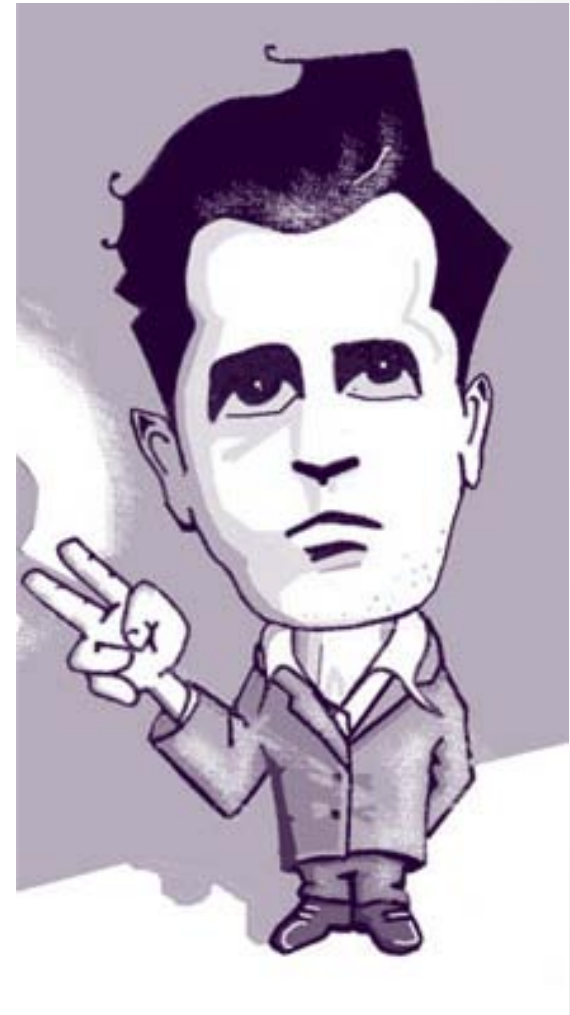


Kripke: *On Rules and Private Languages*

Sarah Sgro and Gretchen Walker

Wittgenstein's Approach

“A certain problem, or in Humean terminology, a ‘sceptical paradox’, is presented concerning the notion of a rule. Following this, what Hume would have called a ‘sceptical solution’ to the problem is presented. There are two areas in which the force, both of the paradox and of its solutions, are most likely to be ignored, and...to seem incredible. One such area is the notion of a **mathematical rule**, such as the rule for addition. The other is our talk of our own inner experience, of **sensations and other inner states**” (Kripke 627)



Wittgenstein's Sceptical Paradox: Counting

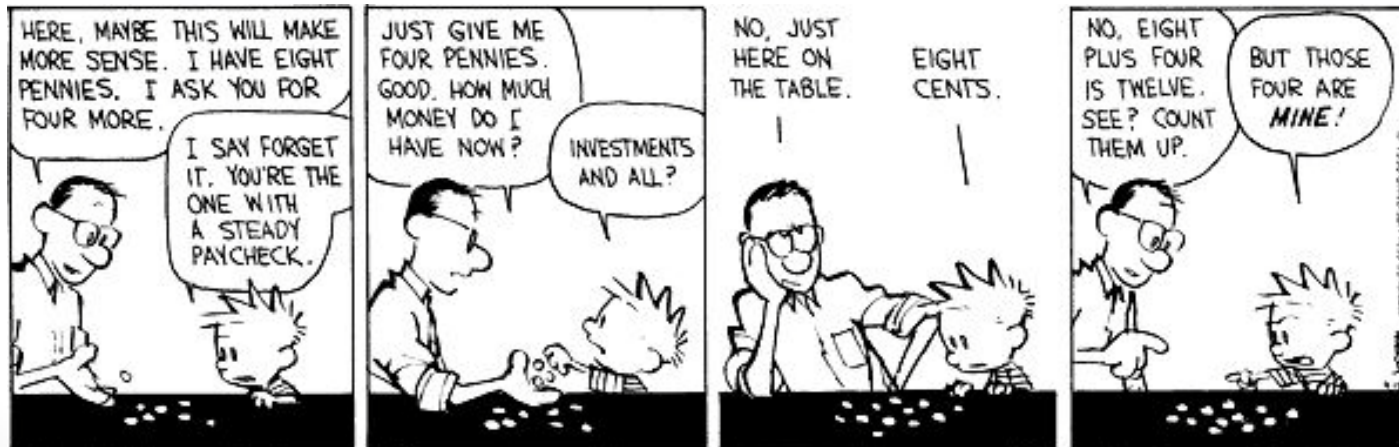


- *Philosophical Investigations* §185
 - We try to teach a man to count by twos (+2)
 - Correctly replicates +2 sequence for numbers up to 1,000
 - After 1,000: “1000, 1004, 1008, 1012”

How can we justify that the man is wrong?

Straight Solutions

- Pointing?
 - Numbers are not concrete objects
 - Pointing also implies its own set of rules
 - Is “two” a quantity or a group of nuts?
(or a direction, color, etc.)
 - Meaning of a word rests within uses and practices
 - Not a sufficient tool for explaining meaning



Straight Solutions

- Introspection?: “The right step is the one that accords with the order – *as it was meant*” (§186)
 - By saying +2, we assume it is meant for all possible propositions (including those after 1,000)
 - “The steps are *really* already taken, even before I take them in writing or orally or in thought” (§188)
 - *BUT*, maybe “it comes natural to this person to understand our order with our explanations as we should understand the order: ‘Add 2 up to 1,000, 4 up to 2,000, 6 up to 3,000 and so on’” (§186)



Sceptical Solution

- So, can we justify that the man is wrong?
 - No; we can only say that he is not following *our* rule
- The rule to continue +2 (as we conceive it) beyond 1,000 is not based on any fixed transcendent meaning
 - As shown by the pointing problem, the meaning of “2” rests within our uses and practices
 - For the man, the rule +2 entails “0, 2, 4...998, 1000, 1004, 1008...”
 - For us, the rule +2 entails “0, 2, 4...1000, 1002, 1004...2000, 2004...”
- But how can we say which rule is superior?

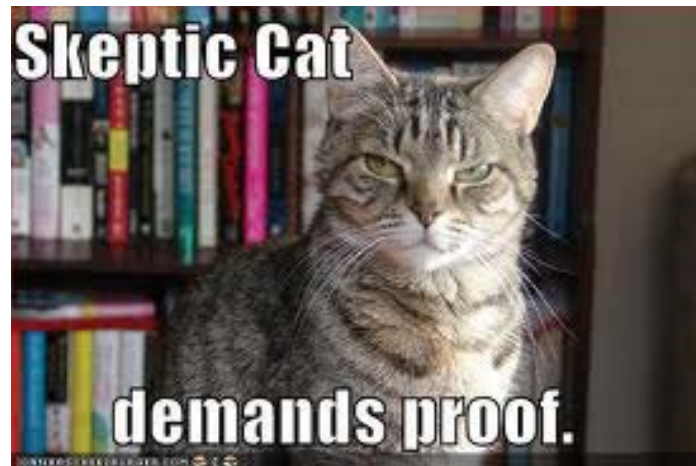
Kripke's Take: Kripkenstein

- Kripke re-interprets Wittgenstein's paradox by presenting the problem of quus v. plus:
 - Suppose that for all addition problems ($x + y = z$) I have ever performed, neither x nor y has exceeded 57
 - When asked to add $57 + 68$, I therefore assume the sum is 125
- Skeptic: "Actually, the sum is 5. The function of "plus" (+) you thought you were performing all your life is actually the function "quus" (\oplus).

$$x \oplus y = x + y, \text{ if } x, y < 57$$
$$\text{If } x \text{ or } y > 57, x \oplus y = 5.$$

Kripkenstein cont.

- This seems silly, but can we prove that it is wrong?
- If we've never added numbers above 57, who is to say we haven't always meant \oplus (quus) instead of $+$ (plus)?
 - “When asked for the answer to ‘68 + 57’, I unhesitatingly and automatically produced ‘125’, but it would seem that if previously I never performed this computation explicitly I might just as well have answered ‘5’. Nothing justifies a brute inclination to answer one way rather than another” (Kripke 631)



Straight Solutions

- Straight solutions (pointing and intent) don't work

It just *does*, Mom. I can't explain why it feels so good to be a gangster.



- We can't open up someone's mind and see the process of addition rather than quaddition
- Even though we say we know we *meant* addition, we can't prove this to the sceptic because we've never combined numbers higher than 57
- So, we can't argue against the sceptic with straight solutions

Sceptical Solution



- Our closest form of justification is convention: “This is simply what we do” (*Philosophical Investigations* §217)
- The sceptic was missing the point!
 - Use/meaning of plus is not brought into question just because we introduce numbers we haven’t dealt with before
- Use of plus is not grounded in personal intention or thought, but in the way “plus” is defined and used by society

Private Language Argument

- The point: we rely upon public uses for meaning.
 - Introspection is an afterthought of public use
 - We derive meaning from societal conventions – the way society uses words – and internalize these meanings as “private thought”
- Given this, Kripke denies the possibility of a private model of language, one which affirms that “a person following a given rule is to be analyzed simply in terms of facts about the rule follower and the rule follower alone, without reference to his membership in a wider community” (Kripke 635)
- This private model underlies the concept of a private language whose “individual words... refer to what can only be known to the person speaking; to his immediate private sensations” (Wittgenstein §243)
 - **Since there can be no private model, there can be no private language**

PLA: Need for Societal Context

- So, individuals can't follow rules independently and in isolation from society.
 - “Does this mean that Robinson Crusoe, isolated on an island, cannot be said to follow any rules?” (Kripke 635)



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- “I do not see that this follows. What does follow is that *if* we think of Crusoe as following rules, we are taking him into our community and applying our criteria for rule following to him” (Kripke 635)
- Physical isolation is not the issue. Rather, in order for us to say that an individual follows a rule, both the rule and the individual cannot be considered in isolation from some societal context.