

Pictures of Rule-Following

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1. Introduction

My thesis is this: in Kripke's *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*, there are two strands of rule-following skepticism and that they are intertwined but can be disentangled. My aim is to clarify how these strands differ and then answer one of the strands.

A few remarks by way of orientation: first, the strands of rule-following skepticism that I will be discussing also exist in Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*. However, Kripke's book is useful as a way of focusing our discussion on rule-following since its structure is more manageable than that of *Philosophical Investigations*. Second, I'm going to call my skeptic 'Kripke' even though Kripke himself suggests it may be wrong to identify his own position with that of the skeptic's. I'm doing this just for the sake of locutionary ease.

Finally, before we (really) begin, we need to establish what shall be meant by two terms: Cartesian skepticism and Kantian skepticism;¹ or perhaps equally, epistemological skepticism and metaphysical skepticism. One kind of skeptical worry is that of *how* we know things about rule-following; this is the epistemological/Cartesian thread. Cartesian skepticism is concerned with how we access, or ascertain, facts about rule-following. But it does not doubt the *nature* of such facts. The Cartesian skeptic accepts we know what a claim about rule-following means; he simply wonders whether we can ever be *certain* when making such a claim, whether we can *really know* such facts. The metaphysical/Kantian skeptic, however, is beset by a deeper anxiety. We can think of the Kantian skeptic as sidelining the Cartesian question of how we *know* facts about rule-following and asking after the *constitution* of such facts. In other words, Kantian skepticism is concerned with what claims of rule-following *even mean*. The onset of Kantian skepticism (in both Wittgenstein's and Kripke's work) is marked by the worry that there is nothing we mean when we speak of rule-following; or in other words, that there is nothing there to be a Cartesian skeptic *about*, that discourse on rule-following is not merely epistemologically *difficult* but simply *nonsense*.²

¹ These terms come from Conant's *Varieties of Skepticism*.

² What are my grounds for claiming that Kripke himself makes this distinction? After all, maybe this is interesting philosophical taxonomy but not a way of thinking that can be assigned to Kripke. To the text, then. Early in *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*, Kripke writes:

2. Kripke's picture of rule-following

In this section of the talk, my aim is to bring out Kripke's picture of rule-following; that is, the metaphysical model on which he thinks rule-following must be construed.

Kripke asks a question that might be stated thus: what makes it the case that *this*—some action or event—is in accordance with *this* particular rule and not another one (or not in accordance with any rule at all)? More simply, what is it to follow a rule? Ultimately, for Kripke,

In the discussion below the challenge posed by the sceptic takes two forms. First, he questions whether there is any *fact* that I meant plus, not quus, that will answer his sceptical challenge. Second, he questions whether I have any reason to be so confident that now I should answer '125' rather than '5'.

This quotation supports at least the conclusion that Kripke has in mind two strands of skepticism, the skeptic's challenge taking "two forms". And looking at these strands, it appears the first can be identified as a Kantian strand, the skeptic wondering whether there is any fact at all that distinguishes between meaning plus and quus, and that the second can be identified as Cartesian, the skeptic wondering whether I can *know*—and thus "be so confident"—that *this* is an application of the rule in question.

We can see further (and conclusive) evidence of Kripke's awareness of this distinction in some of his descriptions of the shape of the skeptical dialectic. At one point Kripke writes, "the problem may appear to be epistemological... however... it is clear that the sceptical challenge is not really an epistemological one". The real challenge to rule-following is the Kantian one, not a question of epistemology but a question of how there could even be such a thing as rule-following. In a telling passage, Kripke writes thus:

The sceptic...puts the challenge in terms of a sceptical hypothesis about a change in my usage...

Of course, ultimately, if the sceptic is right, the concepts of meaning and of intending one function rather than another will make no sense... But before we pull the rug out from under our own feet, we begin by speaking as if the notion that at present we mean a certain function by 'plus' is unquestioned and unquestionable. Only *past* usages are to be questioned. Otherwise, we will be unable to *formulate* the problem.

Kripke consciously uses Cartesian skepticism as a way into the Kantian paradox, knowingly bringing the problem out through epistemological worries that are ultimately meant to give way to metaphysical/Kantian skepticism. In other words, Kripke poses the problem first as an epistemological 'how-do-you-know' question, but it quickly becomes apparent that this is the less pressing expression of skeptical anxiety. Kripke recognizes that it is not *whether or not* and *how* I know; the real question is *what would I have to know in order to count as knowing the thing I purport to know?* For Kripke, Cartesian skepticism is merely a vehicle for arriving at Kantian skepticism. In this paper, I mean to address the slide from Cartesian skepticism into Kantian skepticism. I argue against the latter form of skepticism but leave the former basically untouched. Perhaps this will seem a cop-out to some readers. Am I conceding skepticism? And if so, is this not a reprehensible feature of this essay? There are a couple of things to say in response to these charges. First, it seems to me that when it comes to rule-following Kantian skepticism should be addressed prior to Cartesian skepticism (unless there is a way to address both simultaneously, but no such possibility occurs to me). Before we entertain epistemological concerns (before we argue over whether we ever *actually* know claims of rule-following to obtain), we should determine what we are taking about, or that we are actually talking about something intelligible and not merely spouting nonsense. And this essay would be too long if I were to address Cartesian as well as Kantian skepticism.

The second reason I leave Cartesian skepticism untouched: it seems the sorts of answers given in response to Cartesian skepticism elsewhere should, if they are good ones, be applicable here as well. 'Cartesian rule-following skepticism' does not strike me as a unique form of Cartesian skepticism (one posing its own special problems) but rather a particular application of its generic form, the problems it poses for rule-following being basically the same as those it poses elsewhere. And if we concede Cartesian skepticism, we at least understand what we are conceding, whereas concession to the Kantian skeptic seems intolerable in that concession erases the possibility of understanding that concession and so we are left with a paradox.

this is not a Cartesian question, one about how we access or ascertain facts of rule-following (though it begins a one), but rather a Kantian question about the constitution of following a rule. How is it so much as possible that an action be in accordance with a rule? How is it different from an action that is not in accordance with a rule, and what makes it so? And if it is impossible to distinguish between following a rule and not following one, the whole concept of rule-following (its very intelligibility) must be lost to us and not just our (mere epistemological) ability to determine whether or not a particular case is one of rule-following.

No candidate answer to the question of rule-following is to be rejected solely because it references facts that it are epistemologically difficult, even impossible, to attain knowledge of. Kripke asks whether there is any fact *at all* that determines whether or not a rule is being followed regardless of whether there exists any hope of accessing such a fact. Kripke's ultimate conclusion is that there is no such fact, i.e. that there is nothing that distinguishes between following a rule and not following one, and thus is issued a skeptical paradox in which we are apparently forced to conclude (however impossibly) that there is no such thing as being in accordance with a rule.

Kripke argues that anything we do or think might be brought, on the strength of some interpretation, into accordance with multiple (and conflicting) rules governing our actions. For Kripke, this means there is no possibility (not even a hypothetical one) of distinguishing between something's being in accordance with any particular rule. In other words, all the facts to be found in a putative case of rule-following (one's actions, his 'mental contents', *et cetera*) do not add up to following any particular rule since these same facts would also be consistent with *not* following the same rule. In the face of the conclusion that there is nothing that is different between cases of following a particular rule and cases of following some different rule or even no rule, Kripke concludes that the whole concept of following a rule must be abandoned (or at least that the whole *traditional* concept must be abandoned). For, following a rule is only conceivable if it may be meaningfully contrasted with not following one, a contrast that he purports to have shown illusory.³

³ In ordinary cases, particular criteria are taken to warrant ascriptions of rule-following, and some explanations, interpretations, justifications, *et cetera*, do the necessary clarifying work in cases of confusion or misinterpretation. Sometimes we are certain that a rule is being followed or certain of how to follow it ourselves, and we do not consider the logically possible ambiguity of our criteria or any potential misunderstandings to unsettle our certainty. However, a particular clarification, interpretation, or criterion that works in some cases is no proof against every possible misinterpretation, and in this way our position as knowledgeable rule-followers may appear unstable. If the

Kripke's skeptical argument works by showing that in no case is misinterpretation inconceivable, and it is this 'lack of assurance' against possible misinterpretations that motivates the beginning of the skeptical dialectic. For example, he challenges our grip of the plus function by suggesting a 'quus' function⁴ - that is, a function that is similar to addition but with a crucial difference - and though the argument is ultimately supposed to lead to a place where both plus and 'quus' are unintelligible, it is motivated first by the skeptic raising the possibility of misinterpretation, showing that the criteria we had taken to determine the rule seem to permit possible mistakes. Thus the question is first the Cartesian one: how do I know this to be a case of rule-following? How can I rule out possible misinterpretations? When it comes to look like I cannot *really* know whether this is a case of rule-following (since I cannot rule out every possible misinterpretation), Kripke begins shifting registers and asks *what would I have to know in order to know this to be a case of rule-following?* So the dialectic evolves, moving its challenge from one of *how* you know (what you say you know) to a challenge of *what* you know (you say you know).

Our temptation towards claims about the general unintelligibility of rule-following is supposed to grow from our recognition of an ever-present potential for misinterpretation. It strikes us that nothing could close the gap between our *criteria for* and the correct *interpretation of* the rule, and on this way of thinking, we end up losing rule-following altogether. In this way, what seemed to be the harmless observation that any set of criteria could be misinterpreted deepens and eventually collapses the difference we had thought to exist between following and not following a rule. Thus the original Cartesian skepticism devolves into Kantian skepticism, and Kripke's epistemological challenge comes to reveal a deeper problematic. No longer is it incumbent on the anti-skeptic to show (merely) *how* we could know a case to be one of rule-following; what a claim of rule-following even *means* has come under skeptical attack.

So Kripke disregards all ordinary answers to the question of rule-following, citing possible misinterpretations as proof of their inadequacy. But how does Kripke imagine a satisfactory answer would appear? What kind of answer would he accept? For surely there must be *some* kind of answer that Kripke thinks would suffice, certain criteria that he thinks if met

context shifts, if something new about the present circumstances comes to light or another viable interpretation is presented, we may be shaken in our conviction (and no longer warranted in saying) that *this* is a case of rule-following or that *this* is how to apply a particular rule.

⁴ Kripke, *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*, p. 9.

would constitute a good answer to his skepticism. Otherwise, he presupposes his conclusion of the impossibility of rule-following. In other words, Kripke has reasons for disregarding our ordinary answers to questions of rule-following, saying *this answer is no good because it does not fit these criteria*, and this means Kripke has in mind a template of how a good answer would look, i.e. certain criteria that a good answer would meet.

In considering the reasons he cites for disregarding our ordinary answers and asking what an answer that would not be excluded would have to look like, I think it becomes apparent: Kripke is after an 'essential' answer to the question of rule-following, i.e. an answer that would serve as an unassailable criterion of rule-following under any circumstances whatsoever. When he asks how we can be sure that a particular application really accords with the rule, Kripke is not satisfied by any answer that falls short of being ultimate, enquiry-ending, fool-proof; he seeks something that is unimpeachable in every case. Such a criterion would have to ensure by its mere presence in a case (whatever such a presence would amount to) whether it were one of rule-following. In principle, it could not be 'unsettled' by a shifting context. Kripke wants a fact that, should it obtain, implies rule-following with bilateral necessity; and we can see this is true by noticing that he rejects all answers that do not satisfy this condition.⁵⁶

This absolute criterion that Kripke is apparently after begins to look like an 'essence' of rule-following. It could not be a mere concomitant feature of rule-following, something that as such could conceivably accompany a case that was not one of rule-following, for then such a fact would offer no infallible assurance that the case in which it obtained were one of rule-following. Philosophical clarity on the matter of rule-following, Kripke appears to think, would consist in isolating whatever it is that lies at the heart of rule-following and bringing that to light. The

⁵ To elaborate the point: though we ordinarily identify certain criteria as constitutive of following a particular rule, these criteria might be of no consideration in other cases or under different circumstances. Merely adding certain choice details to the case under consideration might cause us to take the same criteria to have a different sort of relevance (moving a pawn does not count as following the rules of chess for one who has no understanding of the game, but in another context, moving a pawn certainly does count as following the rules of chess). Kripke seeks, not a criterion for rule-following that settles the matter only for a particular context, but an answer that settles the matter in every conceivable eventuality, one that wards off every possible misinterpretation and that would tell us whether a case was one of rule-following whatever other circumstantial details obtain.

⁶ It is a noteworthy feature of Kripke's picture of rule-following that, if a fact that thus constituted rule-following existed, it would only be necessary to look at a single moment, a 'snapshot', in order to determine whether or not a particular case were one of rule-following. Not only would other contemporaneous details be unimportant to this ultimate criterion, but also what preceded and followed would be unimportant.

In *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein writes in the voice of an interlocutor, "we grasp the meaning at a stroke, and what we grasp in this way is surely something different from the 'use' which is extended in time!" (p. 59e, §138).

general thrust of Kripke's skeptical argument lies in showing that there is no such ultimate criterion, no essence lying beneath cases of rule-following, and it is this realization that moves him to his skeptical conclusion of the fictive nature of the concept of rule-following.

So far, I have paid special attention to how Kripke makes his skeptical argument, i.e. how he motivates the slide into paradox. I have asked what it is he is seeking, what he thinks would be necessary in order to render rule-following intelligible, for it is apparently in *not* finding this that one is brought to paradox. In answering these questions, it has become apparent that Kripke seeks the essence of rule-following. My aim has so far been purely descriptive, an attempt to clarify the framework of the Kripke's thinking. I have not attempted to say whether Kripke's position is defensible.

3. Rule-following: a family portrait

In this section, my aim is to describe rule-following and draw from these descriptions an accurate model or picture. The upshot of these considerations will be that Wittgenstein's 'family resemblance picture' - and not the 'essence picture' - is true to rule-following as it is actually manifest in the world.

Looking at actual cases of rule-following, it is apparent that there are a variety of different things that are ordinarily considered criteria of rule-following. For example, sometimes one is said to be following a rule when he writes " $2 + 2 = 4$ ", or perhaps when he moves a chess piece, or when he consults an instruction manual and then proceeds to unscrew a lug nut. These are all possible cases of rule-following, and we are (ordinarily) warranted in claiming them to be so though we might hesitate to say we have identified an essential criterion in any of them.

One way in which Wittgenstein attempts to make rule-following's lack of an essence apparent is by asking questions like *could this be an instance of rule-following; could someone follow a rule in this way?* What I think one is meant to see in considering these cases is that it is necessary to fill out a context, however roughly, to get a handle on what it would be for such things to be cases of rule-following or not. What sorts of practices, institutions, customs, and so on, must we imagine in order for *this* to be a case of rule-following? In what surroundings would *these* criteria warrant a claim of rule-following (and in what contexts would these 'same' criteria be unrecognizable as such)? Since Kripke is after the essence of rule-following, asking if certain criteria are *ipso facto* constitutive of rule-following, he thinks there would have to be some final

criterion that holds regardless of whatever further circumstances obtain. Wittgenstein's examples, however, make it apparent that, deprived of a context, the answers that can be given to questions about whether certain criteria constitute rule-following drift into indeterminacy. It is only when deployed in some context that our criteria have any life. Wittgenstein writes:

It is only in normal cases that the use of a word is clearly laid out in advance for us; we know, are in no doubt, what we have to say in this or that case. The more abnormal the case, the more doubtful it becomes what we are to say.⁷

It is only under certain circumstances that anything might constitute rule-following. Any criterion of rule-following "presupposes as a surrounding particular circumstances, particular forms of life and speech [just as] there is no such thing as a facial expression without a face".⁸ Bereft of the circumstances in which they occur, our criteria for rule-following lose their significance.⁹

There is no essence lying under cases of rule-following, an essence that may be brought into focus by excluding our 'non-essential' criteria. I previously argued that the skeptic is functioning with an 'essence picture' of rule-following. I think it evident, though, that this is not a characterization of rule-following that is true to our actual practices and language-game(s) surrounding rule-following. Observation of our every-day lives, of what we do and how we

⁷ Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, pp. 61e - 62e, §142.

⁸ Wittgenstein, *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*, p. 414, VII, §47.

⁹ Contrary to the picture of rule-following with which Kripke is working, rule-following is not something that can always be 'pinned down' to a single moment or to a definite—i.e. sharply bounded—period of time (though it may sometimes be). On some occasions, *when did he really follow the rule* is a bad question. Asking (and insisting on) such a question can lead to confusion when in fact all is known and in the open. Wittgenstein demonstrates how this takes place with questions we might try to ask about chess; he writes, "What if one asked: When *can* you play chess? All the time? Or just while you are making a move? - And how odd that being able to play chess should take such a short time, and a game so much longer!". Thus a game of chess, something which may unexceptionally last several hours, now may (on this way of thinking) appear as though it lasted so much longer than the *actual* playing of the game (a bizarre conclusion). When it comes to playing chess, I want to say *nothing is hidden*. In ordinary circumstances, an exact description of what is going on (strategy excluded) is easily achieved and not perplexing (i.e. there is ordinarily no confusion over *when the participants are really playing chess*; such questions either do not occur to us or, if they do, do not bother us for they are easily answered). If someone should pose this question and, moreover, appear to be confused by it, we should echo Wittgenstein and say that his question contains a mistake: the mistake of assuming we must be able to name a span of time—with sharp boundaries—that one can *actually* play chess. The language-game that revolves around chess (and more broadly rule-following in general) does not (always) speak of rule-following in this way and simply has no answer to the question of when one can *really* play chess. As a result, when asking such questions of rule-following, we become confused by the grammar, and we suppose there must be definite temporal boundaries to be set around games of chess (and cases of rule-following). However, this supposition arises, not from observation of our practices, but because of the influence of a particular picture of rule-following. We assume something like Kripke's essence picture, and this gives rise to the idea that we must be able to give a definite answer to these sorts of questions. Observation of the actual language-game, though, makes it apparent that the question is an unnatural one.

speak, suggests that there is no unassailable criterion in cases of rule-following. Rather, to borrow a term Wittgenstein uses elsewhere in *Philosophical Investigations*,¹⁰ cases of rule-following share *family resemblances* and can be recognized and understood as such without the existence of any essential feature undergirding them.¹¹

I have offered an alternative picture of rule-following, one holding that knowledge of rule-following involves no unassailable criterial knowledge. Thus it is a picture that palpably differs from Kripke's essence picture. The knowledge we have of rule-following may be fruitfully compared to an ability—a case of 'know-how'—as opposed to knowledge that can be made exhaustively discursively explicit. *If* rule-following had an essence, *then* one would be obliged to know that essence in order to (really) know a case to be one of rule-following. However, if there is no essence of rule-following, then we are not obliged to demonstrate knowledge of any such thing in order to vindicate the claim that we understand rule-following (i.e. what it is or how to do it). If rule-following is better captured by the family resemblance picture, then our knowledge of it will show itself as an ability, and this reflects no lack on our part but rather is indicative of what rule-following itself is.

4. Reassessing rule-following skepticism

In this last section, I will reassess Kripke's skeptical claims in light of what has emerged, i.e., that he assumes an essence picture of rule-following while the family resemblance picture is in fact a better characterization of it.

Kripke is after an indefeasible criterion of rule-following, but it begins to look as if this search were always bound to fail. Taking the essence picture in conjunction with a form of Cartesian skepticism leads Kripke to Kantian skepticism since, in any case (described as one) of rule-following, it seems possible to conceive of further (as of yet unknown or unspecified)

¹⁰ See, for example, Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, p. 36e, §67.

¹¹ I do *not* mean to suggest that there are a number of disjunctive, interwoven properties that hold together all cases of rule-following (or in other words that rule-following has a complex essence, one comprised of a series of disjunctions). In saying that cases of rule-following can be thought of as sharing family resemblances, I am suggesting a picture that is in opposition to the supposition that rule-following—either in general or in particular cases—has an essence, or something lying 'below the surface' in virtue of which it is what it is (as perhaps one is a man in virtue of being a rational animal). The term 'family resemblance' may be misleading if one takes it to mean the point is mainly one about *relationships between* cases of rule-following. The focus is better understood as being on individual cases. Holding only one case to be in question, we do not (take ourselves to) need an essential feature, an indefeasible warrant, in order to recognize it as a case of rule-following (which we can *see* by observing the language-games that surround cases of rule-following).

details that may obtain and thus change (our assessment of) the case from 'rule-following' to 'not rule-following'. This is so far a Cartesian skepticism, a comment on the nature of our ability to ascertain certain facts about the world, but Kripke, working implicitly with his essence picture of rule-following, thinks there *must* be an unimpeachable criterion of rule-following, one that is not susceptible to being unsettled by the revelation of further imaginable circumstances, and rejects every answer that fails to meet this standard. Upon rightly concluding that there is no such thing, he arrives at the rule-following paradox. It is, in other words, his failure to successfully construe rule-following on the essence picture that leads Kripke to declare rule-following impossible.¹²

But since there is an alternative to the essence picture of rule-following, it does not seem necessary to give up rule-following altogether due to its failure to be rendered comprehensible within the framework of the essence picture. Before attempting to espouse such an unstable position, one should ask whether the family resemblance picture might better serve as a model for rule-following, and if so, whether we should replace the essence picture with it.¹³¹⁴ So when it becomes apparent that the essence picture is not a good fit for rule-following it becomes an important task to search for a new model (insofar as finding a new one might prove helpful), one that serves as a better object of comparison for our actual practices, helping us understand them as they really are.

The failure to make sense of rule-following when it is construed on the essence picture shows, not the failure of rule-following *tour court*, but the failure of rule-following to be construed on such a picture. Wittgenstein describes this situation perfect when he writes, "The more closely we examine actual language, the greater the conflict between it and our requirement... The conflict becomes intolerable; the requirement is now in danger of becoming vacuous".¹⁵ Kripke has certain requirements for rule-following that, upon investigation, go unmet, and the failure to meet these requirements renders unintelligible the very thing we were

¹² Wittgenstein describes an impulse to say something like, 'But *this* isn't how it is—yet *this* is how it *has* to be'; and this is an accurate characterization of where Kripke finds himself—surprised by the dissonance between his model and reality—and this leads him to paradox.

¹³ In fact, it is not obvious whether a picture of rule-following is necessary at all. Do we need to replace the essence picture with another, or can we do away with pictures altogether? I am not sure how to answer this question, but no matter the answer, jettisoning the essence picture is both viable and necessary.

¹⁴ After all, the use of the model or picture is to help us understand reality; it is not to dictate to reality how it must really be. Wittgenstein writes: we can avoid unfairness or vacuity in our assertions only by presenting the model as what it is, as an object of comparison - as a sort of yardstick; not as a preconception to which reality must correspond. (The dogmatism into which we fall so easily in doing philosophy).

¹⁵ Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, p. 51e, §107.

trying to understand. Once, however, it has been made explicit that it is only a certain *picture* that is untenable, new paths open, and we can go on.

In fact, once it is made clear that the skeptic shows the failure, not of the concept of rule-following *tout court*, but rather of rule-following to fit the essence picture, Kripke's argument can be regarded as a *reductio ad absurdum* of this picture, a clever way of showing that the premise that rule-following has an essence—and thus that knowledge of it requires an unassailable criterion—is a bad one. But in order to claim that the Kripke's skeptical arguments are a *reductio* of his position, it is necessary to make explicit the premise that is under attack and that can be jettisoned. Without this, we lack a vantage point from which to observe the destruction of the *reductio*.¹⁶

But after replacing the essence picture with the family resemblance picture, are Kripke's skeptical concerns not still applicable? Do not the exact same problems arise no matter the 'picture' with which we function? Well, I think the answer is *no*.

In an ordinary case of rule-following, it is easy to say what counts as following a rule, which rule is being followed, how we know one is following it, and so on. Kripke introduces what we can call an 'unsettling element' into ordinary cases of rule-following, one that shows that a doubt is conceivable by introducing either a possible misinterpretation or certain other facts about the case that suggest a reassessment of whether the case is one of rule-following.¹⁷ These are presented as possibilities, conceivable interpretations that one must be able to head-off if one is not to fall into skepticism. In this way, Kripke purports to show that the criteria named as constitutive of rule-following were inadequate. However, when Kripke adds 'unsettling elements' to the case in question, answering him is still a possibility. One can still say what constitutes rule-following under these *new* circumstances, in light of these *new* facts.¹⁸ (I say these are *new* facts and, therefore, circumstances because they must be contrary to what was assumed of the case; otherwise they would have no power to 'unsettle' our previous assessment.) We should say to Kripke, "Now that the circumstances have changed, this is how I know this to be a case of

¹⁶ We might capture the point with a metaphor: we realize we are sawing off the branch upon which we are sitting but see no other way to saw at all and so are paralyzed—any movement threatens to send us crashing to paradox.

¹⁷ He suggests a bizarre quus-like function and similar things (we can, for example, also imagine him suggesting a Martian's finding it natural to interpret a drawing different than do we, or a pupil's finding it natural to taking the direction *count by twos* differently than do we, and so on).

¹⁸ And I suppose that if I were to discover a Martian's tendency to misinterpret a drawing I might try to correct this too.

rule-following (or to not be a case of rule-following, or to be a case that is indeterminate)", and this should no longer appear problematic once we have shifted pictures of rule-following.

In a shifting context, the criteria that constitute rule-following change too. This is no challenge to our practices or to the concept of rule-following, and it appears so only if rule-following is thought of as requiring an essence, i.e. something not susceptible to skeptical 'unsettling elements'. Once rule-following comes to be thought of on the family resemblance picture—once the notion of an essence of rule-following is abandoned—the fact that different circumstances give rise to different criteria and that there are no ultimate criteria of rule-following become mere commonplaces. Since there is nothing that must 'lie below' every case of rule-following, nothing that must settle the matter for every possible eventuality, the observation that all our criteria may be unsettled no longer appears puzzling—this is simply a feature of rule-following and our knowledge of it.¹⁹

The logical possibility of doubt that Kripke demonstrates can be raised in, perhaps, any case at all only shows there to be a question of Cartesian skepticism at hand. That differing circumstances give rise to different criteria of rule-following and that no criterion is unassailable reveals only that rule-following is without essence. Kripke's 'arguments from possible misinterpretation' - i.e. his Cartesian skeptical worries - lead to Kantian skepticism when combined with the essence picture of rule-following, but upon reflection, this picture of rule-following can simply be let go. When Kripke's arguments from possible misinterpretation are applied to the family resemblance picture of rule-following, there arises no Kantian problem about the intelligibility of rule-following. We stop the slide into the general unintelligibility of rule-following before the skeptical dialectic gains momentum. Thus when it comes to rule-following, Cartesian skepticism does not give way to Kantian skepticism. If the skeptic raises a

¹⁹ In other words, we should exhort Kripke to take notice of the ease with which we say what counts as rule-following (and why it does) in ordinary cases but to not expect any final answer on the matter. To expect such is to be misled about the nature of (knowledge of) rule-following, and thus our lack of ability to give an ultimate answer does not signify a lack of understanding of what it is that distinguishes between one's following a rule and one's not following a rule. If the nature of the case changes, we may change our assessment entirely or adjust our answer, but Kripke is unable to raise a worry about the general intelligibility of rule-following since this possibility hinges on viewing rule-following as necessarily having an essence. Thus Kripke's 'deep' skeptical questions about rule-following can be given ordinary answers. In one deflationary passage, Wittgenstein writes:

Where is the connection effected between the sense of the words "Let's play a game of chess" and all the rules of the game? - Well, in the list of rules of the game, in the teaching of it, in the everyday practice of playing".

Whereas the interlocutor here takes himself to be asking a 'deep' question, Wittgenstein responds as though it were quite an ordinary one, requiring an ordinary answer—for given the right picture of rule-following this is the only kind of question we should feel compelled to answer.

concern that purports to be general, it is in the search of the essence of rule-following—something we should not expect to exist and whose non-existence should leave us nonplussed. As long as we try to cram rule-following into the mold of the essence picture, we shall fail to perspicuously describe our practices, but after that mold is swapped for the family resemblance picture, all falls back into place and our concept of rule-following makes sense once again.

End of paper.

Works Cited

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