denote something then I must use it in accord with a rule such that it denotes this and not that function, kind of thing, individual, etc. There must be something that assigns to the word a definite role (or no role) in any given truth-function. But according to K-W's argument, just as any finite series (past uses of a word) is compatible with any number of rules, any rule formulation is compatible with numerous different ways of applying it (interpretations) at any given point.

This is because rules, and interpretations thereof, are expressed in words or signs. And the paradox applies to these words and signs no less than it applies to the words which rules are supposed to govern. These words too have been used only finitely many times in the past, and so the sceptic's hypothesis about a change in one's usage can be applied here as well. If a rule must be expressed somehow in order to be accessible to me as a guide for future applications of a word, then if it is to "tell me what I ought to do in each new instance" it must be completely unambiguous, *not* compatible with more than one way of proceeding. Otherwise it does not *justify* one way of proceeding as opposed to another. It might be suggested that an *interpretation* of a rule, could satisfy this requirement. But the sceptic's arguments showed that any interpretation, being itself expressed in words or signs that must themselves be rule

governed, is variously interpretable. It looks as if there is no way of showing—another or oneself—what rule is denoted by an interpretation without *assuming* that the interpretation has a definite meaning. But this assumption is unwarranted says the sceptic. Any account of what was meant on a particular occasion couldn't but be circular, and thereby philosophically inadequate, since it must rest on the unwarranted assumption that the words or examples used to explain what was meant are not themselves interpretable in more than one way. According to the sceptic any account of the foundations of language that cites rules as what determines the meaning of signs is hopelessly mired in paradox, for such an account can not explain how a rule grounds the distinction between correct and incorrect ways of applying a word. To do this it would have to explain how to distinguish between correct and incorrect applications of a rule, which it can not do. What looks like a straight path to an explanation of the nature of language is shown to circle back to its starting point.

In the next section I will argue, among other things, that any supplementation of such a set of directions—such as by means of images or indescribable experiences, or the 'voice' of intuition—will fail to endow them with the requisite normative force and so fail to solve the paradox. The attack on such straight solutions will consist mostly in arguments parallel to those mounted against the notion of self-presenting rules.

Solving the Problem Straight?

Various philosophical theories have been proposed in attempts to explain the human capacity for intelligent thought and communication. They attempt to show what constitutes this capacity, what must be the case for there to be such a capacity. One way that has been thought helpful for producing insight on this matter is to think about, to ask, what must be involved in the acquisition of the capacity by children. How is it possible for a child to learn a general concept by means of a limited number of examples? How can such a paucity of instruction produce—when successful—the capacity to, as it were, 'go beyond' the examples to employ the concept in a potential infinitude of new cases? It seems obvious that at some point the child attains an *understanding*, a state that is the source of (a guide for) future use. Some difference in the facts about the learner before and after understanding is attained must explain the difference between those who do and those who do not know the meaning of the signs used to express the concept in question. What does this understanding consist in?

K-W does not confine his application of the sceptical argument to any one type of theory. He claims that they "all fail to give a candidate for a fact as to what I meant that would show that only '125', not '5', is the answer I ought to give"(p.11). He does require that an answer to the sceptic must cite a fact about one's *mental* state, but, as I noted, he leaves it open what constitutes the mental. Since his paradox has a wide application the sceptic is not concerned to bracket considerations about the ontological status of mental facts. Conceive of the mental however you like, says the

sceptic, as behaviour, as material states of the brain, even as introspectible states of a non-material mind, you will not be able to describe a fact of that kind which will satisfy the requirements of meaningful assertion.

It might be thought at this point, if it hasn't already been thought, that K-W—or K-W's sceptic—is simply ignoring his own conclusion in the course of giving his own argument; i.e., he is using words—what on all accounts would be called words!—apparently consistently, apparently in accord with some rules for their use, in the course of establishing the conclusion that "all meaning is impossible". Kripke is, of course, fully aware of this difficulty. He acknowledges that "ultimately, if the sceptic is right, the concepts of meaning and of intending one function rather than another will make no sense."(p.13). Still, K-W must allow all the candidates for a fact that constitutes meaning to be brought forth, if only to show their ultimate inadequacy. He lays it down as a requirement of his investigation that "we begin by speaking as if the notion that at present we mean a certain function by 'plus' is unquestioned and unquestionable."(p.14).[3] Let us try to do this with 'plus' and '+', as well as with other key words necessary for the presentation of K-W's arguments.

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[3]Presumably this applies to all the words that may be necessary to present the sceptical argument, since the paradox applies to *all* alleged meaningful uses of signs. It seems a lot to ask a philosopher to assume the meanings of all the words employed in a philosophical discussion are uncontroversial. For what is often taken to be an important *preliminary* to a philosophical discussion is coming to an agreement about the meanings of the terms that are necessary for such a discussion to take place. The sceptic seems to require that we forego this preliminary, and assume that we are in agreement about the meaning (the range of proper uses) of 'meaning', 'rule', 'understanding', 'interpretation', etc.. I do not mean to attribute philosophical naiveté to the sceptic, but this requirement does trouble me. However, we can not begin before the beginning.

Is K-W right to insist: "Only *past* usages are to be questioned"? He says we must observe this restriction, at least initially, "otherwise, we shall be unable to *formulate* our problem"(p.14). One might doubt K-W's suggestion that we *can* question present usage, i.e., one might doubt that it *makes sense* to do so. But this doubt should not worry us here since the suggestion is to be made good by the presentation of the sceptical argument; i.e., this is the *means* by which present usage is ultimately brought into question. So we can not expect Kripke to deal at *this* point—before he has even presented the argument—with the important worry that any argument that repudiates the presumed conditions of its own meaningfulness *must* be defective in some fundamental way. This worry would have to be answered by showing in what way the sceptical argument *is* defective—for example, that the argument is fallacious, or that the conditions one presumes are necessary for meaning are not in fact necessary. But if any such moves are to be employed against the sceptic then we must allow his argument to be presented. So for now I will proceed, as does K-W, as if the problem of finding a fact that constitutes one's meaning something by a word has been coherently formulated; and that the problem is in need of a solution if we are to justify our (rarely stated) 'belief' that we generally understand each other's, and our own, utterances.

How, then, might one begin to respond to the sceptic, given that one is committed to trying to find a "straight" solution to the sceptical paradox? Perhaps there is a fact that determines what I meant, but the sceptic has overlooked it. What might such a fact be?

I propose to run through the candidates that Kripke discusses and the objections he raises to each proposal. I will not call into question Kripke's formulation of these proposals but will for the most part assume that he has identified their key elements accurately and fairly. The primary purpose of the present section, then, is to explicate not evaluate. *Kripke's* purpose in canvassing these proposed solutions is, of course, to show their inadequacy, to demonstrate the real force and scope of K-W's rule-scepticism.

Before proceeding to discuss the attempted straight solution Kripke discusses first, and at greatest length, I want to deal with another he considers. I will present two main objections to it, only one of which occupies K-W. His objection is based on the paradox of rule-following, mine is epistemologically based.

The sceptic considers a proposal according to which meaning one thing as opposed to another consists in the occurrence of a certain inner experience as opposed to another. A view of this kind can come to seem attractive, where at first sight it may seem implausible. It can seem attractive when one realizes the inability of behaviourism to cope with the normative aspects of meaning and understanding. According to the sceptic's argument one's past linguistic behaviour is compatible with any number of rules and so fails by itself to establish what rule, if any, one is following, and hence fails to establish what one ought to do in a new case if one is to mean the same thing by a word as one meant in the past. But since it seems clear that, as Kripke puts it, "each of us knows immediately and with fair certainty that he means [e.g.]

addition by 'plus'", it becomes plausible to suppose that it is something more than mere behaviour that makes the difference between apparent and real rule-following. And presumably that something must be *introspectible* if it supposed to serve as a *guide* for future use[4].

This putative solution attempts to establish an intrinsic relation between the state of mind of someone who means addition by 'plus' and what counts as following the rule for addition. Experiences of particular states of mind *constitute* particular meanings and therefore *justify* particular patterns of use for particular words. Different experiences constitute different meanings. According to this view, the sceptic has illegitimately demanded a *reduction* of meaning, when in fact meaning something consists in the presence before one's mind of an irreducible content. Just as having a headache or seeing red are experiences with irreducible qualities, i.e., they cannot be further atomized by analysis. On this view "meaning addition by 'plus'" denotes one irreducible experience "meaning quaddition by 'plus'" denotes another.

Assuming that we have better access to the present contents of our own minds than to anything else, this solution has the virtue of explaining why one finds it as difficult to conceive of being mistaken about what one means as it is to conceive of being mistaken about whether one is in pain. It also seems to explain how one can grasp the meaning of a word or sentence 'in a flash'. We sometimes suddenly say "Oh, I understand, *now* I get it". This seems to indicate that one is referring to something that

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[4]This requirement does not pre-empt materialist solutions, since nothing said here about the notion of an introspectible mental state rules out its being a material state of the brain.

made a sudden appearance, viz., the experience of understanding, an experience that has a specific character because it is the experience *of* something specific. Kripke has the proponent of this solution saying something like: The successful grasping of the concept is the solitary achievement of every mathematician (speaker, thinker, mind) independently of interaction with a wider community; one "has achieved something that depends only on one's own inner state, and that is immune to Cartesian doubt about the entire external material world"(p80). Grasping the concept of addition "puts me in a special relation to the addition function"(p.80).

What is further required here is an explanation of the relation between the occurrence of the postulated state of consciousness and its 'object', in this case the addition function. One could conceive this relation as internal, or external. If the relation is external then the nature of the state can be specified independently of any reference to its object. If it is internal then there is something intrinsic to the state that makes it the state of meaning this as opposed to that. I'll discuss two objections to the extrinsic conception, and one objection to the intrinsic conception.

On the extrinsic conception the fact of my meaning plus—as opposed to quus—consists in the *correlation* of a particular experience with some particular 'object', the plus function, which determines the correct use of the word in question. It follows that my using the word 'plus' with a constant meaning, i.e., correctly, consists in the experience recurring concomitantly with my use of the word. The relation between my meaning something and what I mean is external. It is something extrinsic to the state

that determines the state as one of meaning *addition*. But then my *knowing* that my present use of a word conforms to my past use depends on my knowing that the *same* experience is occurring now as on past occasions of the word's use. But this is surely something one can be mistaken about. No one wants to argue that memory is infallible, or that one's belief that one has remembered something right is the same thing as remembering it right. Hence this solution does not preserve grounds for supposing we are infallible about what we mean, since it implies that it *makes sense* to ask whether I know what I mean and how I know. The epistemology of this solution implies that my ability to use a word is founded on an inductive generalization, so that it would make sense to say "I think I want to play chess, but I'm not certain. Such an experience as this is usually followed by chess playing and if it is this time, then that will further confirm my belief that this experience is one of wanting to play chess." I would have to wait to see what I do in order to know the object of my intention. This is obviously not a correct account of the matter.

But even if it were, then, given the sceptic's scruples, his doubts could still find a foothold. The following difficulty is not directly addressed by K-W but it is well worth mentioning. The occurrence of a specific inner experience, no matter what its content, could not provide grounds for *knowledge* of how to *go on* using any word. For one could always doubt whether what one is *inclined* to do following the experience is what one *ought* to do to conform to previous usage. Given this doubt one would have to admit that all the experience could provide would be an ungrounded conviction that

some experience is guiding one. And that must mean guiding me *right*. But I have no criterion independent of the experience itself that determines what *is* right. And obviously a further experience could not do anything to give normative force to a previous one, since the same doubts could be raised about *its* normative force. Here too all one can do is proceed *blindly*. This is not the rule following paradox exactly, but it leaves the proponent of this solution in an equally impossible position. It is a problem for any view that takes the relation between a state of consciousness and its 'object' to be an external one. The conclusion here is only that one could not *know* whether one is using a word consistently, not that there would be no fact of the matter. This objection leaves open the possibility that the same experience does occur whenever I use the word 'plus'. It is a further question, however, whether the occurrence of a particular experience can contribute anything to revealing a *normative* relation between a word and a rule for its use.

How, the sceptic will ask, could a content of consciousness, irrespective of whether the awareness of it constitutes infallible knowledge, *tell* me what its presence mandates I do in order to conform to the standard of correct usage it allegedly determines? How could the content of an experience determine the infinite extension of a rule, irrespective of whether one could *know* that the same experience always occurs when, and only when, one means or understands a particular word? The sceptic's response is that it can't. Whatever the content of the experience—a picture, an image, even an 'indescribable' feeling—it can't guarantee my future application of

the word whose meaning it is said to determine. *A fortiori* my knowledge of its occurrence can't constitute my knowledge of the word's meaning. The experience would be a finite object contained in a finite mind. "If there were a special experience of 'meaning' addition by 'plus', analogous to a headache [in that the fact which makes it true that one has a headache is knowable immediately], it would not have the properties that a state of meaning ought to have—it would not tell me what to do in new cases" (Kripke p.43).

Consider briefly another criticism of this solution. What would distinguish an experience or mental content that determines a meaning from one that does not? Suppose whenever I use or hear the word "murder" that as well as pictures of stab victims, bullet wounds, etc. I have a tickle in my foot. How would I have known, at the time I "gave myself directions" for the future use of the word, that this was not to be included in the meaning of "murder"? What makes me so sure now that such a thing should not be included? The mere occurrence of an experience can not guarantee that I do know the meaning of 'plus', i.e., that I know what the presence of this experience mandates.

One might want to claim that it is a specific *act* of mind, one's intention, that determines what is meant on some occasion. But while this move might give us an idea about what *does* the meaning (if that makes any sense), it will not contribute anything to explaining how one can determine *what* was meant; and that is the problem being considered here. Perhaps it can be thought of as a *necessary* condition of someone's

meaning something that his attention be intentionally directed, but it is clearly not a *sufficient* condition. An intention has an object, and the problem here is to specify the object of the intention. An intention might be conceived as a kind of pointer. But the presence of such a pointer could not by itself tell one whether at any given time it is being directed at the plus function as opposed to the quus function, for example. This move does not account for the *content*, for *what* is meant. But that's an essential part of accounting for my meaning one thing as opposed to another; I must be able to specify *what* I meant—it is not in dispute that it was *I* who meant it! What is in question is whether there is any *fact* that is *constitutive* of my having meant one thing as opposed to another. Without the object, the intention, the hypothetical act of meaning, is like a disengaged cog, nothing else turns with it.

Dispositions

The response Kripke treats most thoroughly is one according to which "the fallacy in the argument that no fact constitutes my meaning plus lies in the assumption that such a fact must consist in an *occurrent* mental state."(p.22). According to this objection what the sceptical argument shows is that the fact that I meant plus and not quus is to be analyzed *dispositionally*, and not by reference to occurent mental states. K-W's analysis of the dispositional view runs as follows: To mean addition by 'plus' or '+' is to be disposed, when asked for any sum 'X+Y' to give the sum of X and Y as the answer; to mean quaddition by 'plus' or '+' is to be disposed to give the quum. On this view, what one means by 'plus' depends on what series one is disposed to

produce upon being asked to develop a series, starting anywhere, by repeatedly performing the operation "add 2" , for example. To say that one means addition by 'plus' is to indicate what one *would* do if one were to act on this order. If I say I meant addition then I am describing a disposition to answer '125' when asked for the sum of 68 and 57; to say I meant quaddition is to describe a disposition to answer '5' when so queried. Presumably there are truths about what I *would* do under certain circumstances, and truths about what I would have done under counterfactual past circumstances. These facts should appear no more elusive or occult than such facts as we readily cite when speaking of non-sentient objects; e.g., "the salt would have dissolved if it had been combined with enough water ".

Perhaps this is a good time to return briefly to the analogy between Hume's scepticism and the scepticism of K-W. This maps on nicely to the analogy I just tried to make use of; viz., that between the dispositional facts that are the truth conditions of claims about what someone means, and the dispositional facts that are the truth conditions of claims about the causal properties of objects. It should be clear however that this analogy is helpful to the defender of facts about meaning only if the notion of a dispositional fact about objects can be grounded, can fend off objections analogous to those leveled against facts about meaning. Kripke deals initially with a different objection to the dispositional solution, one I will discuss shortly, but by exploiting the analogy with Hume I want to do two things here; a) further elucidate the form of the rule-sceptic's argument, and, b) defeat the dispositional solution.

Hume claimed that the evidence upon which we base causal generalizations does not really warrant the attribution of causal powers to objects. Kripke claims that the evidence upon which we base claims about what we mean by the words we use does not warrant the attribution of 'meaning powers' to human speakers. The rule-sceptic claims that nothing that is true of a single speaker at any given time (including his entire history) could distinguish between his meaning one thing as opposed to another. Hume argued that nothing that is true of any single so-called 'causal' interaction could distinguish between an objects having a causal property and not having it. All we ever observe, says Hume, is a temporal propinquity of things—we never see causal efficacy at work. We never *observe* what an object *will* do or *would have* done under different conditions. But if we really knew of the existence of causally efficacious properties then we would *know* what effects they *will* produce. This is shown by the logical truth that we must deny that X causes Y if X occurs but Y does not follow (ceteris paribus). On Hume's view we can't know that Y will always follow X. All the evidence we could have—that X follow*ed* Y n times—is compatible with X not following Y the n+1th time. Here is the formal similarity between Hume's scepticism and K-W's: the evidence thought to show the truth of the common sense view of things is shown to be actually compatible with the truth of radically different views. And since *nothing* could distinguish between the truth and falsity of any of the incompatible views there is no fact of the matter about which one is right, i.e., the notion of meaning one thing as opposed to another is as metaphysically empty as the notion of one event causing

(necessitating) another. So if one is moved by the rule-sceptic's argument then it would be inconsistent to attempt a straight solution to the paradox by claiming that dispositions provide the truth conditions for statements about what someone means. One can no more prove the existence of a (particular) disposition than one can prove the existence of causal relations.

Kripke provides several criticisms of the 'dispositional solution', and he claims that "Ultimately, almost all objections to the dispositional account boil down to [a particular] one."(p.24). He argues, first of all, that the dispositional reply "immediately ought to appear to be misdirected, off target."(p.23). On K-W's construal this proposed solution fails to address the real issue; viz. whether my present response is *justified*, i.e., whether it is the answer I *ought* to give if I am to act in accord with the "instructions I gave myself" regarding the use of the word 'plus'. *Whatever* one is *disposed* to do, there is a unique something one *should* do to conform to an intention to follow a particular set of instructions. The proponent of the dispositional solution has failed to notice that, in so far as the notion of a disposition enters into the present discussion it is a normative notion, not a descriptive one. If it is to be justifiably said of me that I am disposed to add correctly, the ground for saying this can not be simply that I respond correctly to one or two addition problems. But how many problems must I solve correctly before it is certain that I have acquired the disposition to add, and not some other quus-like disposition? No finite number of problems will do. What

I *should* do next is not determined by what I am disposed to do, otherwise *whatever* I do is correct, as long as I was *disposed* to do it!

But on what grounds do I attribute a disposition to *myself*? It might be agreed that I know what I am disposed to do in the present moment—in fact I mentioned earlier that a ground rule for the investigation is that we do not call into question present uses of words, and it seems perfectly consistent with this to take knowledge of one's present dispositions to be indubitable. What can't be assumed however, is that one knows whether one's present disposition is a disposition to act in conformity with one's previous linguistic intentions. This claim stands in need of justification. One problem would be in finding any evidence that shows *what* one's past linguistic intentions disposed one to do. It seems that any *justification* of a claim about what one meant that relies on reference to dispositions can't but be circular. In order to identify a disposition as the disposition to add I would have to say what it is to add, as opposed to quad, for example. If I then try to explain what addition is by referring to what I (or any number of others) am disposed to do when following the rule for addition the account is clearly circular.

Another problem with the dispositional solution is that even accomplished adders can have dispositions to make mistakes. But what is the criterion by which these are dispositions to make *mistakes*? It surely can't be 'the actual addition function' as defined by any particular person's disposition! And since the dispositions of a group will in all likelihood not agree in every detail, there will be no way of distilling from

any group a single unique set of responses to addition problems, and so no single unique function can be so identified. But if we try to bolster the notion of a disposition, individual or collective, by adding a ceteris peribus clause—i.e., if we idealize the notion of a disposition—we only scribe another circle. For when we idealize a disposition we do it by tacitly assuming the normative component that brought us trouble in the first place. An idealized disposition is just the presence of something or other from which all the correct applications follow. But this is no better than the self-interpreting picture the sceptic has shown to be bogus.

K-W's fundamental objection to the dispositional solution is that it misconceives the sceptic's problem. What the sceptic challenges you to show is that what you are disposed to do is what you *should* do if you are to accord with your "past intentions regarding addition". But what you *should* do is determined for an infinitude of cases while your dispositions, idealized or not, are finite. Suppose one could survey the entire range of one's dispositions. The range is finite, so the sceptic's argument is applicable in the same way as before. Any finite sequence of numbers or set of answers to addition problems is compatible with numerous distinct rules that could be rationally supposed to have produced them. And for each distinct rule there will be different things one should do to continue the series or answer a new problem in conformity with that rule. What one does *next* is all important. But there is no end to the number of next-answers one should give! No particular next-answer can be *the* answer that shows which function was meant—that shows *what* rule is determined by

one's disposition—since the very next answer could be anything, depending on which function was meant or on what one's disposition is. And there is no way to show that a particular answer is (in)correct independently of showing which function was meant. If one answers '68+57=?' with '5', that could be construed as either an incorrect answer according to the addition function or as the correct answer according to the quaddition function. What is in question is which function was meant, and while each new answer may seem to rule out certain functions there will always be numerous other functions, compatible with the set of answers given to any point, that can't be ruled out. I said that each new answer will *seem* to rule out certain functions. But each new answer can also seem to accord with any function one likes—suitably interpreted. Hence Wittgenstein's remark in P.I. 201: "This was our paradox: no course of action could be determined by a rule because every course of action can be made out to accord with the rule." We might also say that no rule can be determined by a disposition because any disposition can be made out to accord with any rule. "The dispositional solution assumes that which function is meant is determined by my disposition to compute its values in particular cases. But since dispositions are finite and since they may deviate from the function's true values, two individuals may agree on their computations in particular cases even though they are computing different functions. Hence the dispositional view is not correct."(Kripke p.32)

Kripke cites a remark by Michael Dummett as giving a concise account of a variant of the dispositional solution: "A machine can follow this rule; whence does a human

being gain a freedom of choice in this matter which a machine does not possess?" (quoted in: Kripke, p.32. The view is not necessarily to be taken as Dummett's). This version of a dispositional view construes the sceptic as saying, in essence, that I am free to go on however I choose when asked to develop a series, e.g., add two, since I can always interpret the order such that whatever I do is in accord with my interpretation. Or, what comes to the same thing, I could, i.e., I am free to, interpret my "past intentions regarding the use of 'plus'" so that whatever I do brings my present use of 'plus' into accord with them. But a machine is not free to interpret, to choose what will count as going on correctly, to select an interpretation of its programs that accords with whatever it does. This must be because the rule itself determines what counts as correct. All that humans really have a choice about is whether to continue a pattern or not, not about whether this or that continuation of the pattern is *correct*. A machine does not possess the former capacity and, a fortiori, not the latter capacity, but that is irrelevant to determining what counts as the correct application of a rule.

This answer to the sceptic requires that one imagine embodying one's intention-to-use-a-word-in-a-certain-way (a rule) in a machine and letting the machine develop a series, e.g., "add two", in accord with that intention, thereby showing which function one meant by 'plus'. This would show that one's intention has a specific object, the rule that corresponds to the series the machine produces.

But what *crucial* difference does the proponent of this solution see between a machine and a living human being that indicates a machine would be any better at showing which function was meant? It can't be a difference between the capacities of machines and humans to 'malfunction' since machines break down, or are programmed or assembled incorrectly, just as humans are taught poorly or have brain injuries or drug induced illusions. And it can't be a difference in the capacities to store programs and information (the foundation of any disposition), since a machine too is capable of storing only a finite amount. Anything short of an infinitude of predetermined responses is not enough to defeat the sceptic's argument. And why would a machine be any better than would a human brain at 'containing' an abstract representation from which an infinitude of correct answers follows? No fact about the machine could determine which rule it embodied.

The machine really takes the place of the (idealized) dispositions I discussed above. To claim that the output of such a machine is definitive of one's intention is to say that whatever the machine does is correct. But real machines sometimes malfunction. It is surely imaginable that as I watch the machine churn out answers I judge that it is not computing according to the rule I embodied in it. Now what is to be said? Is it that the machine really is malfunctioning, or is it that I misinterpreted my past intentions? The sceptic's reply is that there can be no fact of the matter here. If I try to imagine the machine as 'ideally rigid' then the account of how the machine determines what I meant can't but be circular. Adding the condition of rigidity to the machine is just a

way saying that it will always behave as it *should*. And this is not something the machine can determine. But insofar as the sceptic does not doubt whether there is a determinate relation between a given rule and what accords with it the ideal rigidity of a machine doesn't answer the sceptic's worry, viz., that nothing determines *what* rule is being followed. Whether the machine is *rigidly* following a rule is one thing, but it is a further question *what* rule it is rigidly following. And if one concludes that there is no fact of the matter as to *what* rule is being followed that is tantamount to concluding that there is *no* rule being followed.

We have now canvassed all the candidates for a fact that constitutes meaning considered by K-W, and argued that the sceptical argument has forced the rejection of them all. Perhaps there are others which have not been acknowledged, but K-W makes no mention of any, and I shall assume that this silence is justified. We are compelled to admit then that, strictly speaking, our confident applications of allegedly meaningful signs are no better than blind stabs at conformity to a rule. If we are to give any account at all of statements about meaning it will have to be a sceptical one. K-W's attempt to do so will be presented in the next chapter.

Chapter Two

The Sceptical Solution

In the chapter entitled "The Solution and the 'Private Language' Argument" Kripke claims that while "Wittgenstein has invented a new form of scepticism..., the most radical and original philosophy has seen to date,... he does not wish to leave us with this problem but to solve it..."(p.60). The solution depends on rejecting the sceptic's requirements for meaningful assertion. These requirements were given forceful expression in Wittgenstein's own *Tractatus*. As the introduction to *Philosophical Investigations* attests, he "was forced to recognize grave mistakes in what [he] wrote in that first book"(p.viii). Kripke identifies the main target of the later Wittgenstein's attack on the *Tractatus* as the truth-conditional theory of meaning. When this account is pressed for an answer to the question: what are the truth-conditions for a sentence such as "Saul means addition by 'plus'"?, it can provide no answer that does not lead to the paradox that meaning must be impossible. The 'solution' to the paradox comes only when this account is replaced by another, viz. an assertion-conditions account.

An assertion-conditions account of meaning constitutes the 'constructive' element of K-W's solution to this paradox. The account is, so to speak, deduced from

descriptions of how statements about meaning and concept attribution are actually used. K-W insists that a description of the assertion-conditions that warrant statements about such things, and an account of the role played in our lives by adherence to these conditions is all that is required to legitimize assertions about meaning. The arguments offered 'in support' of the sceptical solution are the arguments *against* the possibility of a straight solution. These arguments have left the sceptic with nothing else to go on in trying to understanding meaning than a "description of the game of concept attribution" (p.95).

As I said earlier, Kripke refers to Hume's sceptical solution to his problem of induction to illustrate what he means by a "sceptical" solution to a philosophical problem. A straight solution to Hume's problem would have shown that belief in the necessity of causal relations can be grounded in, or proven true by, experience and is hence justifiable before the highest court of appeal. Hume was forced, however, to accept a sceptical conclusion—that no necessary connection between events can be discerned—but gave an alternative account of the belief in causal efficacy, and its apparent inexorability, and thereby showed that we are, in a sense, 'justified' in our belief. *This* 'justification' is the gift of nature however, not an a priori provision.

K-W's sceptical solution is also necessitated by an acceptance of the sceptic's conclusion—no (possible) facts correspond to assertions about meaning—and founded on a rejection of the apparent implication that no one is justified in claiming to mean something by what they utter. A "straight solution" to K-W's problem would have

shown that the necessary and sufficient conditions of meaning something are at least sometimes instantiated. It would have shown that the facts which *must* exist for such assertions to be true are really possible after all. However, K-W agrees with the sceptic that "there is no 'superlative fact'...that constitutes...meaning addition by 'plus' and determines in advance what...to do to accord with this meaning."(p.65) The search for the 'superlative facts' in which the meaningfulness of assertions seemed to consist must be abandoned, to be replaced by "a description of the game of concept attribution" (Kripke, p. 95). In this a posteriori, naturalistic description, is to be found all that is needed to legitimize assertions about meaning.

K-W's sceptical solution consists partly in trying to demonstrate that "the appearance that our ordinary concept of meaning requires such a fact is based on a philosophical misconstrual—albeit a natural one—of such ordinary expressions as 'he meant such and such', 'the steps are determined by the formula' and the like" (Kripke, pp. 65-66). Part of the job has already been accomplished by means of presenting the sceptical paradox as an insurmountable obstacle to maintaining the misconstrual that is the truth-conditional account of meaning. On this point Kripke thinks Berkeley provides a somewhat better comparison to Wittgenstein than does Hume. I will try to flesh out this comparison point by point.

1) a) In denying the existence of matter Berkeley does not claim to be denying the existence of something the common man believes in—causes of our ideas—but only the existence of anything corresponding to the then prevailing *philosophical*

conception of these causes— imperceptible matter—, a conception which was based on a misbegotten explanation of ordinary talk; b) When K-W denies that there is any 'superlative fact' (a distinctly *philosophical* conception) in which meaning one thing as opposed to another consists, he does not deny that there is a basis for our attribution of concepts to one another. 2) a) Berkeley gives his own analysis of ordinary talk about physical reality, claiming that when the ordinary person speaks of 'an external material object' he really means something like "an idea produced in me independently of my will", an expression containing no allusion to perception-independence. He agrees that if the world *did* consist in mind-independent substance then we would necessarily be barred from any knowledge of it; b) K-W holds that if meaning had to be explained by reference to truth-conditions then claims of the form 'X means Φ by "P"' would turn out to be meaningless, and hence all language would be impossible. But when the ordinary person says of such an utterance, "That's true", he really means something like, "The language-game in which we are engaged justifies that assertion". He need not be committed to the apparent implication that he has made a factual assertion that purports to correspond to some superlative fact in X's mind. 3) a) Berkeley concludes that external-world-scepticism is incoherent, since, if he is right, the attack invokes a conception of the constitution of the external world which is itself incoherent, and is in fact adhered to by no one but confused philosophers; b) K-W's aim is to show that the appearance that our ordinary concept of meaning demands there be 'superlative' facts (i.e., facts about individuals considered in isolation)

corresponding to assertions about meaning must be an illusion, since it leads to an irresolvable paradox.

The philosophical misconstrual that beset the meaning-sceptic is manifest in the truth-conditional account of meaning expounded in Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*. Its simplest, most basic idea can hardly be dismissed, says Kripke. It is the idea that a declarative sentence gets its meaning by virtue of its truth conditions, by virtue of its correspondence to possible facts that must actually obtain if it is true. On this view the question what a sentence means is answered by a specification—effected by an analysis of the relevant concepts—of the conditions under which the sentence is true. Kripke argues that Wittgenstein's later method of elucidating meanings depends on replacing the question, "what must be the case for this sentence to be true?" by two others: first, "under what conditions may this form of words be appropriately asserted (or denied)?"; second, given an answer to the first question, "What is the role, and the utility, in our lives of our practice of asserting (or denying) the form of words under these conditions?"(Kripke p.73). This seems to comport with Wittgenstein's claims, 1) that we can define "the meaning of a word" as: Its use in the language (P.I. 43) and, 2) "...to imagine a language means to imagine a form of life" (P.I. 19).

The "rough general picture of language" that replaces the *Tractatus* picture has a dual role in *Philosophical Investigations*, says Kripke. It offers a new approach to the problem of how language has meaning—hence the replacement of questions about truth-conditions and the exhortation to look at use; and it can be successfully *applied*

to "give an account of assertions about meaning themselves, regarded as assertions *within* our language" (p.77). To emphasize that these are assertions *within* our language is to express the rejection of the philosophical demand for the a priori deliverance of necessary and sufficient conditions, in this case of language and meaning. If K-W's new account is to be accepted we must first "discard any *a priori* conceptions and *look* ("Don't think, look!") at the circumstances under which...assertions are actually uttered, and what roles [various] assertions [actually] play in our lives" (Kripke, p. 75. No reference is given for the parenthetical remark).

In what follows I will not discuss the question whether Kripke is right in claiming that Wittgenstein *replaces* one account of language with another *account*.[5] I will assume that this *is* the correct way to describe the central difference between the earlier and later Wittgenstein and therefore also assume that the latter Wittgenstein owes us an account of how we are to justify, albeit in an attenuated sense, our assertions about meaning. My aim here is to explicate *K-W's* account of the justification-conditions for assertions about meaning; later I will compare this account with what I take to be Wittgenstein's result.

It must be noted here that Kripke is aware that focusing exclusively on *assertions* runs the risk of ignoring some important things Wittgenstein says about language, e.g.,

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[5] In my view Wittgenstein's change is a change in his way of looking at language that makes *any* kind of *account* superfluous. "Language must speak for itself" (Philosophical Grammar, p.40). Wittgenstein insists on sticking to *describing* language-games and not trying to explain or justify them. I think Wittgenstein's new approach is aimed at showing that there is no real 'problem of how language has meaning', rather than at giving a new answer based on a so called new *account* of language.

that language consists in a *multiplicity* of activities more or less related to one another, that assertion is *one* form and has no special primacy in elucidating the concept of meaning (language). But Kripke tries to turn this to K-W's advantage by arguing that this insight—that assertion is not primary—lends greater plausibility to the idea that "the linguistic role even of utterances in the indicative mode that superficially look like assertions need not be one of 'stating facts' (Kripke p. 73). Kripke thinks it therefore better to speak of "the conditions when a move ([the application of] a form of linguistic expression) is to be made in the 'language-game'", rather than of conditions for assertion; but he allows himself to "adopt an oversimplified terminology more appropriate to a special range of cases" and say that "Wittgenstein proposes a picture of language based, not on *truth conditions*, but on *assertibility conditions* or *justification conditions*" (p.74).

It should also be noted that the introduction of assertion-*conditions* smacks of reference to *facts*, e.g., about our practices. But, replies K-W, these conditions (facts, states of affairs) are not what *constitute* meaning, they are not 'superlative facts' about individuals; rather, they are what *justify one in asserting* something of the form "X means Φ by 'P'". "No supposition that 'facts *correspond*' to those assertions is needed" (p.78, my emphasis). Needed for *what*, exactly?, one might ask. On K-W's view the aim of providing a sceptical solution is to preserve the distinction between correct and incorrect uses of words, of one's being "licensed to make utterances" (p.76). The proponent of the sceptical solution should not be seen as wanting to

eschew all reference to facts when discussing meaning. In fact it seems that K-W wants to say that facts *are* involved in a correct account of the matter, but that they come into consideration in a different way. Facts are relevant in so far as they enter into descriptions of the circumstances in which one is licensed to say, e.g. "X means Φ by 'P'". But facts do not *constitute* the meaning of what is said. An individual's being licensed to go on using a word in a particular way in new cases is not a function of the existence of some *superlative* fact—a 'mental' state of the individual—that 'embodies instructions' for the use of the word. It is a function of the importance of the public practices with which our use of language is interwoven.

It is only when a *community of fellow language users* is also brought into consideration that the normative notion of correctness—a rule of language—can get any kind of foothold. Only then is there something *independent* of the individual's inclination to respond one way rather than another to give substance to the distinction between the individual's *thinking* he is right to continue his way and his *being* right to so continue; "...justification consists in appealing to something independent" (P.I. 265). The detached Cartesian mind, the individual considering himself in isolation, has no resources for maintaining this essential distinction. *Nothing* about the individual can be adduced to show whether or not he is using words correctly. *The* key to the *possibility* of maintaining a distinction between the correctness and incorrectness of statements about meaning (and by implication all other utterances) is the existence of a community. This would seem to explain why Wittgenstein spends so much time

examining third person criteria for concept attribution, especially the case of teaching a child to use words correctly, and asking what actually counts as showing that the child has mastered the use of a word.

What counts is not whether the child is *inclined* to use a word in a particular way, but whether the child's inclinations *agree* with those of its teachers. Of course if a child is to have any hope of becoming a member of the linguistic community it must at some time begin to exhibit a roughly *consistent* inclination. But considered in isolation, whether consistent or not, an inclination necessarily fails to conform to any *particular* norm of correctness. Only a practice that has a role in our lives can provide a basis for discriminating between correct and incorrect actions to which one is inclined. These practices must now be described.

The first thing Kripke draws our attention to is "what is true of an individual considered in isolation". The most obvious fact, he notes, is that "no one actually hesitates when asked to produce an answer to an addition problem."(p. 87). That is, irrespective of questions of correctness, we can say of individuals that they most often respond to new addition problems confidently. But the paradox has shown us that, upon being queried as to *why* we produce the answer we do, we must ultimately reach a level where we run out of reasons and all we can say is: "This is simply what I do" (P.I. 217). "It is part of our language-game of speaking of rules that a speaker may, without ultimately giving any justification, follow his own confident inclination that this way (say, responding '125') is the *right* way to respond, rather than another way

(e.g., responding '5')" (p. 88). So part of what constitutes the assertion-conditions that license an individual to claim that one way rather than another is the correct way to follow a particular rule, is that he does what he is inclined to do. It is a fact of our ordinary practice, says Kripke, that an individual is licensed to follow the rule the way it strikes him (ibid). But this license does not imply that whatever anyone does is *correct*. That is *not* part of our usual concept of following a rule. Quite the contrary; only if there is a large number of cases in which our inclinations *agree* can there be any substance to the distinction between correct and incorrect. Agreement in judgments among the vast majority of members of a community is essential to the existence of normative concepts, and hence to the practice of attributing them.

Just because individuals exhibit confidence that their way of proceeding is right that does not mean that there is no room for judgments that certain of their answers are incorrect. "Someone—a child, an individual muddled by a drug—may think he is following a rule even though he is actually acting at random, in accordance with no rule at all."(Kripke, p. 88). Kripke notes that we are inclined to accept such conditionals as: "If someone means addition by '+' then, if he remembers his past intention and wishes to conform to it, when queried about '68+57', he will answer '125'" (p. 89). The question is, he says, what substantive content such conditionals can have. Applied to a single person in isolation, they can have no substantive content since there can be no truth conditions or facts in virtue of which it can be the case that he accords with his past intentions or not. The situation is very different, however, if

we "widen our gaze from consideration of the rule-follower alone and allow ourselves to consider him as interacting with a wider community" (p. 89). There will then be a basis for justifying judgments regarding the (in)correctness of the subject's responses; e.g., a child learning addition is corrected if his answers do not agree with the teacher's, and praised if they do. If the child gets almost all small addition problems right, then even if he makes some mistakes with larger problems he might still be judged to be following the right *procedure*, e.g., carrying and so on. Here the teacher's judgment that the pupil is following the right procedure amounts to judging that he is following the procedure that the teacher is himself inclined to follow.

When we consider adults making judgments of other adults the case is similar. If Smith and Jones are engaged in the practice of comparing results of calculations and Jones suddenly begins to give results which Smith regards as differing bizarrely from his own, Smith will judge that something must have happened to Jones, that he is no longer following the rule he previously followed. If Jones' answers no longer display any discernible pattern then Smith will no longer judge that he is following any rule at all, and may eventually conclude that he has gone insane.

From consideration of these kinds of case Kripke says that we can discern rough assertion-conditions for such a sentence as "Jones means addition by 'plus'". "*Jones* is entitled, subject to correction by others, provisionally to say, "I mean addition by 'plus'", whenever he has the feeling of confidence—"now I can go on!"—that he can give 'correct' responses in new cases; and *he* is entitled, again provisionally and

subject to correction by others, to judge a response to be 'correct' simply because it is the response he is inclined to give."(p. 90). Both Jones' general inclination that he has got the right procedure, and his inclination to give particular answers, are to be regarded as primitive. They can not be justified by reference to Jones' ability to interpret his own intentions, or by anything else. But Smith need *not* accept Jones' as an authority on these matters, since he will judge Jones to mean addition by 'plus' only if he judges that Jones responses agree with those *he* is inclined to give. *All* members of the community will have inclinations to give responses and make judgments regarding the (in)correctness of the responses and procedures of others, but no individual's inclinations will be taken as authoritative; *all* inclinations are primitive. In no way does X test whether Y has a rule in his head that agrees with a rule in X's head. The point is only that where inclinations agree in enough concrete cases, no individual will feel justified in calling the responses or judgments of others wrong if they agree with his; and no one will feel justified in excluding from participation in the practices of the community a child whose inclinations begin to fall more and more in line with those of established members of the existing community. Those whose inclinations do not so fall in line "simply can not participate in the life of the community and in communication"(p. 92). These platitudes, as Kripke would call them, are all that we can offer when our inquiry after justification gets to the bottom of our linguistic practices (cf., Kripke p. 112). But such 'justification' is idle if we do

not describe the role and utility in our lives played by the practices of making certain types of utterance under the conditions that license them.

The question now is: What is the role and the utility of the practice of attributing mastery of the use of a word—the acquisition of a concept—to a candidate for admission into the community of speakers? The main point Kripke makes in reply has to do with *expectations* that go along with such attributions. For example, if I ask Jones to do my tax return I expect him to tally my deductions according to the proper procedure, and this because I assume he has mastered the rules involved in such tallying. If he makes what looks like a minor mistake I might say: "Oh well, this can be expected to happen occasionally". But if he checks his results several times and they are every time different, this can not be forgiven. I do not expect this, and I can only suppose that he is suffering a temporary aberrant condition, or that he has lost, or never had, a grasp of the necessary concepts. As Kripke notes, "our entire lives depend on countless such interactions, and on the 'game' of attributing to others the mastery of certain concepts or rules, thereby showing that we expect them to behave as we do."(p. 93).

These expectations place substantial restrictions on the behaviour of each individual, and are not compatible with just any behaviour one may choose. This is to be contrasted with the case where we considered the isolated individual. In that case there was nothing that placed a restriction on what that individual could do, since nothing about him could constitute *the* path laid out by his intentions. But an

individual who does not come into agreement with the responses of the community in enough cases will not be judged, by the community, to be following its rules, and will be excluded from transactions such as preparing another's tax return, or relaying an important message, etc.. In short, the community indicates that it can not rely on his behaviour.

This can be restated by means of a common philosophical device, viz., *inversion* of a conditional (p. 93). The analogy with Hume is apt here. Our ordinary concept of causation appears to commit us to acceptance of a conditional such as: "If events of type A cause events of type B, then if an event e of type A occurs then an event e' of type B must follow". But Humeans point out that this way of putting it appears to commit us to belief in a causal nexus, to the belief that the fulfillment of the antecedent, the occurrence of an event e, *necessitates* the occurrence of an event e', just what the Humean denies. To solve the problem the Humean concentrates on the assertion-conditions of a contrapositive form of the conditional, in order to reverse priorities. He does not want to upset our normal practice of speaking about causes, or making predictions, but to get philosophers to see the matter correctly and discard an erroneous metaphysical belief. Instead of seeing causal connections as primary from which 'flow' observed regularities, he takes the regularities as primary, and—looking at the matter contrapositively—points out that we withdraw a causal hypothesis when the regularity in question has a definite counter-instance (p. 94). Kripke cites other instances of the use of this philosophical device, e.g., "We do not accept the law of

contradiction because it is a necessary truth; it is a necessary truth because we accept it (by convention)"; "We do not condemn certain acts because they are immoral; they are immoral because we condemn them". These statements are not conditionals of course, but are (crude) expressions of conventionalist accounts of the relevant concepts. To each such account there correspond conditionals which, when maintained in their contrapositive form, are much less apt to seduce us into a metaphysical belief about what justifies our attribution of , e.g., necessity to the law of non-contradiction, or truth-conditions to statements about moral character.

Analogously, K-W holds that: "We do not all say 12+7=19 and the like because we all grasp the concept of addition; we say we all grasp the concept of addition because we all say 12+7=19 and the like" (pp. 93-94, nt.76). Even though we maintain as essential to our concept of addition some such conditional as "If Jones means addition by '+' then if asked for '68+57' he will answer '125'", maintaining it in its contrapositive form would provide us a better picture of the true situation. (Kripke asks that we ignore the fact that the antecedent is expressed overly loosely—e.g., the possibility of computational error is not allowed for— and accept the conditional, and its contrapositive, for present purposes). K-W concentrates on assertion-conditions, and points out that "If Jones does *not* come out with '125' when asked about '68+57', we cannot assert that he means addition by '+'" (p. 95). Despite the overly loose form in which this conditional is expressed, the fact remains that if we ascribe to Jones the conventional concept of addition we do not expect him to exhibit a pattern of bizarre,

quus-like behaviour. Our adherence to conditionals of this sort expresses our commitment to withdraw the attribution of a concept to a subject if in the future he exhibits, on enough occasions, bizarre patterns of behaviour that do not agree with the behaviour patterns exhibited by the established members of the linguistic community. Thus we place a restriction on the community's game of attributing concepts. And though our playing this game does not amount to our attributing to anyone a special 'state' of mind, still, we do something of importance. We take them provisionally into the community. And this game sustains itself only because of the brute fact that deviant behaviour rarely occurs. This account of the conditions that justify assertions expressing concept attribution, and the account of the role such attribution plays in our lives, constitute K-W's sceptical solution.

Kripke follows his presentation of the sceptical solution with a discussion of three of Wittgenstein's "key concepts"—agreement, forms of life, and criteria—in an effort to show how the sceptical solution applies with respect to concepts other than addition. This is important to Kripke's thesis—a thesis I do not intend to discuss or challenge at any length— that the real 'private' language argument of *Philosophical Investigations* is not to be found where most readers of Wittgenstein have claimed it is located. Kripke claims the crucial considerations, and conclusion, appear *before* section 243, where most commentators say the argument begins. On Kripke's view the discussion beginning at 243 constitutes Wittgenstein's application of the sceptical solution to a case that provides an apparently convincing counter-example to his claim that "...it is

not possible to obey a rule 'privately'", viz., the case of naming one's own private sensations. Examining this case, and comparing it with the case of terms for publicly observable objects, will allow us to see in slightly more detail how K-W's sceptical solution is supposed to work. We will see how agreement operates here, by examining the criteria we apply in reaching agreement about the appropriate use of avowals of sensations, noting that our procedure is to be accepted as given, as part of our form of life.

The sceptical solution depends on checkability, on one person's ability to check whether another uses a word as he does. There must, of course, be criteria that are applied in such checks. Take the word 'table'; how is it decided whether a child has mastered the use of this word? Put crudely, we can say that a child who says "table" or "that's a table" when adults see a table in the area (and does not do so otherwise) is said to have mastered the term 'table', i.e., he says "That's a table", based on his observations, in agreement with the usage of adults, who base their claims, and their judgments of the correctness of the child's usage, on their observations (Kripke, p. 99). But the case of sensations is different in a crucial respect according to those who would take this case as a convincing counter-example to K-W's thesis about the impossibility of private rules. The apparently crucial difference is that sensations are not publicly observable as are tables, and it would seem that the adults can not confirm—because they lack adequate criteria—whether or not pain is present when the child says "I'm in pain", and so they can never be sure whether or not the child is

using this term correctly. Only the child can know. But to draw this conclusion would imply that one had done what K-W says we cannot and need not do: invoke an "*a priori* paradigm of the way concepts ought to be applied that governs all forms of life, or even our own" (p. 105). In this case the criteria for the mastery of the word in question is not, and need not be, identification of a publicly observable object. It is, rather, publicly observable behaviour and circumstances; and "the fact that such behaviour and circumstances characteristic of pain exist is essential in this case to the working of Wittgenstein's sceptical solution" (p.100). Kripke's view is that "...it is part of Wittgenstein's *general* view of the working of *all* our expressions attributing concepts that others can confirm whether a subject's responses agree with their own. The present considerations simply spell out the form this confirmation and agreement take in the case of avowals" (ibid.). To complete the account of the attribution of sensation concepts we need only describe the role such attribution plays in our lives. Briefly, "If I attribute mastery of the term 'pain' to someone, his sincere utterance of "I am in pain", even without other signs of pain, is sufficient to induce me to feel pity for him, attempt to aid him, and the like..." (p.105).

In addition to discussing K-W's account of the criteria for the attribution of concepts for publicly and privately observable objects, Kripke invites us to compare the case of mathematics. This discussion is aimed at driving home the point that while no "a priori paradigm of the way concepts ought to be applied governs...our own form of life", nevertheless one thing must be present in all these different language-games involving

concept attribution, viz., while they all involve attribution of mastery of terms that can be applied to a (potential or actual) infinitude of cases, the criteria for their attribution "must be 'finite', indeed 'surveyable'..." (p.106). In the cases of mathematics, specifically those areas involving concepts more sophisticated than elementary arithmetical ones such as addition, the crucial criteria involved in reaching agreement in judgments involve proofs. Proofs are "finite objects; they are...short and clear enough for me to be able to judge of another person's proof whether I too would regard it as a proof. That is why Wittgenstein emphasizes that proof must be *surveyable*. It must be surveyable if it is to be usable as a basis for agreement in judgments" (p.106).

The parallel Kripke cites between mathematical concepts and sensation concepts illuminates, he says, "Wittgenstein's remark that "Finitism and behaviourism are quite similar trends. Both say, but surely all we have here is... Both deny the existence of something, both with a view to escaping from a confusion." (*Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*, p. 63)"(p. 106). Finitists realize that even though mathematical statements and concepts may be about the infinite, the criteria for attributing such concepts to others must be 'finite'. For example, we attribute the concept of addition—a concept that has an infinitude of possible applications—to a child on the basis of his agreement with us on a finite number of instances of its application. Similarly, even though sensation language may be about 'inner' states, behaviourists rightly note that the attribution of sensation concepts to others rests on

publicly observable, i.e., behavioural, criteria. Both parties, according to K-W, are right to deny that the relation between the language of infinite mathematical objects or 'inner' states, and its 'finite' or behavioural criteria of application, is "an adventitious product of human frailty, one that an account of the 'essence' of mathematical or sensation language would dispense with."(p.107). But both parties wrongly deny the *legitimacy* of such talk, condemning it as meaningless. Behaviourists have gone further and attempted to redefine statements about 'inner' states in terms of behaviour. In K-W's view these are both "attempts to repudiate our ordinary language-game." (ibid). But K-W holds that the language-games in which we assert statements about 'inner' states or mathematical functions allow the use of such statements for particular purposes. And despite the fact that the criteria for judging the legitimate use of such statements are behavioural or finite, "finite or behavioural statements can not replace the role these statements play in our language as we use it" (ibid).

Thus K-W rejects finitism and behaviourism as a function of his overall rejection of the truth-conditional theory of meaning. If one does not think of meaning as determined by truth-conditions, then to deny the existence of certain putative facts need not lead to the denial of the usefulness of certain forms of expression which appear to be statements of fact. The statements we make about inner states and about the infinite are legitimate not because they correspond to facts, but because they play an important role in our lives. The sceptical paradox, though it has shown us that a certain account of our assertions attributing concepts is blocked, has done nothing to

show that such attributions are unwarranted. There are conditions, internal to our language-games, that justify our attributing concepts to one another.

Finally, it should be re-emphasized that K-W's new account of language is based on assertion conditions. It should not be confused with the view that, for any *m* and *n* the value of the function we mean by 'plus', *is* (by definition) the value that (nearly) everyone in the community would give as the answer. Such a view would constitute a theory of the *truth* conditions of such assertions as: "By 'plus' we mean such-and-such a function", or "By 'plus' we mean a function, which, when applied to 68 and 57 as arguments, yields 125 as value." Such a theory would assert that 125 is the value of the function meant for the given arguments, if and only if '125' is the response that nearly everyone would give. That would be to suppose that a function can be *identified* by the dispositions of the community. But that would require that an infinite, exhaustive totality of responses be produced to show what function is meant by 'plus', to show just *what* function the community is disposed to apply. Kripke points out that such a view would be "a social, or community-wide version of the dispositional theory, and would be open to at least some of the same criticisms as the original form" (p.111). It would be a mistake to suppose that K-W is claiming that what *makes it true* that the answer to 68 plus 57 is 125 and not 5 is the fact that nearly everyone is disposed to give the answer 125 and reject the answer 5. That would be to suppose that "human agreement decides what is true and what is false"; but Wittgenstein explicitly rejects this view in P.I. 241. We all agree that the answer 125 is correct, but

that does not make it true that the answer is correct, since our answers do not constitute the identity conditions of a function. K-W has *no* theory of truth-conditions for the correctness of one response rather than another to a new addition problem. He simply points out that each of us *automatically* calculates new addition problems without feeling the need to check with the community whether our procedure is proper; that the community feels entitled to correct a deviant calculation; that in practice such deviation is rare, and so on. K-W thinks that his "observations about sufficient conditions for justified assertion are enough to illuminate the role and utility in our lives of assertions about meaning and determination of new answers" (p.112). What follows from these assertion-conditions is *not* that the answer everyone gives to an addition problem is, by definition, the correct one, but rather the platitude, that if everyone agrees upon a certain answer then no one will feel justified in calling the answer wrong (ibid).

In the next chapter I discuss what I take to be significant differences between K-W and Wittgenstein. But before doing that I want to briefly summarize K-W 's position. He began by raising doubts about the adequacy of what he took to be our ordinary justification of concept attribution. He argued that there can be no truth-conditions for assertions about meaning, that our ordinary practice of attributing meaning to signs and sounds can not be justified by reference to facts about individuals considered in isolation, that such attributions are not true or false in virtue of corresponding or failing to correspond to superlative facts in the mind. The only basis for justifying such attributions is agreement in judgments among the members of a community engaged in

common practices. In effect there is no such thing as a 'private' justification for a knowledge claim about meaning. Considered in isolation, individuals speak without justification, but not without right. One has a *right to say* such things as "I mean addition by 'plus'", in virtue of being confidently inclined to think that one can respond to new addition problems. But one will have been *justified* in having made such an assertion only if one's responses agree with those confidently inclined to by the majority of one's fellow language users. The criteria for establishing such agreement must be public and surveyable, though it need not conform to the requirements of "an a priori paradigm of the way concepts ought to be applied that governs all forms of life, or even our own" (Kripke, p.105). But this is not to say that agreement in responses constitutes the truth-conditions of a claim about meaning, that a particular rule for the use of a word is identified by the agreed upon responses of the community. That would be to suppose that there are truth-conditions for the claim that we follow *this* rule and not *that*. There are *no* truth-conditions for an assertion about the identity of a rule.

Chapter Three

Problems with the Sceptical Solution

Introduction

In this chapter I present two challenges to Kripke's interpretation of Wittgenstein's discussion of meaning and rule-following. The presentation is divided into two sections, with each section devoted to a more or less separate criticism. First I try to show how a persistent sceptic might argue that, given the notion of doubt invoked in K-W's original challenge to a naive (truth-conditional) account of meaning, the sceptical solution, while an attractive alternative to an unjustifiable belief in 'superlative meaning-determining facts', does not provide the individual with a basis for knowing the meaning of words. I try to show that a persistent sceptic could find reason to doubt the 'philosophical value' of K-W's sceptical solution, irrespective of the solution's *correctness*.

Next I argue that Kripke fails to provide a correct interpretation of a key part of Wittgenstein's text—specifically, section 201 of *Philosophical Investigations*—that is crucial to his supposition that Wittgenstein propounds and 'solves' a sceptical problem. I present a rival interpretation of this key part of Wittgenstein's text and

show how it conflicts with Kripke's interpretation. I try to show that in Wittgenstein's view the sceptical problem arises only given a certain tendentious statement of the ordinary conception of meaning. According to the interpretation I endorse, section 201 of *Philosophical Investigations* does not, pace Kripke, contain the conclusion of a sceptical argument. Rather, it presents the conclusion of a reductio ad absurdum argument. I argue that if Wittgenstein's reductio is successful, then K-W's sceptical problem can not intelligibly arise.

In chapter four I conclude my challenges to Kripke's reading of Wittgenstein with a discussion of Wittgenstein's general treatment of scepticism. Some of the questions raised by the issues discussed in the first part of the present chapter will be addressed in chapter four. For example, I try to show that Wittgenstein's favoured approach to scepticism is to aim at a dissolution of these pseudo-problems; to reject the sceptic's questions, not to answer them. I often quote Wittgenstein on this point since from his earliest through his very last writings he expressed strong doubt about the intelligibility of sceptical questions; e.g., from the *Tractatus*: "Scepticism is *not* irrefutable [pace Russell], but obviously nonsensical, when it tries to raise doubts where no questions can be asked" (6.51); and from his last notes, a remark which also bears on the present problem of word meaning: "The argument 'I may be dreaming' is senseless for this reason: if I am dreaming, this remark is being dreamed as well—and indeed it is also being dreamed that these words have any meaning" (O.C. 383).

These discussions will, of necessity, be limited in scope. Wittgenstein's claim that his investigation compels us to "travel over a wide field of thought criss-cross in every direction" should serve as a warning that his work can not be easily understood piecemeal; rather, to borrow a phrase from *On Certainty*, "Light dawns gradually over the whole" (O.C.141). I do not expect to shed much light in this sense (since I often find myself in the dark!) but only to refract an account of Wittgenstein's aims which is more plausible than Kripke's account. I will rely somewhat on the work of a few prominent Wittgenstein-scholars in attempting to show where K-W differs from Wittgenstein.

Sceptical Doubts and The Sceptical Solution

In this section I discuss the issue of whether K-W's sceptical solution, irrespective of whether it is an accurate account of Wittgenstein's reflections, is vulnerable to sceptical challenge. I do not address questions about the *correctness* of the sceptical solution since these raise issues which are too complex to be adequately dealt with within the scope of this essay. I focus my discussion on the epistemological concerns of a persistent K-W-type sceptic whose argument, which I explain below, goes roughly as follows: Suppose I accept the sceptical solution. And suppose I continue to accept as grounds for doubt such grounds as were allowed by K-W's sceptic when he first raised doubts about my (putative) justification for applying a word in a particular

way. Then, following classic lines of sceptical reasoning, I can still find reason to doubt whether, for any given putative word, it is really meaningful. The sceptic will try to show that the epistemic demands made by the sceptical solution leave him in a position no more philosophically attractive than that he was in when armed with a naive (truth-conditional) conception of linguistic meaning. His conclusion is that once one accepts the conception of doubt advocated by K-W's sceptic, then "the decisive movement in the conjuring trick has been made"(P.I.308), and attaining knowledge of the meaning of words looks to be impossible, irrespective of one's having adopted a new account of meaning. I discuss a few objections to the sceptic's argument and present what I suppose would be his reply. To close out this section I provide a brief comparison between Wittgenstein reaction to the sceptic's argument and the reaction one might expect from K-W.

Now, K-W tells me that a kind of solution to the rule-following paradox is achieved when I abandon a truth-conditional account of meaning and replace it with an assertion-conditions account. Now the sceptic asks: what is gained philosophically when this paradox is solved? He recalls that K-W's "main problem was *not* "How can we show private language—or some other special form of language—to be *impossible*?"; rather it is, "How can we show *any language at all* (public, private, or what have you) to be *possible*" (Kripke, p.62). Presumably then it is only where the truth-conditional account of meaning failed that the sceptical solution is supposed to succeed, i.e., to accept the sceptical solution is to accept only that language is

possible, that it can exist given certain contingent conditions. The persistent sceptic now argues that just as the sceptic about the existence of an external world agrees that it is *possible* that such a world exists, and then argues that no one can know whether or not it does, the semantic-sceptic ought to agree that while it is possible that language exists, no one can know whether or not it does. To make his point the persistent sceptic needs to show that the conditions which, according to the sceptical solution, determine whether or not a given utterance is meaningful, can not be known to obtain.

According to the sceptical solution, though statements about meaning can not be justified by reference to facts which make them true—there can be no such facts—their assertion is warranted in certain circumstances, given that making such assertions in these circumstances plays a role in our lives. But if one raises doubts about whether he can know the existence of the requisite circumstances, how can the sceptical solution help resolve *these* doubts? K-W does not raise any doubts about one's capacity to know whether or not conditions justifying an assertion obtain. One might ask why not, *given that he took his original doubts to be legitimate*. I will try to show where the method of doubt might have been further applied by a persistent sceptic. The sceptic's aim is to show that, *given* K-W's conception of a legitimate doubt, his solution to the sceptical paradox, assuming its correct, only gets him so far in his quest to extricate himself from the Cartesian predicament.

At this point I should remind the reader of the perspective on this entire problem which I described in my introduction to this essay (above, p. 3-5). I called it the "Cartesian perspective", and said, in agreement with Kripke, that the paradox of meaning could be developed, in accord with this perspective, with respect to a *single* language user, one who has taken up the challenge of Descartes' sceptic. I tried to make the sceptic's question about meaning seem reasonable by showing how it can arise in the context of a Cartesian search for knowledge. As I represented the matter the question about meaning didn't arise until after the sceptic had concluded that he couldn't know whether a world existed external to his mind. He claimed to have reached the point of realizing that even though he couldn't know whether his experiences were veridical, he could know, and therefore accurately describe, the content of them. Upon further reflection the Cartesian sceptic raised a doubt about his putative knowledge of the meaning of his words, since he realized that his descriptions of his thoughts and experiences must be expressed in language, and that mistakes about the meanings of words are possible. Given his acceptance of the result of K-W's sceptical argument, he could be said to agree that *if* he were to know the meaning of any word, it *could* not be in virtue of his having knowledge of a fact about himself which determines the meaning of that word, since there are no *possible* facts about any individual to which a claim to mean one thing rather than another could correspond.

To a sceptic armed with a truth-conditional account of meaning it looks as though a necessary condition of knowing the meaning of a word, viz., its *having* a meaning, was

shown to be impossible to fulfill. However, according to K-W all is not lost, because one can still find a basis for asserting something about meaning. He claims that by virtue of the existence of certain facts, i.e., assertion-conditions, one can have adequate justification for asserting something of the form "I, like most others in my community, mean Φ by 'P'". But now the persistent Cartesian sceptic asks whether K-W's sceptical solution says anything about meaning that ought to preempt his inclination to employ sceptical doubts to determine whether such facts could be known to obtain? If statements about such putative facts are not justifiably assertible then the sceptical solution fails epistemologically, and leaves the individual in a position which is little (perhaps insignificantly) better than the position in which he found himself rationally obliged to concede that the "sceptic's negative assertions [about the possibility of a truth-conditional account of meaning] are unanswerable" (Kripke, p.66).

To proceed with the dialectic then, the first thing the sceptic needs to do is to identify the conception of a legitimate doubt he will employ in his argument. He claims that his doubts about the sceptical solution are of a kind with those raised by K-W vis a vis the naive conception of meaning. K-W seems to hold that a doubt is legitimate simply by virtue of its being a priori possible. That this is K-W's conception is suggested by the following: Kripke says: "if the sceptic proposes his hypothesis [about a change in usage] sincerely, he is crazy"(p.9); and yet despite having said that, he supposes the sceptic's doubt to carry weight (to demand an answer) on the following ground:

"although the hypothesis is wild, ["obviously insane" (p.8); "bizarre", "absolutely wild", "no doubt false", "ridiculous and fantastic"(p.9)] it does not seem to be *a priori* impossible" (p. 9, original emphasis). I take it that the suggestion is: if an hypothesis is a priori possible (imaginable, conceivable), then it constitutes legitimate grounds for doubting the truth of alternatives and must be ruled out if a contrary hypothesis is to be known to be true. And if our ordinary conception of meaning (or whatever) is founded on the assumption that a particular hypothesis is true, then if the advocate of our ordinary conceptions seeks to justify his adherence thereto, he must rule out all other a priori-possible hypotheses. From the point of view of the sceptic the supposition that there actually exist circumstances which warrant assertions about meaning is an *hypothesis*. To raise doubts about this hypothesis the sceptic will have only to describe an alternative hypothesis that is compatible with the evidence that seems to support K-W's hypothesis.

Now K-W could rightly point out here that he is not in a position to be hoisted by his own petard. He might claim that his argument did not really depend upon any sceptical doubts. According to Kripke, K-W's hypothesis about a change in usage, caused perhaps by a bout of LSD, or an insane frenzy, is employed as "in a sense merely a dramatic device"(p.10). As I see it, the ultimate point of introducing the hypothesis was to induce the reader to attempt to cite the facts that ostensibly make it true that one means addition, and not, say, quaddition, or nothing, by "plus". If one is so confident that the sceptic's hypothesis is false and that one does know the meaning of

the word "plus", i.e., the rule(s) for its use, then one ought to be able to cite the rule-embodying facts that make a statement such as "I mean addition by "plus"" true. If the problem has an epistemological application, then it is this: one is being asked to show that a necessary condition, the truth condition, of a knowledge claim about meaning is fulfilled. However, "the sceptical challenge is not really an epistemological one" (Kripke, p.21). The sceptic's argument did not proceed, as so many sceptical arguments do, on the assumption that there is a possible fact (which, if it obtained, would make my claim true), and try to show why it cannot be *known* whether or not such a fact does obtain. His aim was to establish a conceptual point, viz., that statements about meaning could not be meaningful in virtue of the subsistence of truth-conditions (possible-states-of-affairs) to which they correspond. This is not an epistemological claim about the possibility of attaining a kind knowledge, it is a metaphysical claim about the *possibility* of the *existence* of a kind of fact, quite irrespective of whether such putative facts could ever be known to obtain.[6]

So perhaps it could be argued that the notion of doubt employed by K-W's sceptic is not *essential* to his attempt to establish the conclusion that there can be no truth-conditions (as he conceives them) for statements about meaning. However, his employment of the notion, albeit only for dramatic purposes, constitutes an endorsement of it as a legitimate philosophical device. One could say that it constitutes

[6]Of course, it follows from the claim that there can be no facts of the requisite kind that no one could *know* the truth of a claim which has as a necessary condition of its *being meaningful* the possible existence of such a fact.

an endorsement of the Cartesian method of doubt as a sound method for producing philosophical insight/avoiding philosophical error. Nowhere does he either repudiate this conception of doubt or disparage its use in philosophical investigation. Insofar as he endorses it, he ought to acknowledge that if his sceptical solution is to be helpful to a philosopher caught in the Cartesian predicament, it can be so only if it offers conditions for meaningful assertion that are knowable. The persistent sceptic argues that it can not.

Perhaps it will be suggested that the proponent of the sceptical solution has blocked further sceptical challenges by having conceded that there is no fact of the matter about meaning and hence nothing to be sceptical about. That is, since K-W "has no theory of truth-conditions—necessary and sufficient conditions—for the correctness of one response rather than another to a new addition problem" (Kripke, p.111), it would seem as if he has put forward a view which is immune to sceptical doubt. According to him there can no more be a practice-independent fact which could show that a community is wrong in agreeing on the answer to a new addition problem, than there could be a practice-independent fact which could show that an individual is following a particular rule. Just as Berkeley defined "sensible thing" in such a way that one could not fail to have knowledge of sensible things, K-W has defined "meaning" in such a way that no community could be wrong in agreeing about the correct use of its words. But the sceptic might still ask: "Supposing one agrees with this definition of "meaning", where does this leave the *individual* vis a vis *knowledge* of meaning?" All

the sceptical solution has told him so far is that conditions under which he would *actually* be justified in claiming to know the meaning of a word *might* exist. And according to the sceptical solution if these conditions did not exist then "the game of attributing concepts to individuals *could* not exist" (Kripke, p.96, my emphasis).

In order for the sceptic to succeed in showing that the sceptical solution leaves him in the epistemological lurch he need show only that among the conditions which must exist for there to be meaningful utterances *at least one* can not be known to obtain; he need not show, though perhaps he could, that none of these conditions can be known to obtain. According to the K-W sceptical solution, the following condition must obtain if there is to be any ground for an individual to claim knowledge of the meaning of words: There must exist communal linguistic practices which, though not circumscribed by rules reaching to infinity, contain standards of correctness which exist independently of any given individual, standards according to which it is correct for one to say things that imply an attribution of some concepts, e.g., "X means Φ by 'P'", "I mean 'addition' by 'plus'", etc. The *basis* for a standard of correctness is general agreement in responses among the members of the community, and the *measure* of correctness of an individual's response is its agreement or disagreement with the response the majority of others are inclined to give.

As an important preliminary to his sceptical argument the sceptic now points out that, as he understands K-W's notion of a linguistic practice, in order for there to be such a thing there must be individual signs and sounds which are *regularly* used in

certain ways. In support of this claim he argues as follows: When the sceptic first raised the question whether or not any 'superlative facts' exist which determine whether an individual's use of a word is correct, the question was thought by the sceptic's opponent to be answerable by showing whether or not it was used in accord with a particular rule (instructions given to oneself). The sceptic then argued that if one is to be genuinely guided by a rule then it must be the case that the rule is held fast to *over time* [7]. The requirement of regularity through time is nowhere abandoned by K-W, and seems to be implicit in the sceptical solution. That is, the claim that it is justifiably assertible of a community that they are engaged in communication by means of language must mean that there is some justification for saying that they proceed over time in accord with some standard of correctness, that there is some (normative) *regularity* to their practice of using signs and sounds[8]. It can't mean that they agree

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[7]Of course the *amount* of time is irrelevant. My point is only that *some* time will have elapsed between when one first "gave oneself instructions" for the use of a word, and when one intends to use it in accord with these instructions. And the sceptic exploits this temporal gap to hypothesize a change in one's usage.

[8]There is good reason to think that Wittgenstein took regularity to be one of the essential features of what we call language. In section 207 of *Philosophical Investigations* he claims that it is imaginable that we should encounter a community of people who "carr[y] on the usual human activities and in the course of them employ, apparently, an articulate language. If we watch their behaviour we find it intelligible, it seems 'logical'. But when we try to learn their language we find it impossible to do so. For there is no regular connection between what they say, the sounds they make, and their action; but still these sounds are not superfluous, for if we gag one of the people it has the same consequences as with us; without the sounds their actions fall into confusion—as I feel like putting it" (P.I. 207). We can conceive of these people as agreeing in their *present* responses to, and uses of, sounds. Furthermore, we can say that these sounds play a role in the lives of these people (recall that such a role is required for K-W's sceptical solution). But in answer to the question, "are we to say these people have a language: orders, reports, and the rest?", Wittgenstein's conclusion is that in such a case there would not be enough *regularity* for us to call what they do "speaking a language" (ibid). Here he seems to be referring to a 'necessary condition', an *essential* feature of what we call language (Though we should not suppose that Wittgenstein thinks of *regularity* as having an essence; and, a fortiori, we should not think of regularity as being *the* essence of language, for language has no essence (P.I. 65, 92, 108)).

only in their *present* responses. For, *considered in isolation*, present agreement in responses would fail to establish, or constitute adherence to, a standard of correctness.

To know on any given occasion whether or not one is making a meaningful utterance there must be a criterion for distinguishing between words and mere marks and noises. The sceptic's difficulty is that he is able to conceive of cases in which certain 'utterances' that seem to one to be meaningful, are in fact meaningless gibberish, noises having no regular use and therefore belonging to no language at all. For example, so called "speaking in tongues" might be thought of as such a case. If a sceptic could successfully argue that he has no means of reliably distinguishing between meaningful words and meaningless noises and marks, because he could not rule out a 'speaking in tongues' type hypothesis, then he will have shown that, despite the fact that K-W's sceptical solution provides for the possibility of meaning, it does not provide reliable grounds for *judgments* about meaning.

Community Regularity?

It is no use, for example, going back to the concept of agreement, because it is *no more certain* that one proceeding is in agreement with another, than that it has

happened in accordance with a rule. Admittedly, going according to a rule is also

founded on agreement. (R.F.M., p.392. My emphasis)

The sceptical solution is supposed to preserve the distinction between its seeming

that a move is correct and its being correct. An individual considered in isolation has

no resources for maintaining this distinction. If the sceptic can show that present

agreement among the members of a community is insufficient to establish that they are

speaking a language, and that no one could know whether agreement was ever more

than present then he will have shown that there is no ground for claiming to know of

the members of a community that they make meaningful utterances. And if an

individual needs to think of himself as a member of a linguistic community in order to

have any basis for making assertions about the meaningfulness of his own utterances,

then he will have no basis for knowing whether or not he ever says anything

meaningful. A sceptic could argue that it is conceivable, from *within* any community,

that the regularity they seem to themselves to exhibit in using 'words' could be an

illusion. If it were, then no one in the community could have a justification for saying

of them that they speak a language. In that case the individual would again be left

without reliable criteria for determining whether or not any given putative word is

meaningful.

A sceptical member of a community could always argue that, *for all he could know,*

the community's agreement, while very often apparent to him in the present, was in

fact always *merely* present agreement. He could suppose that the inclinations of the entire community were always shifting en masse without their noticing this. *Though wild, this hypothesis does not seem to be a priori impossible* (cf. Kripke p.9). If this hypothesis were 'true' (justifiably assertible in certain circumstances) then an essential feature of what we call language, viz., regularity, would not in fact be manifested in the behaviour of the community. From a sceptic's point of view, one could never know whether or not one's utterances met the criteria specified by the sceptical solution. The only evidence available to an individual in the Cartesian predicament is compatible both with the claim that one's community speaks a language, and with the claim that they are merely making noises which are somehow connected with their present activities.

At first blush it seems not, for the following reason: according to their K-W-conception of metalinguistic justification all that is required for them to be justified in using an expression in a particular way is that they be inclined to use it in agreement with one another. Supposing this situation obtains, there is no further question whether they are all proceeding in the 'right' way. But suppose a member of the community reflects as follows: If there is to be anything to the notion of 'a *way* of using a word', correctly (or incorrectly), this can not simply amount to agreement (or conflict) in *present* inclinations to say it is being used in some way. A *way* of using a word can not be identified by a description only of what occurs in the *present*, viz., agreement in inclinations in some present circumstances. A *way* of using a word is a

pattern of use. A clock does not tell the time merely by its hands presently being in some particular position. The hands must also have been in some *previous* position and be on the way to some *further* position; a clock works by exhibiting a *regular pattern* of movement. The mere fact that all the clocks in town *now* show the same time does not show that they are all working properly.

Suppose a sceptical member of the community in question develops this analogy with clocks. He notes that it would be possible for some change, e.g., in the earth's magnetic field, to cause all the clocks in town to begin, in unison, running at a changed rate, and this to be detectable by noting how they all now go around three times per day instead of two. Under such circumstances he could conclude that the clocks are no longer exhibiting the same pattern as before even though they all 'agree' in their present positions. Now suppose he asks whether something analogous is possible with him and his fellow language users, whether something might have caused an en masse shift in the inclinations of the community such that, e.g., what they are all now presently inclined to call "green" they were all previously inclined to call "red". *Though wild, this hypothesis should not seem a priori impossible to this individual* (cf., Kripke p. 9).

He would note that such a change would *seem* to be detectable by the community under certain circumstances, e.g., there are suddenly a great many more traffic accidents at controlled intersections. But then he might reflect that in the end they could not distinguish between a change in their inclinations to use 'words' and a

change in the objects they 'describe as having certain colours'. For unlike the case with the clocks, where the regular movement of the sun provided a standard against which the regularity of the clocks could be judged, the sceptical solution mentions no measure of regularity independent of the inclinations of the community. How can one know such en masse shifts in the inclinations of the community are not occurring all the time, without anyone noticing this? One can not know! All the evidence one could have is compatible with at least two inconsistent hypotheses, only one of which describes the community as engaging in linguistic practices. If one could not show a priori that it is possible to know which is right, one will not have shown how it is possible to justify an assertion about the meaningfulness of any putative word.

Thus scepticism about the meaningfulness of 'words' would be possible even if one didn't think of meaning something by a word as being *constituted* by any facts about oneself. Agreement in inclinations, under whatever circumstances, does not provide adequate grounds for someone's supposing that the 'words' of the 'language' of his community are being used in any regular way. And if there are no words (meaningful sounds) then surely there is no language. Present inclinations to utter sounds may agree, but if a conflict with the facts arose how is it to be decided what has gone wrong? The evidence would be compatible both with the hypothesis that the world had changed and with the hypothesis that the inclinations of the community had changed. There could be no set of conditions that justified the assertion of one hypothesis over the other.

If this sceptical argument is successful, then we are faced with a radical conclusion: No one can know whether anything he inclines toward 'saying' is a meaningful utterance, even if others appear to agree in being inclined to 'say' the same thing. If this is true then, for all one can know, there is no such thing as a linguistic practice in which putative assertions can be justified. In that case one has no basis for saying of one's own utterances that they are meaningful. It looks as though as long as one adheres to the Cartesian method of doubt and its context-independent notion of a legitimate doubt, there will be no possibility of laying down a set of conditions, a *rule*, which could guide one in distinguishing between linguistic and non-linguistic practices. One could always suppose that while there may be linguistic practices, one can never be in a position to remove all doubts about one's grasp of them.

How might K-W respond to the above sceptical challenge to the sceptical solution? He shouldn't be that surprised by it. But on the other hand he might be somewhat impatient with it. He might remind the challenger of several important points: It has already been shown that there are no facts that could possibly constitute truth-conditions for our claims about meaning. Criteria for meaningful assertion are entirely internal to the practices of a community, and they are not answerable to anything outside the purposes for employing them. Assertions about meaning float free of any need for correspondence to reality. The ways we find it natural to proceed, whether or not these proceedings exhibit regularity, constitute our form of life, and that is to be accepted as given. The only *possible* basis for deciding the assertibility of claims about

the rule-following of a community is by reference to the role and utility of such claims in the practices *internal* to that community. Anyone who could not learn to proceed as we do, who did not find it natural to proceed as we do, simply could not participate in the life of our community.

But he would not be justified in saying that we are possibly wrong to attribute meaning to our words. For one thing, how could he possibly take himself to have said anything meaningful?! If someone within our community began to raise bizarre 'doubts' about possible en masse shifts in the community's inclinations and no longer exhibited confidence about how to apply words, he too would be excluded from participation in our activities (except perhaps philosophy!). And he too would have no justification for concluding that we might be wrong to attribute meaning to our words. Such attributions are neither true nor false. They are intra-linguistic articulations grounded in practices which would not even exist if everyone were preoccupied with doubts about what counted as a word. Such doubters could only be reminded of the criteria we actually apply in deciding whether something is a word, and whether it is being used correctly. All one could do would be to try to show that there is no possibility of getting outside the practices in which assertions about correctness have importance to see whether these practices adequately ground the criteria we employ when justifying an assertion.

K-W could agree with the persistent sceptic that there simply is no guarantee that no disruptions could occur that would make us uncertain about how to go on using

words. And if something did happen that created uncertainty as to whether the inclinations of the community had shifted en masse or the world had changed, then as long as the community could adjust itself and its use of words to the new circumstances and maintain its new found agreement then there would be no need to decide whether it was measure or measured that had changed. That is simply all there is to be said. Further 'doubts' at this stage have no point or purpose, and hence make no sense. They are useless. They can do nothing to help us set up language-games that would "stop up all the gaps". We have no idea what such language-games would be like.

The general line taken in this reply is roughly compatible with Wittgenstein's view[9]. But he did not take the sceptic's *original* demand for justification of our linguistic practices to be legitimate. He tried to show that the method of doubt is self-destructive[10]. So in his view there was never any need to find a 'superlative fact' about individuals that guaranteed they were using words in accord with what they took them to mean. It was only a certain idealized conception of a rule of language, and an incoherent conception of doubt, that seemed to give the sceptic any ground for uncertainty about whether we could know that our words are meaningful. In what follows I will try to show that far from being sceptical about our capacity to live up to the demands made by this idealized conception, Wittgenstein repudiated it and tried to

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[9]There are important differences too, but it would take me too far afield to attempt to identify these.
[10]I argue this point more fully in chapter four.

show that the semantic-sceptic's concerns are founded on a misunderstanding of the ordinary use of the words "rule", "meaning", "understanding", "interpretation".

Kripke's Reading of P.I. 201

My question really was: "How can one keep to a rule?" And the picture that might occur to someone here is that of a short bit of hand-rail, by means of which I am to let myself be guided further than the rail reaches.[But there *is* nothing there; but there isn't *nothing* there!] For when I ask "How *can* one...", that means that something here looks *paradoxical* to me; and so a picture is confusing me (R.F.M., p. 430).

According to Kripke's interpretation, section 201 of *Philosophical Investigations* contains the paradoxical conclusion of a sceptical argument. The rival interpretation of P.I. 201 that I am going to present is largely derived from David Pear's book *The False Prison*. Pears' discussion of the issues raised by Kripke's book is far too detailed to be reproduced here, but I will try to make clear the main points which conflict with Kripke's interpretation of this crucial passage. Pears argues that

Kripke's interpretation of *Philosophical Investigations* is not the complete misunderstanding some of his critics have taken it to be. He asks the same questions as Wittgenstein about the maintenance of language as an accurate system of measurement and, like Wittgenstein, he argues that it can only be

maintained by internal resources. The main difference lies in the assessment of this conclusion. Kripke's verdict is that the best available resources are not really adequate. That is not the verdict of Wittgenstein, who argued that the quest for external resources is the result of a misunderstanding (Pears, p. 443).

Pears presents a view shared by many other authors, viz., that section 201 presents the conclusion of a reductio and not the endorsement of a paradox. But unlike some others, who concentrate only on Wittgenstein's attack on the notion of a mental state or process of meaning, Pears identifies a key target of Wittgenstein's reductio as Platonist theories of meaning and rule-following. Kripke claims that "for Wittgenstein, Platonism is largely an unhelpful evasion of the problem of how our finite minds can give[11] rules that are supposed to apply to an infinity of cases" (p.54). Pears agrees that on Wittgenstein's view Platonism is unhelpful, but not because it constitutes an evasion of the problem, but because it is the *source* of the so called sceptical problem. It makes matters appear worse than they would appear if we simply thought of language as a self-imposed self-sustaining system, evolving out of our natural tendencies—as Wittgenstein thinks of it. Pears argues that Platonism is invoked because the idea of language as a self-imposed self-sustaining system arising out of

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[11]Note that Kripke conceives of the problem as being about how our finite minds can *give* rules that apply to an infinity of cases, as opposed to being about how we can *grasp* a rule that has an independent existence in Platonic heaven. Nevertheless, the rules we are said not to be able to give, are required to have the essential characteristic of Platonic rules, viz., they must, if they are really to determine meaning, determine, and hence guide one through, an infinitude of applications. As the sceptical problem is formulated there is a gap between the rule as it is contained in the instructions I give myself, and the particular applications I go on to make of it. The problem then is what mental fact about me ensures that I am acting in accord with the rule as I formulated it. So an attack on Platonism applies here as well.

natural human tendencies makes it appear somehow arbitrary, an unstable and hence unsuitable instrument for accurately describing reality. So to explain how it can have the stability it *must* have to fulfill its purpose, theories that go beyond the contingent are invented to service this demand.

One such theory is adumbrated by the following remarks: "The steps are *really* already taken, even before I take them orally or in thought" (P.I. 188); A rule for the use of a word "traces the lines along which it is to be followed through the whole of space" (P.I. 219). A rule of language is conceived as a kind of normative machine that needs only to be engaged with the mind ('grasped') in order to provide the individual an in exhaustible guide for the correct application of the word it governs. Kripke thinks this view is an unhelpful evasion because, as he puts it, "Platonic objects may be self interpreting...; but ultimately there must be some mental entity involved that raises the sceptical problem" (Kripke, p. 54). Pears agrees with this point: "Platonism involves something more than an ontology, because it is not enough that the fixed rails should be laid to infinity, but also necessary that something in the rule-follower's mind should connect him with them" (Pears, p. 469). The Platonic conception of rules *requires* that one postulate a mental state that guides one in maintaining accord with these rules, otherwise the question of how one knows what to do to maintain consistent accord with the rule is left unanswered. But on the other hand, since there is a distinction between the *consistency* in my use of a word and the *correctness* of that use, there must be some standard of correctness, the rule, independent of the mental

state. But Wittgenstein's arguments, as Kripke demonstrates[12], show that there could not be any such mental state. For the mental state, whether consisting in the presence of a picture, an analytical formula, or a feeling, can be no less ambiguous than the rule it was supposed to interpret. The question is whether Wittgenstein saw this as a reason to be sceptical about our capacity to use language as, inter alia, a (reliable) means of describing the world.

"The entire point of the sceptical argument", says K-W, "is that ultimately we reach a level where we act [specifically, use a word to mean something] without any reason in terms of which we can justify our action. We act unhesitatingly but *blindly*" (Kripke p. 87). The sceptic has forced himself into admitting that his doubts are unanswerable, that no matter how confident anyone may feel about his way of proceeding beyond the familiar, he proceeds blindly. According to the sceptic one's only resource for assuring oneself that his language is a stable means of describing the world is agreement with others who share the same blind inclinations[13]. This is supposed to be a sceptical answer to a doubt as to whether my conviction that I am following a particular rule is justified. But what makes it appear as though there is a *sceptical* problem here, one which can be answered only by reference to a brute inclination and community

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[12]These arguments were presented in chapter one.

[13]Pears argues that Wittgenstein allowed for another resource, what Pears calls "calibration on standard objects". This resource is not often appealed to, but is assumed in any check for agreement with fellow speakers. It wouldn't do to check with others unless it could be assumed that their use of a word remained constant. But how is this in turn to be checked? Put briefly, and crudely, it is checked by measuring the communities use of language against the world. But this is not to step *outside* language and check whether it corresponds with the world, the nature of which can simply be seen, without the medium of language. Pears explains this by saying that "In Wittgenstein's later philosophy a resource that 'stabilizes language' contributes to what counts as the stability it maintains" (Pears, p. 368, ftn. 19).

agreement? On K-W's view the ordinary concept of a rule demands there be something in my mind which makes it true that I am following this rule (e.g., plus) for the use of the word 'addition' and not that rule (e.g., quus). But this demand can seem warranted only if one conceives of a rule as uniquely determining an unlimited number of correct (and incorrect) uses of a word. But Wittgenstein rejects this Platonic picture of a rule, and so his remark, "When I obey a rule I do not choose. I obey the rule blindly", should not be taken as a faute de-mieux answer to a sceptical challenge. We understand Wittgenstein's arguments against 'rule-embodying facts-in-the-mind' better if we see them as aimed at rejecting a two-pronged Platonic picture—a rule as covering every imaginable case, and a state of mind which is the grasping of the rule— rather than as trying to show that, because of some limitation we labour under, we must be sceptical about our capacity to fulfill the demands made by the concept of rule-following. "My obedience is 'blind' not because I shut out considerations that might have influenced me..., but because, when I have worked my way down to the foundations, where the only question left is 'What in this case would count as the same again?', there are no more considerations, doubts, or justifications. I do not even have to listen to the rule, because it speaks through my applications of it" (Pears, p. 441).

According to Pears, Wittgenstein's rejects the idea that there must be intermediaries which determine meaning, because he rejects the picture of a rule which engendered this idea. But in turn he rejects the Platonic picture of a rule by showing that there could not be an intermediary that guaranteed one had latched onto the rule. K-W

rejects this latter idea because on his view no fact in the mind could fulfill the demands made by the concept of a rule. A rule must show me what I ought to do to act in accord with it. But any fact in my mind leaves it undetermined *what* rule I am following, and so fails to show me what to do in any given case. Wittgenstein does not suppose that a rule must show me what to do in every imaginable case, so for him it is not so much as if no (possible) fact in my mind can tell me what to do—though he would agree—as that the demand that there be such a thing is based on a misunderstanding. This misunderstanding is identified by Wittgenstein in P.I. 201.

Wittgenstein justifies his rejection of rule-tracking intermediaries, and a fortiori of the Platonic conception of rules, by means of a reductio ad absurdum argument. It is significant that Kripke quotes only part of the passage in which Wittgenstein draws the conclusion of this reductio. It is remarkable partly because the passage is the very one in which Kripke locates what he takes to be the fundamental conclusion of K-W's discussion of rules. One would think Kripke would have felt intellectually obligated to account for the entirety of this passage, since, prima facie it goes against the sceptical interpretation of Wittgenstein's discussion of rules. But he makes *no* mention of a crucial part of it. The passage in full is as follows:

> This was our paradox: no course of action could be determined by a rule, because every course of action can be made out to accord with the rule. The answer was: if everything can be made out to accord with the rule then it can also

be made out to conflict with it. And so there would be neither accord nor conflict here.

It can be seen that there is a misunderstanding here from the mere fact that in the course of our argument we give one interpretation after another; as if each one contented us at least for a moment, until we thought of another standing behind it. What this shows is that there is a way of grasping a rule which is not an interpretation, but which is exhibited in what we call "obeying the rule" and "going against it" in actual cases.

Hence there is an inclination to say every action according to the rule is an interpretation. But we ought to restrict the term "interpretation" to the substitution of one expression of the rule for another (P.I. 201).

Kripke quotes only the first paragraph of this passage and he claims that here K-W is presenting the paradoxical conclusion of a sceptical argument. But Wittgenstein's real purpose in presenting this 'paradox' is stated immediately: "It can be seen that there is a *misunderstanding* here...". The misunderstanding is manifest in the absurd conclusion that every course of action can be made out to accord with a particular rule. This conclusion is fostered by the mistaken supposition that an interpretation is *required* to bridge an apparent gap between grasping a rule and applying it correctly. If that were the case then there would be serious difficulty in trying to understand 'how language is possible', since no interpretation could be the final one. But this requirement is a function of a Platonic conception of rules—the rule... "traces the lines along which it is to be followed through the whole of space" (P.I. 219). Wittgenstein

asks: "if something of this sort really were the case, how would it help?" (ibid.). His answer, as K-W's arguments against 'superlative facts' demonstrate[14], is that it couldn't help at all. Pears argues that Wittgenstein's view is not only that Platonism couldn't help, but also, what is worse, that it abolishes the distinction it was designed to preserve, viz., that between accord and conflict with a rule. Wittgenstein concludes that the Platonic conception is based on an illusion[15].

That Wittgenstein is presenting a reductio and not endorsing a paradox, as K-W does, is made clear by a difference between what K-W says about accord and conflict with a rule and what Wittgenstein actually says. Kripke expresses K-W's so called sceptical conclusion thus: "There *can be* no such thing as meaning anything by any word. Each new application we make is a leap in the dark; any present intention could be interpreted so as to accord with anything we may choose to do. So there *can be* neither accord nor conflict" (Kripke p.55, my emphasis). Wittgenstein, however, does not conclude that there *can be* neither accord nor conflict, but, rather, that on the supposition that an interpretation is *needed* to determine meaning, there *would be* neither accord nor conflict with a rule, since any interpretation could itself be variously interpreted and therefore could never perform the function it was introduced to

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[14]These arguments were presented in chapter one. The main objection to hypothesizing 'superlative facts' is based on the idea that any representation of a rule is variously interpretable, i.e., no representation can determine its own correct application.

[15]It is beyond the scope of this essay to trace the source of this illusion. Wittgenstein explains it by drawing an analogy between the inclination to suppose that one can see the possible movements of a machine in the present state of it, and our inclination to suppose that the possible uses of a word can be seen in the flash of understanding we sometimes express by saying "Oh, I get it , now I understand".

perform, viz., render a rule completely precise and unambiguous, and provide the necessary justification for a particular way of proceeding. K-W concludes that an interpretation can not do the job we would like it to do, and so we must, strictly speaking, i.e., when speaking philosophically, be sceptics and settle for a weaker form of justification than would be ideal. Wittgenstein concludes that interpretations would not do the job philosophers want them to do and concludes that we must, to attain a correct understanding of our normative practices, reject the sceptic's demand for 'ultimate' justificatory foundations. He rejects as unintelligible the philosophical idealization of rules.

Several things seem to be shown by the absurdity Wittgenstein demonstrates: 1) Not every action can be said to be in accord with the rule, since if it could then it could also, by some other interpretation, be made out to conflict with it. In that case there would be *neither* accord *nor* conflict, and the concept of a rule would be empty and useless. "Interpretations by themselves do not determine meaning" (P.I. 198). "...[T]hat everything can...be *interpreted* as following, doesn't mean that everything *is* following" (R.F.M., p. 414).

2) Wittgenstein concludes explicitly that "there is a way of grasping a rule that is *not* an *interpretation* but which is exhibited in what we call "obeying the rule" and "going against it" in actual cases". The inclination to call every action according to the rule an interpretation should be resisted; otherwise the relation between the rule and its correct application appears to be external and there still appears to be the need for a

connecting link to justify the claim that this action counts as a correct interpretation of the rule. We would still be in the absurd position of supposing that it is possible that no one ever acts in accord with a particular rule, or that everything can be made out to accord with it. Wittgenstein suggests that we reserve the word "interpretation" to designate a substitution of one expression of a rule for another. An interpretation "still hangs in the air along with what it interprets, and can not give it any support" (P.I. 198). If I have a *sceptical* doubt about my inclination to follow the rule thus, then how can I avoid doubting the correctness of an interpretation? Interpretations are, to be sure, a part of our language-games, but they are no more nor less important to a complete account of them than the rules and utterances they are used to clarify. Wittgenstein points out that as a matter of fact an expression of a rule *sometimes* leaves room for doubt about how to follow it, sometimes not. So an interpretation, a substitution of one expression of the rule for another, *may* be required, for practical purposes, which may be to determine how, or if, the rule applies to a new case. But he also points out that his claim that the expression of a rule sometimes leaves room for doubt, sometimes not, is an empirical one, not a philosophical one (P.I. 85). But even so, "Interpretations come to an end" (R.F.M., p.342). It is part of the concept of a rule that if there were not overwhelming agreement in reactions to signposts, there would be no signposts, i.e., nothing like *what we call* a rule. Hence there would be no such thing as a possibility under certain circumstances of a variety of interpretations of a particular rule. The agreement Wittgenstein refers to is, in his view, "part of the

framework upon which the working of our language is based" (P.I. 240, my emphasis). It is not something that we establish *in* our language-games. "The agreement of ratifications is the precondition of our language-game, it is not affirmed in it" (R.F.M., p. 365).

3) To obey a rule is a practice, a custom (P.I. 202). It is as much a part of our natural history as, walking, eating, drinking, playing (cf. P.I. 25). To say that I have mastered the use of a rule, or rules, is to say that I have acquired an ability, that I know *how to do* something, for example, to *apply* a rule, or to give explanations of my use of words. "To understand a sentence means to understand a language. To understand a language means to be master of a technique" (P.I. 199). What goes on in my mind is not by itself any indication that I have mastered a technique. "The application is still a criterion of understanding" (P.I. 146). The specification of a rule must include its actual applications, though not all of them; for there is no such thing as *all* of them.

K-W concludes that no 'fact in the mind' (a picture, an experience, a dispositional state), whether or not accompanied by an interpretation, could determine by itself the extension of a rule. Therefore 'true statements' about meaning float free of any necessary connection with 'superlative facts' about our mental lives. They relate to practices, and do not have any meaning outside them. K-W and Wittgenstein pretty much agree on this point, but they differ significantly when it comes to drawing further philosophical consequences. Wittgenstein did not maintain any doubts about the adequacy of our normal criteria for rule-following, and so he has no objection to

speaking about the *truth* of such statements, as established by these criteria. K-W did raise 'doubts' which seemed to show a deep inadequacy in our normal criteria, and force the rejection of a truth-conditional account of meaning and the adoption of an alternative account, an assertion-conditions account[16]; but all this only because he gives a false account of our ordinary conception of what it is to follow a rule.

This is evidenced by the way K-W describes what he takes to be the ordinary conceptions of grasping and following a rule.: "We all suppose that our language expresses concepts— 'pain', 'plus', 'red'—in such a way that, once I 'grasp' the concept, all future applications of it are determined (in the sense of being uniquely *justified* by the concept grasped)" (Kripke, p. 107). "Ordinarily, I suppose that, in computing '68+57' as I do, I do not simply make an unjustified leap in the dark. I follow directions I previously gave myself that uniquely determine that in this new instance I should say '125' (ibid, p.10). The supposition that to follow a rule it is

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[16]I think it is more plausible to say that Wittgenstein rejects the truth-conditional theory of meaning *as a theory*, than to say he *replaces* this view by another, an assertion-conditions theory. The importuning to look at the circumstances in which we take an assertion to be justified is an attempt to widen our gaze, "to produce...that understanding which consists in 'seeing connexions'" (P.I. 122). For example, connexions between the circumstances in which one is said to be justified in asserting something and the circumstances in which we would say that same assertion is true. It is not meant to get us to turn our attention completely away from one thing and let it rest exclusively on another. Consider the following remark about verification: "Asking whether and how a proposition can be verified is only a particular way of asking "How d'you mean?" The answer is a contribution to the grammar of the proposition" (P.I. 353). Wittgenstein says that asking for the method of verification is *only* a particular way of asking "How d'you mean". He seems to be suggesting that the verification *theory* ought to be rejected as *the* way of giving the meaning of a sentence. But he acknowledges that telling how a proposition can be verified is *a* contribution to clarifying its meaning. Why should the same not hold for asking what facts correspond to a given assertion? Nothing Wittgenstein says is meant to discourage us from supposing so. Of course Wittgenstein would add that we need to look at the particular case, and not demand a *general* set of truth-conditions corresponding to a form of utterance, about meaning or what have you. And of course the same holds for asking about assertion-conditions. (See N. Malcolm, *Wittgenstein: Nothing is Hidden*, pp. 65-67).

necessary to "give oneself instructions that uniquely determine...all future applications" goes with a certain conception of what a rule of language *ought* to do; that a rule ought to provides speaker with *complete* guidance, that a rule ought to "trace the lines along which it is to be followed through the whole of space" (P.I. 219). K-W's sceptic is no doubt held captive by this picture, a picture which seems to reveal the real *requirements* for understanding a rule. If a rule really did 'trace a line through the whole of infinite space' then grasping a rule would have to consist in some mysterious act of mind whereby one attains knowledge of the entire infinite range of the rule's applicability ("as only the act of meaning can anticipate reality" (P.I. 188))[17]. But then the voice of scepticism pipes up and describes the following scenario: Two people (with finite minds of course) who have up to some point agreed on what steps are in accord with the rule they both claim to be following, suddenly disagree on what counts as accord in a hitherto unencountered case. This leads to the 'hypothesis' that perhaps they have been following different rules all along, only *seeming* to understand the rule in the same way. Since it is conceivable that such contingencies could arise— indeed they often do, with words such as 'good', though much less often with words like 'plus'—there appears to be no way of assuring that we understand each other short of traversing the infinite rails side by side to ensure our *complete* agreement. But

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[17]Should it be thought here that we can obviate the introduction of this absurd picture by invoking the notion of recursion (or induction) I would remind the reader that this is the very sort of concept which is said by the sceptic to be of no help here. If a recursive rule is supposed to take the place of the mind's traversing the infinite range of a rule's applicability, the question arises: How does one hold fast to the recursive rule? How is one to know that what seems to one to be the same application of the rule really is the same?

this is of course 'impossible', i.e., it makes no sense. That is not what it means to determine the meaning of a word.

S.G. Shanker argues that Wittgenstein's discussion, far from issuing in a complaint that we can't live up to the demands engendered by this picture, is actually aimed at undermining the temptation to adopt this picture. He argues that "Wittgenstein finally arrived at the point at sec.201 [where Kripke sees the endorsement of a paradox] where we are forced to accept that either we abandon this picture, or else concede that language itself must prove to be impossible" (Shanker, p.18). Kripke takes it that Wittgenstein opts for the former alternative because he sees the sense of the sceptic's argument and agrees with his conclusion. Shanker argues that Wittgenstein's point is, rather, that the sceptic's line of attack on what he takes to be the ordinary conception of rule-following inevitably leads to the conclusion "that we can not even understand what he is saying". Thus, the sceptic's argument is "self-defeating precisely because it is nonsensical" (ibid). Just how this conclusion follows will be discussed presently.

I touched on this point earlier (chpt.1) when I noted that Kripke laid it down as a ground rule of the investigation that he and the sceptic agree in their *present* use of words; "otherwise, we will be unable to *formulate* our problem" (Kripke, p.14). Presumably then, they shared a common understanding of what is involved in following a rule. The sceptic's interest was the further question whether anything ensured that their present use was consistent with their *past* use, and could therefore be said to be in accord with a particular rule. So it *seemed* as though the argument

proceeded on the basis of some initial shared piece of knowledge, and progressed to the doubtful. Kripke went on to argue that the "the ladder must finally be kicked away", that this provisional allowance was "indeed fictive" (Kripke, p.21). But if it really was fictive then how can we conclude that anything was properly established by the argument, since it depended for its statement on the employment of meaningful signs, not to mention rules of inference?! Given the sceptic's scruples, this question can find no satisfactory answer.[18]

Wittgenstein saw this and mocked the scrupulous sceptic: Suppose we try to convince the sceptic that, given his criterion of a legitimate doubt, we have no reason to *agree* that in the course of giving his argument he has even said anything; and he replies: "Well, I *believe* that I have demonstrated my point". Wittgenstein replies, "Perhaps you *believe* that you believe it!" (P.I., 260). That is, how do you know what it is to believe something, if you don't now know, and couldn't ever have known, the meaning of the word 'believe'? The point here, I believe, is that "your scruples [i.e., doubts] are misunderstandings" (P.I. 120). Wittgenstein's aim is a reductio of the sceptic's argument by means of exploiting and turning against the sceptic his own method of 'doubt'. "If you are not certain of any fact, you can not be certain of the meaning of your words either" (O.C. 114). In that case no one need listen to your arguments since by your own scruples no one can understand them. The sentence

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[18]The persistent sceptic who accepts this as a logical consequence of the requirements for meaning but still is compelled to think something definite has been established by his argument has reached "the point where one would like just to emit an inarticulate sound" (P.I. 261). At which point he should "bring words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use" (P.I. 116).

"meaning is impossible" must have a particular meaning if it is really to express what it is supposed to express[19]. Likewise the words and sentences used in the putative proof of this conclusion. But if these putative linguistic items really are meaningful then they can't be. If they aren't meaningful then they neither say nor imply anything. The sentences do *seem* to be meaningful. But if they mean what they seem to mean then they can't mean anything. This is not a paradox, it is an absurdity. I will not try to explain how an absurdity can seem to make sense (See P.I. 511-517).

Pears argues that in *Philosophical Investigations* Wittgenstein places all questions about knowledge, doubt, and justification *within* our various language-games, wherein also lie the instructions for answering them. On Wittgenstein's view, just as it makes no sense to ask whether what we call "check" in chess really is check, the sceptical challenge can not intelligibly arise. If, after having had full training in the employment of various rules and passed all the recommended checks, I still 'doubt' whether I am really using a word correctly, my 'doubt' "goes beyond [any] particular language-game and is automatically transformed into a request for an answer to the conceptual question 'What counts as following a rule?'" (Pears, p.442). And this forces me to look at the practice-specific criteria we actually use to settle these matters. "The outer void in which ['doubts'] would retain their sceptical character but lose all hope of

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[19]I hope my point will not be obscured by a concern over the distinction between propositions and sentences. The arguments Wittgenstein mounts to show the uselessness of hypothesizing intermediaries that determine meaning could be applied here to show that nothing could ensure that a particular sentence expressed one proposition rather than another. And this would, on the view I am advocating, be a reductio of the philosophical requirement for such a distinction, not a sceptical challenge to our 'belief that our sentences mean something'.

finding non-sceptical answers is treated by Wittgenstein as a fantasy" (Pears, p.442). If we treat the question whether anyone ever follows any particular rule the same as the question whether Bill is following the rule for addition then we are engaged in such a fantasy. For while it makes sense to ask whether Bill has acted in accord with the rule of addition, it makes no sense to ask whether our practice proceeds in accord with what the addition function dictates. *We* fix what counts as adding. Just as we fix what counts as obeying the rules of chess. It makes no sense to say that what we all call chess might not really be chess, that how we play the game might not really accord with its rules. We can of course change the rules, but then we are playing a different (though possibly related) game and would be in no way getting into conflict with truth. What counts as the truth-conditions of a sentence is determined by criteria internal to a language-game. To attempt to assess the adequacy of these criteria from an external standpoint is the result of a misunderstanding. In Wittgenstein's view it is to fail to recognize "The essential thing about metaphysics"; it obliterates the distinction between "the determination of a sense [the laying down of rules] and the employment of a sense [a move in accord with the rules]" (Zettel, sec.458; R.F.M., p.168).

I conclude that Wittgenstein does not present the conclusion of a sceptical argument in section 201 of *Philosophical Investigations*. Rather, he presents reasons to reject a picture—"a visible section of rail laid invisibly to infinity" (P.I. 218). This picture lead the sceptic to demand, and despair of attaining, an external justification of our ordinary practice of attributing meaning to utterances, e.g., a Platonic rule. But this

brings with it a need for a 'superlative fact' to guide one along the rails. David Pears argues that the demand Wittgenstein is rejecting, viz., that some unambiguous intermediary—an "instant mental talisman" as Pears calls it—must exist to explain how a rule can be grasped and followed, would, according to Wittgenstein, actually "abolish the distinction between obeying and disobeying a rule" (Pears, p.467). That is, if the sceptic's demand had to be fulfilled there would be neither accord nor conflict with a rule. But this is, of course, the very distinction that the supposition was to help explain, and thereby preserve from sceptical 'doubt'. The supposition is self-defeating. This is why Baker and Hacker refer to the upshot of the sceptic's 'position' as, not scepticism but "conceptual nihilism" (Baker and Hacker, p.6). So, since the sceptic's demand can not be made intelligible, we can reject the picture that engendered the demand. This is not to be sceptical, but rather to conclude that the picture of a visible section of rails laid invisibly to infinity is "a mythological description of the use of a rule" (P.I. 221).

Chapter Four

Wittgenstein on Scepticism

It may easily look as if every doubt merely *revealed* an existing gap in the foundations; so that secure understanding is only possible if we first doubt everything that *can* be doubted, and then remove all these doubts. (P.I. 87)

"I cannot doubt this proposition without giving up all judgment". But what sort of proposition is that?...It is certainly no empirical proposition. It does not belong to psychology. It has rather the character of a rule" (O.C. 494).

"The origin and the primitive form of the language-game is a reaction; only from this can the more complicated forms develop" (P.O., p.395).

I tried to demonstrate in previous sections that the sceptic's attempt to formulate a coherent challenge to our ordinary practices of laying down and following rules is founded on a conception of doubt which is self-defeating. I argued that the sceptic's conception of a legitimate doubt, if ubiquitously applied, leads to "conceptual

nihilism"[20]. In this section I try to show that Wittgenstein recognized this, and applied this insight in his investigation of a number of subjects that have occasioned scepticism in the course of the history of philosophy, e.g., the possibility of knowledge of contingent facts about, for example, causal relations, the external world, or the contents of other minds. I do not discuss each topic separately or try to provide a decisive Wittgensteinian 'refutation' of the sceptic in each case. Instead I draw on a selection of remarks from Wittgenstein's discussions of these subjects and try to convey a general account of Wittgenstein's non-sceptical views. However, I do not do much to defend his views, since my aim here is to show only that Kripke is on a completely wrong track in trying to characterize Wittgenstein as receptive to scepticism. This issue is decidable quite independently of whether Wittgenstein's views are correct. To aid in explaining Wittgenstein's relation to scepticism I contrast his conceptions of doubt and knowledge with those employed by Descartes. I also adumbrate what I take to be an important implication of these contrasting conceptions of doubt vis a vis Descartes' and Wittgenstein's respective methods of philosophical investigation.

The first passage I want to discuss will bring into focus one of the main points I try to make in this chapter, viz., that the method of doubt which has dominated philosophy since Descartes is not, and could not be, the method of Wittgenstein. In what follows I try to show that the result of Wittgenstein's investigation of the

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[20]I borrow this term from Baker and Hacker. I quoted it above, p. 87

concepts of knowledge, doubt and certainty is an account of doubt and its relation to knowledge quite unlike that assumed by Descartes in the *Meditations*. The difference between these conceptions of doubt and certainty betrays differences in philosophical method and goals. Descartes' goal was the discovery of a secure foundation for knowledge. The Cartesian method of doubt is supposed to enable one to winnow out the doubtful and find, perhaps, something clear and distinct, something certain, upon which an edifice of knowledge can be built. If a belief is to be elevated to the status of knowledge then it must be able to survive a ruthless application of the method. If *any* ground can be found for supposing the belief to be possibly false then the belief can not count as a piece of knowledge until that doubt is overcome. Now here is an adumbration of Wittgenstein's reaction: "It may easily look as if every doubt merely *revealed* an existing gap in the foundations; so that secure understanding is only possible if we first doubt everything that *can* be doubted, and then remove all these doubts" (P.I. 87). I will try to show that while Wittgenstein acknowledges that "it may easily look as if " this were so, he does not agree that it is so. His view is that before we try to formulate a question regarding the *possibility* of knowing a given thing, we ought to ask "whether it can make sense to doubt it" (O.C. 2).

One of Wittgenstein's encounters with this difficult question is recorded in his notes entitled *On Certainty*. These notes were prompted by G.E. Moore's famous papers "Proof of an External World" and "A Defense of Common Sense", in which Moore rejects Idealism and Scepticism, and embraces Realism. Moore endeavours to prove

the existence of a physical world external to any mind by arguing that certain propositions which imply the existence of such a world are known by him with certainty to be true. It is interesting to compare Wittgenstein's reaction to the doubts to which Moore's papers are an answer, and Kripke's reaction to the semantic-sceptic's initial doubts about the possibility of meaning. Initially Kripke reacted to the semantic-sceptic's doubts as one might expect: "if the sceptic proposes his hypothesis sincerely, he is crazy"(p.9). Yet he goes on to say, apparently as a means of getting the reader to persist in trying to answer the sceptic's doubts: "although the hypothesis is wild, ["obviously insane" (p.8); "bizarre", "absolutely wild", "no doubt false", "ridiculous and fantastic"(p.9)] it does not seem to be *a priori* impossible" (p.9, original emphasis). I take it that the suggestion is: if an hypothesis is a priori possible then, no matter how wild by ordinary standards, it constitutes legitimate grounds for doubting the truth of alternatives. For example, if it is a priori possible that I previously meant quaddition and not addition by "plus", then, unless I can prove I meant addition, I don't know what the rule designated by "plus" determines as the correct answer to "68 plus 57". K-W accepts such an hypothesis as legitimate grounds for doubting one's putative mastery of any given word of a language— "...the relevant sceptical problem applies to all meaningful uses of language" (Kripke, p.7). Wittgenstein, on the other hand, did not accept such hypotheses as legitimate grounds for doubt. In his view the conception of doubt that drives the Cartesian method is a

metaphysical nonstarter— "If you tried to doubt everything you would not get as far as doubting anything. The game of doubting itself presupposes certainty" (O.C. 115).

Certain things must be beyond doubt if a putative expression of doubt is to have *sense*, i.e., if it is to *count* as an expression of doubt, and not, say, as a sign of some mental disturbance, or misunderstanding. But when the sceptic accepts wild hypotheses as grounds for doubt, it is not clear how he can justifiably avoid doubting what must be presupposed if a doubt is to have sense. If he were to apply his doubts to these presuppositions he would find that the ground on which his doubt must stand could no longer support his doubts. This point can be explained by an analogy with a game, e.g. chess. Imagine the following situation: A chess match is in progress between two competent players. Player A claims that the move player B has just made will cost player B a bishop. Player B, who does not yet see this possible consequence, asks: "How do you know that?" Player A makes a move and then says: "There are now only two places you can move your now threatened bishop, and either way I can safely take it." Now suppose (wildly) that B, remembering his philosophy classes, suddenly adopts an extremely scrupulous posture and tries to raise doubts about the claim that the loss of his bishop is now inevitable. For example, suppose he asks A how he knows that bishops can move only diagonally, a claim that A's demonstration presupposed. Now A could respond to this bizarre question in quite distinct ways: On the one hand he could try to cite knowledge of some fundamental facts from which, along with the present evidence, it follows that he knows bishops can move only on

the diagonal. On the other hand he could throw the ball back into B's court and ask whether what must be presupposed *if B's question is to make any sense* can itself be doubted. A dialogue on the matter might go something like this, with B taking the role of the sceptic and A taking the role of the Wittgensteinian:

B: How do you know that bishops can move only diagonally?

A: Well, I know the rules of chess, and that is one of them. I have no doubt.

B: But couldn't you be mistaken? I assume you will admit that from the fact that you have no doubt it does not follow that you have knowledge. Perhaps I can reveal a gap in your 'knowledge'. For example, couldn't you have mixed up the rules for chess and the rules for some other game and not noticed this? Or perhaps you have inadvertently confused the rules for the movement of bishops with those for the movement of rooks. That's conceivable, isn't it? Can you *know* that hasn't happened?

A: Yes, I agree that, of course, the mere absence of doubt does not prove knowledge. And I agree that it's *conceivable* that I could be wrong about a rule of chess, but in the present circumstances I have no reason to suppose that I am wrong. More important however, is that it is also conceivable that *you* have mixed up the rules of chess with the rules of some other game! If that were the case you wouldn't really be asking me about a rule of chess, but perhaps about some other game you *now* call "chess". If conceivability of error is enough to defeat a knowledge claim then on what grounds can you claim to know the meaning of the word "bishop", or "move", or "chess"? Surely you can conceive of all kinds of wild scenarios according to which

you do not know the meaning of a particular word. In fact it's a quite ordinary thing for someone to be mistaken about the meaning of a word.

B: But I think I can *always* know what *I* mean by "bishop", or "chess", or any other word because even if I doubt the existence of everything external to my mind, I can always assign a meaning to a word and use it to describe how things seem to me.

A: But then how can *I* know what you mean by "bishop", or any other word? And how do *you* know? Am I to suppose that you 'assigned a meaning' to this word such that you could not thereafter be mistaken about what meaning you assigned it? How could you do that? Surely it is conceivable that for any given word you may have forgotten what meaning you assigned it, or mixed up its definition with that of another word. And even supposing you succeeded in defining a word independently of any contact with an existent linguistic practice, couldn't whatever criteria you might thereafter employ to test the correctness of your use of a word be wrongly applied? Given the test for knowledge you began with, I don't see how you can have knowledge of an independent basis for distinguishing between your *thinking* you are right and your *being* right to use a word in a particular way. You leave yourself with nothing but an unjustifiable conviction that you know what you mean! Actually I think it's worse than that. If I am to count anything you 'say' as more than an inarticulate grunt I must *presuppose* the existence of linguistic practices, without which words do not exist. If you are to know the difference between a meaningless noise or mark and a word then you too must presuppose an independent standard of correctness.

Otherwise there is no difference in your game between what you *think* is right and what *is* right. And that is not *our* game with the word "knowledge". In just the same way your question about my knowledge of the rule for the movement of bishops presupposed an acquaintance with the practice of playing chess. This is a well defined practice with clear rules. If there were not overwhelming agreement in the application of the rules (and of the words in which the rules are expressed) the game of chess would not exist. If the game did not exist then of course there would be no moves, no bishops, etc.. And a fortiori there would be no questions or doubts *about* the rules for the movement of bishops. It is therefore senseless to raise 'doubts' on such grounds as you proposed. They were not even real doubts. For as I have tried to point out, a thorough-going application of these 'doubts' leads to a scepticism so radical that a sceptic can claim knowledge of nothing whatever, not even the meaning of the word "doubt".

Now player B might ask where this argument leaves him vis a vis determining what he knows. How is he supposed to tell the difference between what he knows and what he merely believes? Does showing that it makes no sense to doubt something prove that one *knows* it? According to Wittgenstein it does not. He did not hold, as Descartes did, that immunity from doubt guarantees knowledge. For example, from the fact that it makes no sense to doubt whether I am in pain it does not follow, according to Wittgenstein, that I *know* whether or not I am in pain. Wittgenstein recognized that his view would seem peculiar. "The queer thing is that even though I

find it quite correct for someone to say "Rubbish!" and so brush aside the attempt to confuse him with doubts at bedrock,—nevertheless, I hold it to be incorrect if he seeks to defend himself (using, e.g., the words "I know")(O.C. 498). In his view, if we do not see this, that can only be because "we just do not see how very specialized the use of "I know" is" (O.C. 11). In his view, if it makes no sense to doubt something then all that follows is that the assurance that one knows that thing can't accomplish anything, since one will not be able to say, by reference to something more certain than what had been called into doubt, *how* one knows. Obviously it does not follow from one's saying "such and such is the case" that such and such *is* the case. One says "I know" when one is in a position to say, or to show, how one knows.

This can be further explained by reference to the chess match between A and B. When B first asked how A knew that B's bishop could not escape capture, the question made sense only because under the circumstances, i.e., given the practice of playing chess, there was a possibility of A's *showing how* he knew. Of course he might have turned out to be wrong. But when B asked how A knew that bishops can move only on the diagonal he employed a notion of doubt which pre-empted the possibility of A's making sure. That is, given the nature of B's 'doubt', A could produce nothing as evidence that would count as more certain than what was called into 'doubt'. This is similar to the case of disputes among Sceptics, Idealists and Realists. Moore attempts to refute the Sceptic and the Idealist by claiming to know a number of apparently ordinary facts. For example, he claims to know that he has two hands, that

the earth has existed for hundreds of years, that he has never been on the moon, and other such things. Wittgenstein denies that it is correct for Moore to say he knows these things. But this is not because Wittgenstein was a sceptic. Nor, of course, was it because he thought *Moore* didn't know these things whereas others did. It is because Moore claimed to have knowledge where there is no such thing as showing how one knows. In Wittgenstein's view Moore misused the word "know".

Wittgenstein notes that it is possible to imagine circumstances in which such knowledge claims would make sense, and could be justified, but these are rare. He offers the following example: "If I don't know whether someone has two hands (say, whether they have been amputated or not) I shall believe his assurance that he has two hands, if he is trustworthy. And if he says he *knows* it, that can only signify to me that he has been able to make sure, and hence that his arms are e.g. not still concealed by coverings and bandages, etc., etc.. My believing the trustworthy man stems from my admitting that it is possible for him to make sure. But someone who says perhaps there are no physical objects makes no such admission" (O.C. 23). Wittgenstein seems to suggest that all parties in the debate between Idealists, Sceptics, Solipsists, and Realists make the fundamental mistake of agreeing that "perhaps there are no physical objects". This is not a mistake of ontology, but a misunderstanding of the role doubt plays in our language-games.

A claim such as "This is a hand" (or "I mean addition by 'plus'") is, in normal circumstances, as certain as anything I could produce in evidence for it. That is why I

am not, in normal circumstances, in a position to take anything as *evidence* to the conclusion that I have a hand, (or that I mean something by the noises or marks I make) (O.C. 250). According to Wittgenstein the game of doubting itself presupposes certainty. A doubt works only *in* a language-game. But "if I wanted to doubt that this is my hand how could I help doubting that the word "hand" has any meaning?"(O.C. 369). And would that not amount to trying to doubt whether there even exists a language-game? Surely I can not doubt that! But this does not mean that the mere existence of the language-game *proves* anything, since proof too exists only in a language-game. Just as check exists only in chess. That is why Wittgenstein insists that we accept the language-game as a "proto-phenomenon" (P.I. 654, 655; O.C.105). We can not go outside the language-game and ask whether, e.g., what we call "knowledge" really is knowledge. Just as it would make no sense to ask whether what is called "check" in chess really *is* check.

Sceptics are characterized by Wittgenstein as being unsatisfied with our ordinary forms of expression, and as wanting to get outside the language-game to see whether it is suitable for presenting the facts as they really are. Wittgenstein objects to the suggestion that it is possible, despite overwhelming agreement among the speakers of a language, to use the wrong *form* of expression and thereby get into conflict with truth. But isn't to deny this to affirm "that human agreement decides what is true and what is false"? Wittgenstein rejects this suggestion: "It is what human beings *say* that is true and false; and they agree in the *language* they use. That is not agreement in

opinions but in form of life" (P.I. 241). Wittgenstein does not take the view that we can keep scepticism at bay by agreement, by agreeing to speak in such a way that sceptical questions can't arise. For one thing, isn't it obvious that the questions would have to have arisen for this strategy to make any sense? Wittgenstein says that the agreement he speaks about "is part of the framework upon which the working of our language is based..." (P.I. 240). This is a remark about the background against which our utterances make *sense*, it is not about their truth. When one gets to the bottom of a language-game in which questions of knowledge, doubt, justification, and truth have a place, one comes up against agreement in *action*, including linguistic actions. As a rule these actions are not subject to doubt or justification and are not manifestations of any species of knowledge.

The words "I know...", applied in a case where a doubt makes no sense, are really a defense against something whose form makes it look like an empirical proposition, but which is really a grammatical one (cf. P.I. 251). As I understand it, Wittgenstein's view is that when the sceptic denies that one can know empirical facts it may look as though the sceptic is making an empirical claim about the contingent non-existence of a mental state of knowing. However, according to Wittgenstein, the sceptic is really objecting to the ordinary use of certain expressions and advocating a *new* way of using a word. And while confident Realist replies such as, "I know this is a hand", "I know fire will burn me", may look like attempts to assert that as a matter of empirical fact

one is capable of achieving a state of knowing, they can serve as no more than expressions of a refusal to give up using certain locutions.

Wittgenstein does not provide a favourable characterization of disputes between Realists, Idealists, and Solipsists, as one would expect if he were inclined to deal with Scepticism in any standard way. In *Philosophical Investigations*, section 402, he characterizes Idealists and Solipsists as "attacking the normal form of expression" and Realists as defending it "as if they were stating facts recognized by every reasonable human being". Wittgenstein believed that both parties are confused. In this passage he seems to be trying to draw our attention to a confusion between doubting *the truth of particular claims* and denying *the legitimacy of a form of expression*. He says that each party treats the forms of expression as if they were *statements of fact*, one attacks them and the other defends them.

But what other position is there? We can keep in mind the differences between investigating the *truth* of a particular utterance, e.g., "he has pains", "that is a tree" and investigating its *sense(s)*. The former is an empirical matter, the latter is what Wittgenstein calls a logical, or grammatical one. That is why Wittgenstein here emphasizes the distinction between a *form* of expression and a statement of fact. And he made it clear that his interest as a philosopher was not the truth and falsity of hypotheses, but a grammatical investigation the aim of which was the "clearing away of misunderstandings" (P.I. 90). These misunderstandings, he believed, were caused by, among other things, "certain analogies between the forms of expression in different

regions of language" (ibid). One form is taken as the paradigm and the *legitimacy* of others is assessed by comparison. For example, if one analyzes "he has a pain in his leg" on the same model as "he has a knife in his back" one is apt to conclude that no rational person ought ever to be as certain of the truth-value of the former as of the latter, since one can have 'direct' evidence for the latter, but not the former.

One might even take this line of argument further and claim that one can't be as certain of "I have a leg" as of "I have a pain", since it could *seem* to me that I have a leg even if in fact I had no body, but it can not seem to me that I have a pain when I haven't. But suppose the sceptic says that I could be wrong about my having a sensation of pain because I could be wrong about the meaning of the word "pain". One might reply by saying "Well I can know whether I am having a *sensation*!" Wittgenstein simply points out that "sensation" is a word of our common language and one could be mistaken about its meaning too. And of course it will not help to say "I know I am having *something*", since "something" is a word of our common language too; and *I* do not have the final word on what counts as its correct use. Wittgenstein argues that one could always imagine a 'doubt' corresponding to *any* given specific use of any particular form of expression. That is why he says that "in the end when one is doing philosophy one gets to the point where one would like just to emit an inarticulate sound" (P.I. 261). There is no such thing as a rule according to which it is impossible to be mistaken about the meaning of a word, or any other thing. Now perhaps a really scrupulous sceptic, "engaged not in action, but only in thought" (Descartes, p.65) may

suppose that realizing this consequence is a deep insight into the human epistemic predicament. He might then choose to grunt with the learned and speak with the vulgar. This is not Wittgenstein's response.

The grunt, Wittgenstein's "inarticulate sound", symbolizes the last futile attempt to preserve something from the destructive arguments of the sceptic. The grunt is supposed to be an expression of the conviction that, even if I were to doubt that my words mean what I think they mean, I still *know* what is before my mind. But Wittgenstein adds, somewhat ironically, that a grunt too will have meaning only in a particular language-game. And understanding the descriptions of the language-game that would show a sound's meaning is dependent on one's *already being able, with ungrounded certainty, to follow rules*. So, of course, is understanding the claim, or a demonstration, that a particular sign or sound is *meaningless*. Scepticism based on the conceivability of error leads to a radical scepticism about meaning. But this is to saw off the branch on which one's thinking about the issue rests; and, as I argued above, the viability of a solution, sceptical or otherwise, is thereby completely undermined. The conclusion: philosophical-scepticism is nonsense, because it is self defeating. It tries to raise doubts where no legitimate questions can be asked.

That is why Wittgenstein made no attempt to provide a justification for any of our language-games. It was not because he found the task too difficult, but because he found the 'doubts' that are essential to adjudicating the Cartesian search for secure foundations to be self-defeating. In *Last Writings on Philosophy of Psychology*, he

says, speaking specifically of language-games involving ascriptions of 'inner states': "I look at this language-game as autonomous. I merely want to describe it, or look at it, not justify it" (Vol. 2, p.40). This does not appear to express concern about the arguments of the sceptic who says: "I really shouldn't say, when thinking with the learned, "I know she is in pain", but rather "I believe she is in pain", since, even assuming others have minds, I can't know what goes on in them, because all I can have acquaintance with is their behaviour." The sceptic who says such a thing can be seen as wanting to find a philosophical justification for using third person forms of expression to attribute mental states; e.g., "She is in pain", "He is angry". Wittgenstein's view is that attempts to give a philosophical justification of our language-games need to be rejected (cf. P.I., p. 200). "The origin and the primitive form of the language-game is a reaction; only from this can the more complicated forms develop" (P.O., p.395). The certainty with which we react to, for example, someone who has fallen and cried out in pain, is in Wittgenstein's view "something that lies beyond being justified or unjustified; as it were...something animal" (O.C. 359). It is not a kind of knowledge, and it is not a distinguishing feature of any particular language-game.

What are called justifications for a use of language come to an end, *in the ordinary course of things*, "but the end is not certain propositions' striking us immediately as true; i.e., it is not a kind of *seeing* on our part; it is our *acting*, that lies at the bottom of the language-game" (O.C.204). Wittgenstein's view is not that there is *no*

justification for, e.g., a statement about physical objects, another's sensations, the meaning of a word, but only that the justifications come to an end. And they come to an end *within* some language-game in which there is overwhelming agreement in definitions and judgments. It is there we philosophers must look to see what justification actually 'consists in'. Wittgenstein's investigation of the actual use of the words "doubt" and "knowledge" reveals, in my view, that it does not consist in "first doubting everything that can be doubted and then removing all these doubts".

To see this same point in a different context consider Wittgenstein's reaction to sceptical arguments about induction. He does not react by insisting that he, or we, *know* that the future will resemble the past, as if we had overcome some doubt about it. The *philosophical* 'doubts' that have been raised have proven to be insurmountable, given the requirements the framework of the question imposes on possible solutions, i.e., given the requirement that a law of induction would have to correspond to a relation of entailment between descriptions of past events and true predictions. But these 'doubts' have also proven to be irrelevant to, and inapplicable in, practice. Wittgenstein wants the philosopher to see that the requirements he imposes for a solution to his difficulties can find no justification in any of our language-games, the original home of words that occupy philosophers. Here Wittgenstein's inclination is to present an object of comparison, in order to change our way of looking at things so that what seemed like a problem now appears as the result of a misunderstanding.

Examine the following assertion from *On Certainty*, sec.287: "The squirrel does not infer by induction that it is going to need stores next winter as well. And no more do we need a law of induction to justify our actions or our predictions." It would be wrong to take Wittgenstein's assertion as a kind of empirical one, resting on the hypothesis that we humans are just like squirrels in having a built in mechanism that preempts any sweeping doubts about the uniformity of nature and thereby obviates the need for justification. His remark is aimed at getting the philosophically unsatisfied to give up a certain picture of a foundation of knowledge. Wittgenstein's tactic is to invite a particular comparison in the hopes that it will have the effect of releasing the philosopher who, in his view, is held captive by a picture. In the present case it is a picture that is characterized by the metaphors of *grasping* a foundation that does not move, and of *seeing* that it is immutable. The sceptic about induction has got a hold of what Richard Rorty has called "the perceptual metaphors which underlie both Platonic and modern discussions [of knowledge]" (Rorty, p.159). The object of comparison Wittgenstein presents in order to characterize belief in the uniformity of nature is *natural reactions*; "Nothing could induce me to put my hand in a flame—although after all it is *only in the past* that I have burnt myself" (P.I. 472). This sardonic remark expresses a rejection of views like that held by Russell, who claimed that "all such expectations [that the future will resemble the past] are only *probable*" (Russell, p.34).

But then doesn't Wittgenstein's assertion that we do not need a law of induction to justify our actions and predictions carry the implication that we proceed by a leap of

faith—blindly—when we make predictions? Isn't Wittgenstein really saying that there is *no justification* for our predictions, and hence none for our actions? No. The philosophical position Wittgenstein is attacking didn't take its rise from the perception of a *need* for a foundation but from the supposition that there *must be* a foundation which is *known to be true*. So his claim that we don't need such a law is not the claim that we get along fine by proceeding blindly. That *would* be to bow to scepticism— and then to try to 'solve' it with something like pragmatism. It would be to suppose that something essential really is lacking, but to offer reassurances that everything is, and will be, all right in practice. But consider the following remark, which, while germane to scepticism about the contents of other minds and not induction, contains a crucial remark that characterizes the general Wittgensteinian response to scepticism that I am trying to indicate: "I do not say that the evidence makes the inner *merely* probable. For as far as I'm concerned nothing is lacking in the language-game" (L.W.P.P., p.40).

There is a possibility that here Wittgenstein will be read as a Realist. It might be thought that when he says "nothing is lacking" he means that, given the facts, the language-game itself is *justified*. This would be a mistake. Note that Wittgenstein says that nothing is lacking *in* the language-game. He does not say that what is objectively required to legitimize this language-game is not lacking. He is not alluding to 'facts recognized by every reasonable human being' in an attempt to justify third person expressions attributing sensations, or our making predictions based on past experience.

Again he is alluding to certainties of action which are not subject to epistemological considerations. "'Knowledge' and 'certainty' belong to different *categories*" (O.C. 308). Certainty, one might say, is in the background, while doubt and knowledge stand in relief only against such a background which is *in deed* not doubted.

One final point to illustrate the difference between Wittgenstein and Descartes vis a vis sceptical doubts. Wittgenstein notes that there is a temptation to assume that "what sometimes happens might always happen" (P.I. 345). Take as an example Descartes when he says: "I judge that other men sometimes go wrong over what they think they know perfectly well; may not God[21] likewise make me go wrong, whenever I add two and three, or count the sides of a square, or do any simpler thing that might be imagined?" (First Meditation: Translation, Anscombe and Geach, p.64). And now compare it with: "If it is possible for someone to make a false move in a game then it might be possible for everyone to make nothing but false moves in every game" (P.I. 345). But "it has no meaning to say that a game has always been played wrong" (O.C. 496). This is a fine example of an aspect of Wittgenstein's method: He does not try to *explain why* we should trust what the sceptic 'doubts', e.g., the 'reliability' of the senses, rather he invites us to compare a philosophical generalization with analogous

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[21]Of course Descartes questions whether it is consistent with his conception of God's supremely good nature to suppose he may have created him such that he is always deceived, so he suggests instead that there may be an evil demon capable of the greatest deception. My point, viz., that Descartes holds that from its sometimes happening that one is deceived it follows that one might always be deceived, stands either way. Descartes claims, furthermore, that if one "would deny that there is a God powerful enough to do this, rather than believe everything else is uncertain" then one is in a worse position since "the ascription of less power to the source of my being will mean that I am more likely to be so imperfect that I always go wrong" (Descartes, p.64).

generalizations germane to more familiar territory; this in the hopes that we will "pass from a piece of disguised nonsense to something that is patent nonsense" (P.I. 464).

In this chapter I have tried to show that Wittgenstein was not a philosophical sceptic. Wittgenstein's relation to scepticism is quite different from that of Descartes. Descartes took the radical doubts of the sceptic to be coherent and in need of refutation. Wittgenstein took the sceptic's doubts to be self-defeating and therefore not in need of direct rebuttal. Instead Wittgenstein tries to get us to see crucial differences between the 'homeless' self-defeating pseudo-doubts of sceptics, and genuine doubts which have a home only *within* a language-game, the ground of which is not propositional and not subject to doubt or justification. Wittgenstein contrasts the relation between doubt and knowledge in actual life, and the relation of 'doubt' and 'knowledge' in the philosophy of the Cartesian tradition. While the 'doubts' of the sceptic mimic what are ordinarily called "legitimate doubts", they differ from them crucially in that they can not be connected with the epistemic activities of our actual life[22]; whereas what counts as a doubt, as opposed to a sign of 'malfunction', so counts only because of its place in a practice which contains means for justifying and resolving doubts. The 'doubts' of Descartes' sceptic take rise from a requirement for knowledge that does not allow for the *possibility* of a mistake. Wittgenstein could agree with Descartes that one has knowledge only when a mistake has been ruled out.

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[22]I can not address the question whether, supposing philosophy counts as a practice, or a language-game, the sceptic's doubts are genuine.

But he does not agree with Descartes that ruling out a mistake means removing every *conceivable* ground for doubt.

On Wittgenstein's view a mistake is distinguished from other sorts of aberrations by having not only a cause but also a ground, "i.e., roughly: when someone makes a mistake this can be fitted into what he knows aright"(O.C. 74). Descartes' doubts can not be fitted into what one knows aright, and in that sense they are groundless. Suppose someone were to utter, apparently in all seriousness, "Perhaps I am mistaken in thinking I have a body, perhaps I am constantly being deceived by a powerful demon and it only *seems* as if I have a body". How should one respond? Would one try to show this person that he is *making a mistake* in doubting the existence of his body? It's not clear how one should begin to do this. One certainly couldn't point to any *evidence*. If someone 'doubts' whether he has a body then surely that person is not in a position to accept any evidence one way or the other. For if one allows that it makes sense to suppose that one is constantly deceived, then one has thereby pre-empted the possibility of unmasking the deception. One has moved outside the province of any language-game in which the notion of deception makes sense. What Wittgenstein tries to do is to "bring words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use" (P.I. 116). And it is an 'everyday' thing for deception to be unmasked.

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