Community Rules: What Does Kripke's Sceptical Paradox Imply for Private Language?

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Abstract

Wittgenstein's private language argument is often taken to imply that an individual could not master a language by himself. This conclusion is explicitly drawn in Saul Kripke's interpretation of Wittgenstein on the basis of general considerations on rule-following. But is an individual really not able to follow rules, as Kripke also contends? In this paper I argue for a novel conception of rule-following that can incorporate the insights of the private language argument without accepting its most counterintuitive implication.

Keywords: rule-following, private language argument, meaning, human community, Wittgenstein, Kripke

Introduction

Saul Kripke's *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language* (1982) contributed to a resurgence of interest in Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* (1958) and simultaneously opened a new line of investigation in the philosophy of language. The work consists of two parts: a skeptical paradox and a skeptical solution. Both have been influential and have inspired a mixture of praise and criticism from the 1980s onward. Kripke thinks of the paradox as a fundamental problem, which was perhaps the underlying motivation behind Wittgenstein's "analogous" positions in the philosophy of mathematics and the philosophy of mind[1] (Kripke 4). Stating this versatile problem with clarity is a challenge in itself, if only because Kripke's own statement of the problem has given rise to different interpretations.

Crucial to Kripke's account is his skeptical solution of the paradox, which attacks part of the skeptic's reasoning. In particular, it denies the supposed dependence of

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[1] Kripke continually refers to passages from Wittgenstein in order to show that the argument is loyal to its source. At the same time, Kripke shies away from the conclusion that his argument is already to be found on the pages of the 'Investigations' (Kripke 5). In this paper I am not interested in exegetical matters.

meaning on 'matters of fact' in favor of an account that sees meaning as rooted in a community. In this essay, I assume both that the skeptical paradox is a real philosophical problem and that the 'communitarian' solution is correct. In addition, I presuppose that what is at stake in the argument against the existence of private language is the possibility of an individual following a rule by himself. Though language is more than following rules, the latter is necessary for the former: I follow Kripke in that respect.

I depart from Kripke in that I re-think the consequences of his skeptical solution for Wittgensteinian well-known arguments against the existence of private language. Using the standard example of Robinson Crusoe,[2] I apply a second skeptical solution to the destructive side of Kripke's initial one. According to Kripke, if we consider Crusoe "by himself and in isolation", we will see that Crusoe's utterances are not meaningful (Kripke 69). At this point, Kripke's own strategy can be turned against him. Crusoe is not affected by the argument against private language: I argue that because Crusoe is part of the human community, he can be a rule-follower. We can grant the 'communitarian' character of meaning without drawing Kripke's conclusions. Of course, this raises the question of what the private language argument is good for, if it cannot be used against individuals considered in isolation. I close by formulating an answer to that question.

In order to make clear why all of this is necessary, I begin by retelling Kripke's story in a way that will allow me to refer to it in later sections. Once we a have a clear view of the problem, I will sketch Kripke's skeptical solution and the implications he thinks it has for the notion of private language. That will set the stage for my own development of the problem, which will draw on Stephen Davies' account of the 'human community'.

§1 Kripke on Rules and Private Language
1.1 The Skeptical Paradox

Our ability to function in everyday life depends on many factors. Perhaps one of the most important ones is the correct application of rules.[3] Kripke's paradox states that it is up for grabs, because there is no fact in virtue of which some application of rules to new cases is correct rather than another. I use Kripke's own example – arithmetic – but the story that follows is my own.

Learning to add numbers is about grasping a concept (Kripke 19), which involves grasping a rule. In primary school, small children are required to master this rule on the basis of a finite set of examples.[4] The children will encounter many addition problems lat-

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[2] More specifically, 'a born Crusoe', i.e. a person that has never been part of any social community.

[3] While I believe that the central problem is about application, Kripke mentions the word only twice (Kripke 19, 55) and Simon Blackburn is the one commentator who makes use of it (Blackburn 281).

[4] "Given only in terms of finitely many cases (...)" (Kripke 22).

er in life that were not among the 'original' ones they were taught in school. One may say that this is precisely what it means to grasp a rule: the ability to glean a procedure from a finite set of initial examples and then to apply the same procedure to new cases. In the case of addition, the possibilities are literally infinite. Let us imagine a child, called Junya, who finishes primary school and grows up to be a successful architect. We encounter him at a certain point in his development. Let us say that he has recently started his own business at the age of 30 (the details do not matter, so long as we have a definite point in time in mind). When filling out the first tax forms for his new firm, Junya has to add two numbers he has never added before: 317 and 237. He writes down 554, but suddenly starts to doubt himself. Is this really the amount that he owes the IRS in taxes?

That same night, a tax inspector haunts Junya's dreams. With an accusatory tone of voice, the inspector asks: "You are aware of the fact that it is illegal to evade taxation, are you not? Let me do the addition for you: 317 + 237 = 1000. So why did you only declare 554 dollars? The fine is rather substantial, you know." Junya objects that he has known how to add since primary school, and is quite certain that the sum of 317 and 237 is not 1000, but 554. The inspector has little patience for him. "A likely story. You are saying that you have been taught to add, but still manage to come up with the wrong number? They must have taught you a different rule in primary school, Junya. The IRS works with *actual* addition." Junya wakes up in a pool of sweat.

Most of us will have had similar experiences involving tax inspectors, whether we meet them in nightmares or in office buildings. While conflicts with the IRS often take a more complex shape than the one in Junya's dream, it sometimes occurs that their calculations are different from ours. On some occasions, we feel that we have been wronged. In order to make that case, we attempt to show that our calculation is correct. The pressure is on us to provide a valid and decisive argument to that effect. Especially when large sums are at stake, some of us cannot rest until we have supplied one.

Junya's dream recurs again and again. Finally, he decides to sit down with a pen and paper in order to resolve the issue once and for all. His first impulse is to point to his childhood mastery of addition, but then Junya remembers that the inspector cast doubt on his very education. Besides, he may have performed admirably in the past, but since he has never done the 317+237 calculation before, how can he be certain of his performance in this case? 1+1=2, 2+2=4... Junya distinctly remembers grasping *something* about those examples. But is it really the same as "actual addition", which the tax inspector claimed for the IRS? It seems impossible to say, because on reflection, in order to grasp the concept of actual addition, Junya would have needed to grasp the corresponding rule of actual addition: but the examples from primary school are compatible with many different rules. Consider what happens if we consider only 1+1=2 and 2+2=4. Both are of the form $x+y=z$. If we do not know what '+' means, then the outcomes 2 and 4 are not particularly informative. "$x+y=z$" could be interpreted in any of the following ways:

- $2x = z$
- $x - (-2)-y = z$
- $x - y - (-2y) = z$
- $x/y * 2x = z$

This is only a small sample, but it is already clear that these rules will yield very different answers as x and y take on different values. Who knows which rule Junya grasped in primary school? His insistence that 554, rather than 1000, is the correct answer suddenly seems arbitrary. Junya asks himself the same question as Kripke: "In what sense is my actual computation procedure (...) more justified by my past instructions than an alternative procedure (...)? Am I not simply following an unjustifiable impulse?" (Kripke 18)

The tax inspector can be right and Junya wrong, but only if Junya is not following the rules corresponding to actual addition. Junya has then "misinterpreted his own previous usage" (Kripke 9): he never meant actual addition, but his own strange version of addition, jaddition. Let us suppose that the two procedures are identical, except for the fact that actual addition dictates that 317+237=1000 whereas jaddition comes up with the answer 554. There is nothing about Junya that could tell us which rule he was following all along. Recall little Junya in primary school: he would have responded to the examples presented to him with the same answers, earned the same praise of his teachers, and so on (by hypothesis, he never encountered 317+237 until the day he filled out the first tax forms for his new firm). Nor is the mental state of little Junya any different because of his first grasping and then following one rule rather than another. He has never applied his mind to 317+237 and is not determined in any way to answer 554 while he is learning about 1+1=2.

As Kripke points out, the problem is not about epistemology (Kripke 21, 37). It is not that we do not know enough about Junya's mental life. In a sense, it is about metaphysics: Junya's dream calls for a certain type of *fact* that can settle the dispute between Junya and the tax inspector. If there is no such fact, then it seems that either of their responses to 317+237 is arbitrary.

Indeed, any response would be arbitrary: we can think of Junya's accountant, his financial adviser and the lawyer he turns to all coming up with different answers because they all follow different rules. And Junya's troubles need not be confined to adding numbers. Imagine a different scenario and a different kind of dispute: this time Junya is accused of not having the concept of a table by an unnamed skeptic. Witness Junya's doubts as reported by Kripke:

> I think that I have learned the term 'table' in such a way that it will apply to indefinitely many future items. So I can apply the term to a new situation, say when I enter the Eiffel Tower for the first time and see a table at the base. Can I answer a sceptic who supposes that by 'table' in the past I meant tabair, where a 'tabair' is

anything that is a table not found at the base of the Eiffel Tower, or a chair found there? Did I think explicitly of the Eiffel Tower when I first 'grasped the concept of' a table, gave myself directions for what I meant by 'table'? And even if I did think of the Tower, cannot any directions I gave myself mentioning it be reinterpreted compatibly with the skeptic's hypothesis? (Kripke 19)

The problem raised by the skeptic's reasoning is that no behavior can be justified by reference to a rule. We have lost track of what the normative relation between meaning and intention to future action (Kripke 37) entails for any case that can be described in those terms. This does not only mean that Junya's current usage of 'addition' is inconsistent with his previous usage, but also that the rightness and wrongness of any intended application are up for grabs. Junya and the rest of us do not know which rule we are applying at any given moment: more specifically, there is no fact in virtue of which we are applying one rule as opposed to another.

Notice that this leaves us in a rather dire situation. The problem itself has become impossible to formulate: the stable meanings on which it depends collapse as soon as the outcome becomes apparent (which is what makes it a paradox). The whole structure of language comes crashing down. "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" (Kripke 55). The problem can also be applied to "predicates of sensations, visual impressions, and the like" (Kripke 20). In a single formula: for all putative instances of some rule, "finite past instances allow many mutually inconsistent extrapolations of them into the future, thereby underdetermining the rule" (Shogenji 504).

1.2 Implications for Private Language according to Kripke

A skeptical problem may be resolved in one of two ways. On the one hand, there are 'straight solutions', which refuse to grant the skeptic his point: there is, after all, a fact in virtue of which Junya means either 'actual addition' or some other way of manipulating numbers by way of '+'. On the other hand, there are 'skeptical solutions', which do not try to offer such a fact but still manage to solve the problem posed by the skeptic. Proponents of a skeptical solution concede that the skeptic is right that there is no 'fact of the matter' as to what kind of addition Junya means, but that his (or the tax inspector's) beliefs and assertions about 317+237 are still justified. Recall that the apparent lack of justification was what made the skeptical paradox seem so urgent. How, then, do we save meaning? According to Kripke, the solution to Junya's troubles is to jettison the notion that "facts or truth conditions are of the essence for meaningful assertion" (Kripke 77).

To put these alternative responses to the problem in more general terms: if we see that the skeptic endangers an ordinary practice or belief that we cannot give up, we may want to insist that the skeptic's problem is ill-posed and does not succeed in discrediting the practice or belief, which therefore remains justified. Kripke states that such a straight solution to the skeptical paradox is impossible (Kripke 77). The other option is to question the assumption underlying both the skeptical problem and its straight solution. To propose a skeptical solution is to say that the skeptic's target was never a candidate to justify the practice or belief in the first place. We may praise the skeptic for pointing out that the practice or belief need not, and in fact should not, be defended in a certain way (Kripke 67), but there is more to be said on the subject than the skeptic allows. Some answer to 317+237 is justified, albeit not in virtue of some fact.

What, then, is the skeptical solution favored by Kripke? It is important to notice that the skeptical paradox "holds no terror in our daily lives; no one actually hesitates when asked to produce an answer to an addition problem!" (Kripe 87). Kripke here invokes Wittgenstein's distinction between speaking 'without justification' [*ohne Rechtfertigung*] and speaking 'wrongfully' [*zu Unrecht*] (ibid). After all, as far as our daily lives are concerned, we do not frown upon those who respond to problems of addition without hesitation (in particular, without worrying about skeptics that will question their use of addition: unless they are filling out tax forms, perhaps). We do not feel that they are speaking 'wrongfully', though their answers may be 'without justification' in the skeptic's sense.

This is where private language comes in. What the skeptical paradox reveals, according to Kripke, is that Junya was wrong to consider himself as if he were "one person alone"; Junya has so far attempted to respond in terms of "his [own, JK] psychological states" (Kripke 88). But then "our ordinary practice [licenses] him to apply the rule in the way that it strikes him" (ibid).

As Kripke goes on to explain, this is not what we mean by following a rule. It is possible for Junya to *think* he is following a rule without this actually being the case. He may also act in accordance with a rule that violates his first intentions (Kripke 89, Shogenji 505). From this, Kripke infers the following:

> [I]f one person is considered in isolation, the notion of a rule as guiding the conduct of the person who adopts it can have no substantive content. (...) As long as we regard him as following a rule 'privately', so that we pay attention to his justification conditions alone, all we can say is that he is licensed to follow the rule as it strikes him (ibid, emphases in the original).[5]

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[5] Compare Wittgenstein §202, to which Kripke also refers: "To think one is obeying a rule is not [the same thing as obeying, JK] a rule. Hence it is not possible to obey a rule 'privately'; otherwise thinking one was obeying a rule would be the same thing as obeying it."

The skeptical solution is thus to be sought in the wider community. The point is that agreement and verifiability are required. In the case of addition, we judge someone to be competent if his answers to particular problems agree with the answers we would be inclined to give, or at least stem from a common method. He is then 'allowed into the community' of adders.[6] There is no point in scrutinizing our past mental history in order to find out if we have grasped "some supersensible, infinite reality": such considerations have already proven to be of no help against the tax inspector (cf. Kripke 106). Instead, Junya should consult his community.

Kripke's skeptical solution, for all its counseled modesty, is quite difficult to grasp. In the spirit of Wittgenstein, we are asked to look instead of to think. We *actually* license people to use addition in cases they have not encountered before, and their confidence does not seem to be out of place. The skeptical paradox has taught us that this cannot be because of some matter of fact: so it must be because of the community. In one fell swoop, Kripke has reconstructed Wittgenstein's notorious 'private language argument':[7] not as a behaviorist premise, but as the destructive side of a skeptical solution. The conclusion seems to follow quite easily: since meaning is always a function of a community, there can be no private language.

But what do these categories ("community", "private") mean? In other words, what is the identity of the private linguist? Kripke helpfully considers an example (with a long history). Imagine Robinson Crusoe stranded on an island: but not as a result of a shipwreck. He has been there from birth and has never been exposed to a community. Should we deny that anything he does and says has meaning and insist that he cannot be a rule-follower?[8] Kripke begins by raising the straightforward distinction between physical isolation and an individual considered in isolation (Kripke 110). Immediately thereafter, he says that "*if* we think of Crusoe as following rules, we are taking him into our community and applying our criteria of rule-following to him" (ibid.). Whether or not Crusoe, on his island, is following rules, thus, depends on our criteria. Simon Blackburn has been a prominent critic of this kind of reasoning.

> [According to Kripke] I have to consider whether Crusoe is a rule-follower by using the normal, community-wide way I make the judgement. But that would be true of any situation I seek to describe. And then, just as (contra Berkeley) I might conclude that an island considered in isolation has a tree on it, might I not conclude that Crusoe, considered in isolation, was following a rule? (...) We are apt to retort that Crusoe would have been a rule-follower in this situation whatever I or we or

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[6] See Kripke 93 for a more extensive explanation.

[7] See Kripke 107f.

[8] There is empirical material on the question whether 'feral children' (children raised by animals) can acquire language: the consensus seems to be that they cannot. But this will not decide the question whether they cannot follow rules. For that reason, I will remain agnostic on the empirical question.

any other community in the world had thought about it – just like the tree. And the reason is that all by himself he had a technique or practice (Blackburn 298).

It certainly seems true that it is possible for Crusoe to master a technique. Consider, for example, Michael Dummett's plot twist: Crusoe finds a washed-ashore Rubik's cube.[9] If it makes sense to claim that Crusoe has a technique of solving it, then he must be able to "[order] his expectations about the recurrence of sensations, with an aim at prediction, explanation, systematization" (Blackburn 299-300). And if Crusoe were to be engaged in such a project, "the attitude that whatever seems right is right is ridiculous. System soon enforces recognition of fallibility" (Blackburn 300). Crusoe seems to be more than capable of rule-following behavior. How can we reconcile the intuitive validity of these objections with Kripke's position, which he says is connected to the dictum that we should look, not think?

Recall that according to Kripke's own lights, we can only hope for a "descriptively adequate account of the *actual* assertion conditions for meaning-attributing sentences" (Boghossian 520). This insistence on 'actual justificatory practice' is not only problematic in the face of an intuitively plausible objection, such as the one raised by Blackburn. It also seems unclear how a descriptively adequate account could justify the nature of Kripke's rejection of private language, in particular, "one of the requisite modal force" (ibid). For Kripke has claimed that there *could be* no private language. While it is true that our actual assertion conditions advert to the dispositions of a community, "the most that would license saying is that *our* language is not solitary" (ibid: emphases in the original).

These are serious problems for Kripke's solution of the skeptical paradox. Let us therefore reconsider the connection between Kripke's 'communitarianism' about meaning and the private language argument.

§2 The Human Community and Private Language
2.1 A Repetition of Moves

We have already seen that the nature of a skeptical solution is to recognize part of the skeptic's negative point, but without granting that the practice or belief that was charged by the skeptic should be abandoned. Kripke's own skeptical solution entails that meaning cannot depend on any matter of fact, but it does not follow that there is no meaning. We do not have to stop using language. The skeptical solution, however, also has a destructive side: there can be no private language.

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[9] Although this scenario is often ascribed to Dummett, he never published it.

This destructive side comes under fire once we realize that it is not evident that Crusoe's rule-following requires some sort of check by the community, as Blackburn points out. If Crusoe is able to devise a system for solving his Rubik's cube, there are right and wrong ways of applying it: he can apply it erroneously, of course, or swap systems: but the point is that it is *meaningful* to talk about erroneous application if he has defied his own rule. There is plenty of opportunity for self-verifying behavior: hence Crusoe, even when considered in isolation, can follow rules (see also Gauker 208 on self-checking). This also reinforces Boghossian's point: Kripke's 'modesty' does not allow him to say that there *could be* no private language.

My proposed way out is to re-apply the skeptical solution. Kripke seems to assume that the initial skeptical solution, and the 'communitarianism' it demands, precludes Crusoe-like figures from rule-following (if they have not passed the tests of our community). This parallels the original skeptic's insistence on matters of fact: his attack on meaning assumed that meaning was grounded in matters of fact. Equally, Kripke's treatment of Crusoe presupposes that a 'communitarian' analysis of meaning precludes the possibility that Crusoe, 'considered in isolation', follows rules. But could we not insist on the importance of community while simultaneously allowing that Crusoe follows rules? This would undercut Kripke's reasoning in the same way that Kripke undercut Junya's tax inspector.

Kripke, as we have seen, suggests that the private language argument affects putative rule-followers who are not part of a social community. Stephen Davies proposes, instead, that the relevant kind of community is 'the human community', comprised of all humans, with the inclusion of Crusoe. In light of the fact that not all rule-following is the product of consensual agreement, it does not seem far-fetched to say that "there seem to be tendencies common to all (mature) human beings" with respect to both the classification of a situation as belonging to a particular set and the subsequent application of a single technique to all members of the set (Davies 62, 66). This descriptive element – an actual propensity to agreement – is required, but there is also a normative component to the human community. Membership in it can be said to establish standards with respect to some practice. By referring to those standards, Crusoe can be said to invent and follow rules without contradicting the 'communitarian' solution to the skeptical paradox. Crusoe's membership is thus real enough (rather than imagined at best, as Kripke seems to suggest) (Davies 60-61). His is not a social community, but a human community in the sense of the total human population, where the members of that population define what counts as a rule. The central thought is as follows:

> (...) it may be appropriate to judge the individual's attempts to generate a regular pattern of behavior against standards set by the similar attempts, judgments and dispositions of other members of the community of human beings, despite possible social isolation of members of the community of human beings (ibid).

When seen in this light, the issues raised by Blackburn are no longer problematic. Crusoe is human, so no harm done: he can follow rules because he is part of the human community (no matter how 'physically isolated' he is).

The response to Boghossian is equally simple. We can address his point if we rephrase the argument against private language as a statement of *human* impossibility: this seems like a high enough standard to set. We should note that treating humanity as the relevant category is not only a skeptical solution to the problems stemming from Kripke's treatment of Crusoe. It is also a further widening of scope: having already shifted focus from the individual to a particular community, Davies urges us to consider the community of all humans in full. This allows for more intuitively plausible consequences, which is mandatory if we follow Kripke in taking actual assertion conditions as the cornerstone of any justification theory.

For the sake of clarity, the two 'analogous' skeptical solutions are as follows:

Skeptical Solution I
(1) The skeptical paradox: if Junya follows a rule, the skeptic says, he does so in virtue of matters of fact, but there is none: therefore, rule-following is impossible;
(2) But it seems clear that we *do* follow rules;
(3) Justification conditions (the 'normativity' of rules) stem from the community, so that rule-following is necessarily 'communitarian': there can be no private language in this sense;
(4) Therefore, Crusoe considered in isolation cannot be a rule-follower.

Skeptical Solution II
(5) Kripke's negative statement: rule-following presupposes a community, Kripke says, but Crusoe is not involved in any community: therefore, Crusoe cannot follow rules;
(6) But it seems clear that Crusoe *can* follow rules;
(7) Some justification conditions (the 'normativity' of rules) stem from the human community, so that meaning is necessarily 'human': there can be private language in this sense;
(8) Therefore, Crusoe considered in isolation can be a rule-follower.

In this way, we can have our cake and eat it too. In cases where all of humankind, including socially isolated humans, agrees on a particular rule, this agreement can be used to adjudicate rule-following controversies. But this victory seems to come at a price. If it is a valid response to Wittgenstein and Kripke, then what is left of the private language argument? It now appears that all that is needed to follow a rule is to be human: surely there is more to it than that.

2.2 What is Left of the Private Language Argument?

In §1, we were introduced to what seemed like a devastating problem – and then we applied what seemed like a satisfying solution. I have tried to argue against Kripke's skeptical solution on the grounds that it 'proves too much' by excluding Crusoe-like figures from the community of rule-followers: precisely because Crusoe, too, is part of a community, namely the community of human beings. But this second skeptical solution threatens to throw us back to the original problem. We should not want to say that following a rule privately is possible merely in virtue of being human; since not every instance of human behavior corresponds to a rule, the analysis has to be specified. Davies attempts to derive conditions for the possibility of private language, but is left with the conclusion that any prospective rule-follower must postulate the existence of an external world that is distinct from his experience of it, with the former being foundational rather than derivative (Davies 56). His argument also proves too much: it entails that only Crusoes that are metaphysical realists can be rule-followers. We stand in need of a new account of rule-following. Below I introduce three necessary conditions of my own design, which are jointly sufficient to explain what rule-following requires. Those conditions will hold the key to understanding what the private language argument, as developed by Kripke in order to answer the skeptical paradox, entails for private language.

The first condition was already implied by my discussion of Crusoe solving his Rubik's cube. If he tackles the cube systematically, Blackburn claimed, Crusoe has to be capable of "ordering expectations about the recurrence of sensations" with a view to explanation, prediction et cetera (Blackburn 299). Under what conditions is Crusoe able to do so? For one thing, we need to postulate the existence of regularities, that is to say stable patterns, which he can come to recognize. Stability is necessarily presupposed by any rule-follower: without stability, Crusoe would not be able to suppose an intimate connection between the rule he adopted while trying to solve the Rubik's cube and his success in manipulating said cube. In other words, he cannot start out by assuming that the cube has a will of its own and can take on any color at all, no matter what Crusoe does with it. Of course, it is possible for an unexpected color to come up, but then Crusoe will have to adapt his system so that it will be able to accommodate the unforeseen result. Even to attempt such accommodation presupposes that he can influence future outcomes by applying his rules.

My second condition is that Crusoe is capable of verifying or falsifying that he has followed a given rule. Each rule he follows sets a standard, for instance in terms of prediction. In particular, if Crusoe has mastered a certain rule, the rule itself excludes certain outcomes. Crusoe knows what the 'incorrect outcomes' are on the basis of earlier applications of the same rule. Let us say that the rules he uses to solve a Rubik's cube include 'solving the top', known to cube enthusiasts around the world. Whenever Crusoe follows the rules for 'solving the top', the squares at the top of the

cube are all the same color. If the top features a stray blue square in the midst of eight red ones, then Crusoe knows that he has not followed the rule for 'solving the top'. If he believed that he had been following it, then his belief is now falsified. Verification works similarly: if the standards set by earlier applications of the rule are met, then it can justifiably be said that the rule has been followed. This leaves open the possibility that actual outcomes are compatible with many different rules, which does not *seem* to be a problem in all cases. For instance, if Junya calculates that 2+2=4, then it can justifiably be said that he follows the rule of addition. But even that is a matter of community membership.

For, thirdly and finally, acceptability by a community is the only standard by which we may speak of rule-following and meaning. Kripke claims that a substantive restriction is placed on individuals within a community by the justification conditions that prevail within it (Kripke 90). Formulating and upholding those conditions is itself a process that goes on within the community, so that it appears that I can never be justified in asserting something whenever the community around me thinks differently. Kripke explicitly states that "doing as others do" cannot be sufficient for meaning anything (Gauker 122, Kripke 112). But at first sight it appears difficult for Kripke to avoid this uncomfortably conformist result.

Simon Blackburn is once again among Kripke's critics. He objects that a community of rule-followers is not like an orchestra. In other words, mutual support is not sufficient as a standard of correctness, as it would be if we think about musical performance. Imagine, with Blackburn, that for individual instruments, there is no standard or instruction on how the piece ought to be played, so that "all melodies are equally acceptable" (Blackburn 293). There might then still be "standards of harmony across instruments" (ibid). But Junya is correct in saying that 317+237=554, no matter what the rest of the world says, we should want to say. How can Kripke resolve this problem?

Addition plays a certain role in our lives and the rule of 'addition' acquires its meaning as a result. Kripke phrases this relation in terms of "utility" (Kripke 73). Someone who uses 'addition' in a certain way is able to perform well in various interactions, for instance, those between the grocer and his costumer (Kripke 93) or between Junya and the tax inspector. As we continue to perform well, we become reliable rule-followers in the eyes of our community. Davies would be quick to call a society in which the tax inspector's rules of addition were upheld (in particular the dogma that 317+237=1000) "inhuman", in the sense that it would be astonishing to discover a Crusoe that "went in for mathematics at all" without ending up with something that is at least compatible with our rule of addition (Davies 64). But this dramatic turn of phrase cannot solve every problematic case. Could we not imagine a conflict within a given society about which rule is to be applied, with the authority falling predominantly on the side that is wrong? Think about the deductive rules invoked in proofs for the existence of God, for

instance. It does not seem very helpful to resort to a charge of inhumanity if we disagree about such cases. Still, it seems that we do need some sort of standard to decide when (if ever) individuals justifiably disagree with their communities.

Since we are considering the human community, cases that are problematic in terms of justification would need to encompass all of humanity. Assuming Kripke's sense of utility, such cases would have to facilitate human interaction across the board without being justified. It may well be that if we phrase the problem in these terms, cooperation between all humans is indeed the ideal limit; not necessarily for every human enterprise, but certainly with regard to rule-following. For instance, if all humans agree on the rules of addition, so that life on earth becomes supremely coordinated (at least more so than it would be if we disagreed on addition), then this is itself ample justification. Note that this does not require that all humans agree on all instances of rule-following, if only because the human community is not the only kind of community. The relationship between communities and their members can be of a layered kind: Crusoe and Junya are both members of the human community, but Junya is a member of a particular social community, that of taxpayers in the United States of America, while Crusoe is not. We can think of such social communities as 'subcommunities' of the human community.

One may object that talk of 'layered membership' hides an underlying difference that separates the human community from any social one. Consider another disagreement between Junya and the tax inspector: this time they are quarrelling whether Junya's gifts to charity are legally deductible. Such conflicts can be resolved by appealing to concrete others who have the requisite authority to decide the issue (for instance, a judge specialized in fiscal matters). There is no such external point of reference for Crusoe, the objection continues: Crusoe cannot *ask* any other member of the human community to check whether he is following any rule.

We can reply by adapting an idea from Simon Blackburn, who writes: "The members of a [social, JK] community stand to each other as the momentary time-slices of individuals do" (Blackburn 294). Crusoe, as we have already seen, is able to predict future outcomes of applying a given rule on the basis of previous ones (past and future Crusoe being different 'time-slices' of the same individual). Consider the rules for 'solving the top'. Crusoe does not have to resort to introspection in order to find out whether he has followed those rules; nor does he need others to check the outcomes. He simply asks: are all the squares on the top the same color? More generally, Crusoe knows what the outcome of applying the rule is and is in a position to check whether or not the outcome has been realized, even though he is by himself.

But this explanation cannot suffice. After all, there is no matter of fact in virtue of which Crusoe has followed any rule: he may have unwittingly applied a different rule, which coincidentally results in the expected outcome. Only at this point does it matter that Crusoe is a member of the human community.

Of course, the point of his membership is not that he can count on the support of concrete others (he cannot), but rather that human beings form a community that accepts some putative instances of rule-following and rejects others. The questions whether or not 'born Crusoes' follow a rule in particular cases can be answered by referring to the attempts of others (for instance, the calculations they performed). It does not matter that those earlier attempts took place across the ocean and without Crusoe's knowledge: they have set standards that apply to his own attempt here and now. Again, this is conditional on the existence of propensities to agreement with respect to the rule, which is an empirical matter. Further examples about which the required kind of agreement exists include logical rules of inference, such as *Modus ponens* and simplification (also known as conjunctive elimination).

The question of justification is answered by appealing to either acceptance by a social community, as in the case of legal deductibility, or acceptability within the human community, as in the case of addition.[10] We have seen that there are different layers of membership: membership in the human community is more fundamental than membership in subcommunities (the latter requires the former). Correspondingly, acceptability is more fundamental than acceptance. A human being follows a given rule if and only if the relevant (social or human) community does *or would* accept that he is doing so.

There are, as Kripke said, no "supersensible, infinite realities" (Kripke 106) to be grasped that are somehow independent of any community. But we need not, and in fact should not, conclude that Crusoe cannot be a rule-follower. We can have our cake and eat it too: rule-following is determined by community membership *and* Crusoe can be a rule-follower. I have provided three necessary and jointly sufficient conditions. To sum up, rule-following requires stable patterns we can come to recognize, so that it is possible to verify or falsify that we have followed a given rule. Thinking in terms of cooperation among all humankind ('the orchestra of humanity', to extend Blackburn's metaphor) is an important step, because mutual support on such a scale is a plausible standard of justification. The third and final condition is that acceptability within the human community is necessary for following a rule.

If I have been treating the issue fairly, the private language argument affects only putative instances of rule-following that do not jointly satisfy the three conditions outlined above. There are many implications outside of the debate about Kripke's skeptical paradox. To give one example, due to Stephen Law: imagine a solitary prisoner, who secretly records the days on which he sees rats in his cell by writing an exclamation mark in his diary. Law thinks that the prisoner's way of responding to rats cannot count as fol-

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[10] Of course, it is possible that a Crusoe-like figure does not *know* whether he is following a rule that is acceptable from the point of view of the human community. But this is an epistemological question. Crusoe's ignorance of whether the criterion applies in individual cases does not take away from the fact that he is either following a rule or not in virtue of that criterion.

lowing a rule because of the private language argument (Law 165): but that conclusion seems impossible to justify. Why would the prisoner be unable to perform this simple technique? And indeed, the prisoner fulfils all three conditions (he can rest assured).

On the other hand, if the same prisoner were to write an 'A' into his diary every time he experienced the *Angst* of post-industrial man under late capitalism, then he would not be following a rule. For in that case, the portion of the world that he experiences (which is part of his inner mental life rather than the external world) is impossible to verify or falsify. Many cases and examples can be added: as in so many other matters, Wittgenstein's writings remain a valuable source.

Conclusion

The private language argument presents a challenge to any philosopher of language, whether he is interested in Wittgenstein's original intentions or not. Kripke has provided a very interesting version of the argument, but seems to go overboard when he considers the implications for a private language. I applied a second skeptical solution (in the spirit of Kripke's initial one) to Kripke's own position, in order to salvage the intuition that individuals considered in isolation can follow rules. The private language argument, understood as an argument against solitary rule-following, does not apply to Crusoe-like figures. It only applies to putative instances of rule-following, R, that do not jointly satisfy the three following conditions:

(1) R assumes regularities, stable patterns, that we can come to recognize;
(2) R assumes the possibility of verifying/falsifying whether a given rule has been followed;
(3) R is acceptable as an instance of language or a rule within the human community.

If interpreted in this way, the private language argument can be thought of as a counter to (a) implicit and explicit forms of 'communitarian solipsism' and (b) the truly objective kind of analysis embraced by some authors. Rules refer to the community in which they are formulated, but not every rule is 'merely' a function of social communities. We have to occupy the middle ground between the 'solipsist' and the 'objectivist' if we are to make sense of the all-important practice of rule-following.

Acknowledgements

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