"Kripke's Near Miss" and Some Other Considerations On Rule Following

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Abstract: In his 1982 book *Wittgenstein On Rules and Private Language,* Saul Kripke maintains that Wittgenstein´s rule following considerations land us with a skeptical argument about meaning. This essay contains a short exposition of Kripke´s argument. In addition, I hold, both on textual grounds and by an appeal to some select secondary literature, that Wittgenstein offered no such skeptical argument in the *Philosophical Investigations*. Although Wittgenstein certainly repudiates a view of meaning based on temporally located mental states, it does not follow that there can be no meaning-grounding facts of other sorts. Although it is true that mental states, viewed atomistically, offer no sure foundation for meaning, I argue that it need not follow, *pace* Kripke, that no facts about an individual´s past mental life can ever make it clear that he meant 'plus' rather than 'quus' while performing any addition. For the individual´s past mental life is indeed relevant to meaning when considered in its unfolding in time. The essay further contains explorations on the very nature of the practice of following a rule and ends with a discussion of the solitary rule follower.
Keywords: Kripke, Rule following, Skepticism about meaning, Wittgenstein

Resumo: Em seu livro *Wittgenstein On Rules and Private Language* (1982), Saul Kripke afirma que as considerações de Wittgenstein sobre seguir uma regra deixam-nos com um argumento cético quanto ao significado. Este artigo contém uma breve exposição do argumento de Kripke. Além disso, argumentamos com elementos textuais e valendo-nos, ainda, da literatura secundária, que Wittgenstein não ofereceu um argumento cético em suas *Investigações Filosóficas.* Embora Wittgenstein certamente repudie uma visão do significado baseada em estados mentais temporalmente localizados, não se segue que a noção de significado não possa ter base diversa. Embora seja certo que os estados mentais, considerados atomisticamente, não ofereçam um fundamento seguro para o significado, não se segue, *pace* Kripke, que nenhum fato atinente à vida mental anterior de um indivíduo determine se ele pretendeu significar 'plus' em vez de 'quus', ao fazer uma adição qualquer. A vida mental anterior de um indivíduo é, na verdade, relevante para o significado, se considerada em seu evolver no tempo. O artigo

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ainda explora a própria prática de seguir uma regra e termina com uma discussão do seguidor solitário de uma regra.

Palavras chave: Ceticismo quanto ao significado, Kripke, Seguir uma regra, Wittgenstein

This essay has two main purposes and a few subsidiary ones. I shall hold, both on textual grounds and by drawing on some of the relevant secondary literature on the topic, that Wittgenstein's rule following considerations, as presented in his *Philosophical Investigations*, do not offer a skeptical argument about meaning. Moreover, I shall maintain that Wittgenstein's treatment of rule following does not purport to show that the very notion of meaning is riddled with insurmountable difficulties, requiring an approach which dispenses altogether with the traditional picture which has it that the meaning of a declarative sentence is – through its truth conditions – importantly related to extra-linguistic facts or states of affairs. Rather, it should become clear, on the view which will emerge as this essay unfolds, that Wittgenstein's real target are those positions which take it that the meaning of a sentence – or, more appropriately, given both Wittgenstein and Kripke's stress on the language user's perspective, what it *is* for someone to mean something by a sentence – is to be thought of in terms of an individual's possession of inner states comprising occurrent, that is to say, temporally located, mental events.

Although one is bound to concede that objectively existing facts of a certain sort cannot constitute a proper foundation for meaning, it does not follow, *pace* Kripke, that Wittgenstein's thinking on rule following leaves no room for alternative candidates which could do the job. If this is correct as an interpretation of Wittgenstein, the appearance of a sceptical problem – namely that we are content to speak about meaning, in our everyday interactions as if it were an unproblematic concept, there being all along no facts of the matter constituting someone's meaning this or that by his words – can be seen to vanish.

Since there is in fact no skeptical problem in the *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein scarcely needs to come

up with a skeptical solution along Kripke's lines, by resorting to assertability conditions in an attempt to rehabilitate the notion of meaning, albeit in a different guise. My point in stressing this platitude is simply to call to mind that this is no place in which to pass judgment on anti-realist theories of the sort which give pride of place to assertability conditions in their accounts of meaning. Whatever their merits and whatever Wittgenstein might have thought of them, it still seems to me to be the case that the rule following considerations do not necessitate *per se* a rejection of the truth-conditional account of meaning.

My second main goal in writing this essay – a goal which serves as a justification for its ironic title – is to suggest that, although I am obviously in no position to read Kripke's mind, his honest avowals of a feeling of uneasiness about Wittgenstein's alleged skeptical problem, even in the course of arguing for the existence of just such a problem, may provide us some of what we need to see that the skeptical problem really is an illusion. It is precisely by exposing the sense in which Kripke's skeptical argument may strike one as very strange indeed that we will be in a position to show that it is ultimately untenable and, more importantly, to see that an alternative treatment of the matter – which Kripke might have hit upon but did not – may be far more promising. To that end, a summary statement and critical analysis of Kripke's thesis that there can be no such thing as meaning *plus* by the '+' sign are in order. It will be seen that Kripke came across something truly interesting in the *Philosophical Investigations*, but that it is not what he thinks it is. Objective facts on which to ground the normative character of the notion of meaning may be found after all, as soon as we come to realize – and this will bring us to some other topics that I will discuss briefly – just how meaning can be related to our species-wide proclivities, the importance of shared contexts of training and learning and the role played by the linguistic community in shaping our practices.

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Despite the eloquent disclaimer one finds in his introduction to *Wittgenstein On Rules and Private Language*[1], Kripke elsewhere seems content to attribute to Wittgenstein a clearly discernible repudiation of the notion of meaning as ordinarily conceived of. On Kripke's view, the skeptical paradox, which he takes to emerge from the one hundred or so sections dealing with rule following and leading up to *PI* 242, is the central problem of the *Philosophical Investigations*, bringing the earlier sections into sharper focus and implicitly anticipating the 'private language argument', which more traditional accounts place after *PI* 242. In summary form, the alleged paradox about meaning is said to have been offered in the first paragraph of *PI* 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 a 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. *PI,* p. 81.

To see how meaning and rule following are related, one need only to bear in mind that the meaning of a word or sentence is not merely what one understands when one understands the meaning of the word or sentence. Clearly, meaning also has a normative dimension. For if one has at any point learned the meaning of a word, one is normally regarded as being able to use it correctly in the future. Someone who supposedly had grasped the meaning of "yellow", but subsequently went on to apply the word "yellow" in the course of referring to red objects would thereby prompt others legitimately to doubt that he had mastered the meaning of the color word in question.

Kripke expounds the skeptical paradox he sees in Wittgenstein by resorting to a consideration of rule following in the context of a mathematical example, the lessons of which may

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[1] "So the present paper should be thought of as expounding neither 'Wittgenstein's' argument nor 'Kripke's': rather Wittgenstein's argument as it struck Kripke, as it presented a problem for him" p. 5.

presumably constitute, if generalized, an equally powerful attack on the notion of meaning in other language domains.

One would ordinarily be thought to have mastered the rule for addition if one could be credited with a mastery of a procedure which, given enough time and in the absence of distracting factors, would enable one to come up with correct answers for concrete addition problems. More pointedly, one can be said to mean addition by 'plus' if, in virtue of meaning the word thus rather than otherwise, one can, subject to the provisos referred to above, come up with correct answers for questions of the general form ' _ + _ ' ? , where the argument places can be filled by any two positive integers.

This being the case, '125' will strike most as the obviously correct answer to the question '57   +   68 ?'. However, if by hypothesis, some individual has never performed additions involving any number larger than 57, Kripke holds that a very real question exists as to whether or not a person who is so placed can be said to have meant addition by 'plus' in the past. Could it not be the case that all along such an individual actually meant by the ' + ' sign, some other function, say 'quus', which, as defined by Kripke, yields the same result as does 'plus' for any two integers smaller than 57, but otherwise yields 5 as the answer to ' _ + _ ?' ?

This assuredly sounds as counterintuitive as it can be. For language users would normally hold that one's having in the past meant addition by 'plus' does not require that one has performed each and every of the infinitely many possible computations of the addition table or even all the additions up to some precisely specifiable point. Surely, one would think that to have meant addition by 'plus' in the past simply requires an understanding of a rule, which, in and of itself, determines some unique answer for every conceivable addition problem. In some sense, the answer to any addition problems may be said to be 'already there', even if one cannot hope to go on performing additions endlessly. Such a commonsense view may well be that from which "the idea that the

beginning of a series is a visible section of rails invisibly laid to infinity" (*PI* 218, p. 85) is ultimately derived.

However, Kripke envisages Wittgenstein's skeptic as someone committed to the view that "no fact about my past history – nothing that was ever in my mind, or in my external behavior – establishes that I meant plus rather than quus" (p. 13).

Kripke's dialectic proceeds roughly as follows: in order to motivate his discussion, he initially presents the skeptical paradox as a purely epistemic one, by noting that, under certain very special conditions, one might be rendered incapable of ascertaining whether one meant 'plus' or 'quus' in the past. Having provided convincing grounds for just such a possibility, he goes on to advance the far stronger thesis that, as stated above, there can be no facts of the matter as to whether one meant 'plus' or 'quus' in past addition exercises. Since, obviously, one's *present* intention to mean addition by 'plus' may in the future be invoked as a justification for the way one goes about solving future addition problems, the argument can be generalized. In Kripke's words, "if there can be no fact about which particular function I meant in the *past*, there can be none in the *present* either" (p. 13). The point is made even more emphatically on page 21: "Indeed, there is no fact about me that distinguishes between my meaning a definite function by 'plus' (which determines my responses in new cases) and my meaning nothing at all".

Having thus, to his mind, at any rate, discarded some fairly intuitive views concerning the sort of facts which might constitute one's meaning something in particular by one's words , Kripke goes on – rather convincingly, one must say – to offer further objections to views which seek to relate meaning to facts of an altogether different sort. Chief among these is the dispositionalist account of meaning, which Kripke finds fault with, mainly on the grounds that it cannot plausibly establish the normative role that meaning is supposed to possess. Another fairly obvious difficulty for dispositionalist accounts is that – and this is particularly evident when Kripke's mathematical example is considered – nobody can be

thought to have antecedent dispositions, which, by virtue of being already in place, could constitute one's meaning 'plus' rather than 'quus' in an indefinitely large number of cases. Having convinced himself that no straight solution is possible for the skeptical paradox, Kripke sees himself as being entitled to attempt to offer, and to claim that Wittgenstein has offered, a skeptical solution to the paradox.

The sketch provided in the previous paragraph of the argumentative route followed by Kripke was purposively short. I shall have nothing to say about the tenability of the skeptical solution, which constitutes the focus of the third chapter of Kripke's book. For my immediate purposes, it will be enough to argue that a skeptical problem about meaning is not to be found in the *Philosophical Investigations.* Most importantly, without any pretence to have found out for myself what Wittgenstein's ultimate views were on meaning and rule following – which would commit me to the rather unlikely presupposition that Wittgenstein had ultimate views on anything – I shall, dispute Kripke's claim, already quoted above, that "no fact about my past history – nothing that was ever in my mind, or in my external behavior – establishes that I meant plus rather than quus".

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As noted by Baker and Hacker (1984) in their critical study of Kripke's interpretation of Wittgenstein's rule following considerations, there is something *prima facie* implausible in supposing that Wittgenstein could have given a prominent place to a skeptical problem in his main philosophical work. Elsewhere, in both his published and unpublished writings, Wittgenstein used rather harsh words to criticize philosophical skepticism. Even more importantly, Kripke strangely neglects to consider the paragraph immediately following Wittgenstein's apparent statement of a paradox in the opening paragraph of *PI* 201:

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 contented us at least for a moment, until we thought of yet another standing behind it. What this shews 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. *PI* p. 81.

This seems to suggest fairly clearly that it is not the notion of rule following which in itself leads to paradox, but a certain way of conceiving of it. Wittgenstein's insistence that our actual practices of obeying or failing to obey rules leave room for some way "of grasping a rule", although one which "is *not* an *interpretation*" suggests that what is problematic is a certain view on the relation between meaning and rule following, rather than meaning as such. Wittgenstein's strongly anti-mentalistic language throughout the sections on rule following, exemplified in such sharp remarks as "Try not to think of understanding as a 'mental process' at all" (*PI* 154) and his appeal to practices, "To obey a rule, to make a report, to give an order, to play a game of chess, are *customs* (uses, institutions)." *PI* 199., are highly suggestive of a deep aversion of a certain construal of meaning, as being a purely mental phenomenon. To grant that much is not tantamount to offering a skeptical problem about meaning. Wittgenstein's goal seems rather that of putting talk of meaning on a distinct footing than had been customary up till the time when he wrote the *Philosophical Investigations.* And although Wittgenstein does attack overly mentalistic conceptions of meaning, neither is his a purely behavioristic account. He nowhere denies that there are certain things going on in one's mind when one grasps something, though he certainly opposes views which posit an excessively rigid connection between the characteristic mental accompaniments involved in understanding something and what understanding really consists in. It can be argued that such accompaniments, looked at in a certain way, may prove relevant in our search for facts on which to secure a foundation for meaning.

Kripke insists that a certain take on meaning is untenable. He claims that nothing, no facts, in a person's past, whether one

seeks to locate them in the person's past external behavior or mental history, can establish that his words have a unique, particular meaning. Let us consider these claims in the context of Kripke's own mathematical example.

It is indisputably the case that if, by hypothesis, I have never performed addition problems with any numbers larger than 57, there is nothing in my public, externally observable behavior, that may prove that I, in the past, actually meant 'plus' rather than 'quus' by the plus sign. After all, the plus function is such that its employment up to 57 is indistinguishable from that which would be on display in the computations performed by someone whose behavior was in fact guided by strict compliance with the quus function.

Now, things are not so simple with Kripke's further claim that one's past mental history is also of no use to someone seeking to ground the notion of meaning on a firm basis. Let us consider two individuals, A and B, neither of whom has ever performed computations with numbers larger than 57. Can anything in their mental history establish that, say, A means 'plus' by the '+' sign, while B means 'quus' by it? Suppose that both have, for some time, been performing computations in which none of the two arguments is larger than 57. Both are being fed with increasingly large numbers for both argument places. At a given point, both individuals might be presented with the same problem, say what is the sum of 17 and 32. Clearly, there is nothing necessarily present in A or B's occurrent, temporally located, mental states, in the course of performing this particular computation, that might establish that one of them is a 'plus' user, while the other is a 'quus' user. For, obviously, in 'quadding' 17 and 32, the 'quus' user need not have any occurrent and concomitant thought constituting a vision or immediate awareness of the fact that his computational behavior will drastically change as soon as one of the arguments gets large enough. Individually and *atomistically* considered, the computations are such that they need not be associated with any occurrent thoughts such that A's mental state at a fairly delimited point in time has to differ from B's, thereby providing us with a much sought-

after fact showing that, say, A meant 'plus' all along, while B meant 'quus'.

Now, if A and B's mental history is considered not *atomistically* – by considering what might be true of A and B's *individual* mental states in the course of performing each and every of the many *individual* computations with arguments smaller than 57 – but rather in their totality, Kripke's utter rejection of any link whatsoever between mental states and rule following will strike one as far less plausible.

Let us suppose that B is the 'quus' user. True, he may quadd, say, 9 and 12, with no ocurrent awareness that his computational behavior will change radically after a while. The same may be true of '17 + 32' , as considered above, or of any other particular computation. But does it actually make any sense to hold that B could have been a devoted 'quus' user all along and yet never, in the course of performing all of those computations stumble upon the thought that his computational behavior would eventually undergo a very significant change? Clearly, such an awareness need not dawn on him at any particular point in time, or in the course of performing any particular, antecedently determined, quaddition. Yet, does it really make sense to hold that his *entire* mental history might be indistinguishable from A's mental history, and that he simply starts both acting and having different ocurrent mental states when the number 57, as it were, finally introduces itself to him? To suppose that this might be the case is to introduce a view of rule following which is no less untenable, no less mysterious, than the view that both Wittgenstein and Kripke seek to attack.

That goes a long way to provide us with a possible explanation of why Kripke was avowedly uneasy about the skeptical problem allegedly proposed by Wittgenstein, seeming to find it so unnatural.. Whether or not such considerations unveil the reasons for Kripke's uneasiness, they serve the heuristic purpose of laying bare the real source of our problems. A temporal cross-section of a person's mental history is not a good starting point for someone trying to find a firm basis for understanding, meaning, and the

normative character of the latter. However, the temporally extended *totality* of our use of rules, our actual practices and a salutary refusal *not* to disregard their mental accompaniments if the latter are properly looked at, rather than atomistically, may provide us with what we need.

As we have seen, Wittgenstein does not think that a particular interpretation is forced upon us by any rule, presumably meaning by "interpretation" something that could be stated in words, expressed in terms of other rules or provided by some sort of inner vision. This neither establishes the irrelevance of the mental realm nor rules out meaning-grounding facts.

Clearly, a certain conception of meaning, namely the idea that understanding the meaning of a word – which implies a temporally extended capacity to use the word correctly – is rigidly connected with the content of some temporally located mental event involving the grasping of the meaning of a word at a precise point in time is a view which Wittgenstein singles out for criticism in a number of passages.

In *PI* 139, he elaborates on the tension found between our customary way of relating to what it is to *understand* the meaning of a word, that is, to regard it as something that can take place in a moment – in a *flash*, as he puts it – and the equally plausible intuition that to understand the meaning of a word amounts to being able to use it correctly in future situations:

> 139. When someone says the word "cube" to me, for example, I know what it means. But can the whole *use* of the word come before my mind, when I *understand* it in this way?
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> Well, but on the other hand isn't the meaning of the word also determined by this use? And can't these ways of determining meaning conflict? Can what we grasp in a *flash* accord with a use, fit or fail to fit it? And how can what is present to us in an instant, what comes before our mind in an instant, fit a *use*?
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> What really comes before our mind when we *understand* word?- Isn't it something like a picture? Can't it *be* a picture?

Wittgenstein subsequently goes on to deny that any conceivable picture of a cube – some ocurrent vision of a cube or what have you – can possibly determine a unique way of using the word "cube". Different interpretations of what it is for something to be a cube could be made to accord with the picture. It seems to be indisputable that Wittgenstein rejects an excessively mentalistic construal of meaning insofar as he pointedly notes, in *PI* 139, as elsewhere, say in his disgression on reading (*PI* 156 to *PI* 171), that pictures associated with words severely underdetermine the uses we go on to make of such words. And yet we would like to say that knowing the meaning of a word or understanding it implies having a mastery of its use, and going on to use it correctly in a wide range of cases.

If occurent mental pictures cannot ground the normativity that one seeks to associate with an understanding of the meaning of a word, what could do the job? Instead of seeing Wittgenstein as someone who rejects the notion of meaning altogether on account of the difficulties just alluded to, it makes better sense to consider the important role he envisaged for our linguistic practices. If, in one's quest for the normative character of meaning, one wants to get a partial glimpse of how Wittgenstein might be willing to address the issue, it bears paying attention to a couple of revealing passages.

At the end of *PI* 141, while still addressing the connection of a picture and its application, Wittgenstein has this much to say:

Can there be a collision between picture and application? There can, inasmuch as the picture makes us expect a different use, because people in general apply *this* picture like *this*.

I want to say: we have here a *normal* case, and abnormal cases.

And in the beginning of the second paragraph of *PI* 145, in considering what is involved in teaching a pupil the series of natural numbers, he says something which is highly suggestive of what constitutes correctness for him: "let us suppose that after some efforts on the teacher's part he continues the series correctly, that is as *we* do it" (my emphasis). He then goes on to point out that there

is no way to say how often the pupil has to get the series right before we can credit him with a mastery of the system. But the truly important point here is that Wittgenstein seems to be implying in these passages – both in talking about what is normal and about what 'we', that is to say, the vast majority of people belonging to a linguistic community do– that what it is for someone to get a word or procedure right is for him to become integrated in the surrounding practices which constitute overwhelmingly the way things happen to be. Language users become integrated in a number of "forms of life", to use one of Wittgenstein's much-quoted coinages. Normativity, he seems to think, is grounded on the sheer fact that the linguistic community has shared, almost invariably agreed-upon, ways of going about the application of vitally important procedures, and among those, the mathematical procedure of which Kripke and Wittgenstein make so much use. Adding correctly amounts to responding in expected ways to the teaching one receives, ways which are the object of nearly universal consensus, apart from some bizarre cases.

Now, of course, what is involved in communal agreement need not be the sort of thing that can the object of a unified theoretical treatment. General talk of rules should not make us oblivious to the fact that there might be rules of an altogether different nature, by which I do not mean to refer to the fact that the *content* of rules of course varies widely. That on which rules have their foundation can also be expected to vary.

Presumably, overwhelming agreement on certain procedures, say, addition, or, to remind us of another of Wittgenstein's memorable examples, the general tendency to think of index fingers or arrows as pointing in a certain direction rather than its opposite, may turn out to be universal ways of going on, based on species-wide proclivities. This may conceivably be analogous to species-wide tendencies in other domains, say, the widespread use of metaphors relating terms that can be thought of spatially, like "up", "high", "heaven" and so on, with what is lofty, noble or transcendent.

None of this is to deny that characteristic ways of going on may be culture-specific, while also being amenable to be taught and learned and to be the basis of correct use in more circumscribed settings. Interestingly, Kripke adapts Goodman's talk of *green* and *grue* for his own purposes, in a way that is analogous to that which he makes of his own mathematical example. There is nothing in an occurrent mental image of a patch of green which need imply that for the person to whom the image occurred in the past the color green has to be assigned the same extension as it does for most of us. He could have meant 'green' all along in a such a way that for him the actual extension of the term might be covered by the fictive word 'grue', which word is one that might be used in the course of referring with complete indifference to objects for which the rest of us would employ the color words 'green' and 'blue' in a more discriminating fashion.

In keeping with what was said above, the correct use of 'green' is not to be grounded in some sort of conformity to what someone might have occurrently in his mind while having an introspective look at some patch of green, but rather in what counts as green in the community. But then again, one has to be careful here: as a matter of empirical fact some languages may very well have color words which could translate 'grue'. In cases such as these, belonging to a particular culture is just as relevant as belonging to the human race. My purpose here is to emphasize that abstract talk of rules should not lead us to neglect the complexity of actual usage.

To conclude this survey-style essay on some of the topics pertaining to rule following, it remains to be seen whether the very idea of a solitary rule follower makes any sense. This is a difficult and controversial matter, on which authors like Kripke himself, Hacker and Baker (*op. cit*.) , Colin McGinn and Norman Malcolm have held different and often conflicting views

Kripke is undoubtedly right in arguing that Crusoe, in the solitude of his island, can still be said to follow rules. It appears to be unproblematically true that, despite his physical isolation, Crusoe

can follow the rules which he was taught in the linguistic community to which he once belonged. He might, for instance, keep track of the number of fish he was lucky enough to catch on any particular day by performing additions in the same way as he used to do, when he enjoyed the company of others. Although there is no one else in the island – no one in a position to pass judgment on how correctly he performs his additions or even whether he performs computations which the outside community would regard as being instances of addition – his computational behavior is still accountable to the criteria he once mastered. That is a clear sense in which, to remind us of Kripke's apt formulation, "*if* we think of Crusoe as following rules, we are taking him into our community and applying our criteria for rule following to him" (p. 110).

Kripke goes on to claim that, although a physically isolated individual can follow rules, an individual considered in isolation cannot. The correctness of such a remark would depend on what the locution "considered in isolation" means.

It appears to be intuitively true that Crusoe could not only perform the additions he was taught to perform in his childhood, but that he could come up with procedures and rules of his own devising, say, to keep a record of the highs and lows of the tides threatening to flood his modest dwellings. According to one of his biographers (Monk, 1990), Wittgenstein himself devised a *sui generis* procedure for writing his personal diaries, a procedure which he clearly need not have learned form anyone. And, indeed, how could one account for innovation in human affairs, say, in science and technology, if solitary creation and solitary rule following were not possible? Is there not at least some sense in which Newton was acting in isolation when he performed derivations or integrations with his newly invented calculus, let us say, before he published his discovery?

The above remarks seem to make it look overwhelmingly plausible that, at least as far as the *content* of the rules is concerned, they may indeed be the brainchildren of solitary rule followers.

It would seem, however, that there is a problem with the fairly commonsensical picture outlined above. I asserted earlier in this essay that, in the absence of certain behavioral or mentalistic criteria, what it means for someone to be following a rule correctly, or indeed at all, is for him to conform with shared ways of going on which prevail in the linguistic community in which he is immersed. But, as seen above, we would tend to regard some individuals as genuine rule followers (or rule creators) even if they are not simply sharing some antecedently given way of following rules which happens to be found in their community. This leaves us with an appearance of paradox.

What would it mean for Crusoe to come up with an original (and correct) procedure for recording the tides in his island? In the absence of a surrounding community, it would appear that any way of going about it might be regarded as a correct application of a rule on some interpretation. In the case of the pupil who, in writing down the series of numbers prompted by the order "+ 2", comes up with 1004, 1008, …., after 1000, we may tell him that he is wrong, because just about every normal person in our community would instead have written 1002, 1004, …, even though the pupil might be regarded as being following a rule on some interpretation. In this example of Wittgenstein's, the sheer fact of overwhelming communal agreement constitutes the source of normativity.

And yet, as pointed out by Baker and Hacker (*op. cit.*), we might think of other criteria for ascribing rule following to an isolated individual who is intent on creating some rule. If, by hypothesis, some external observer could have a chance to take a look at the behavior of the individual in question from some vantage point, he could notice that the individual under observation seems to keep an eye on his own progress, introduces changes into his procedure from time to time, appears to regretfully notice his mistakes and correct them, and so on. Would that constitute sufficient grounds for satisfying Kripke's requirement that the rule follower not be considered in isolation?

That would appear to be the case, since correcting oneself or, alternatively, expressing satisfaction at one's performance in following a rule – even if the rule itself is entirely idiosyncratic in its content – are reactions which, presumably, no individual could acquire in isolation. Hopefully, this may point to a promising way of dealing with one of the many thorny problems which emerge from a close study of Wittgenstein's rule following considerations.

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