Kripke's Account of the Rule-Following Considerations[*]

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What determines the correctness criteria for linguistic behaviour? In an essay published some years ago[1], Kripke ascribed to Wittgenstein a sceptical paradox leading to the conclusion that (alas!) nothing can. Even though the essay also included a sceptical solution that was intended to prove that we can live with the paradox, Kripke's Wittgenstein's (or Kripkenstein's) conclusion has seemed unacceptable to many. Therefore, aside from a few exceptions, philosophers have maintained that there is a straight solution to Kripke's Wittgenstein's paradox; they have maintained that there is, or even that there *must* be, an argument to the conclusion that, after all, something *can* determine the correctness criteria for linguistic behaviour. Kripke himself seems to have had some ambivalence towards the paradox. On the one hand, throughout his essay, he never gives the impression that he believes there is a flaw in (what he takes to be) Wittgenstein's argument, yet, on the other hand, he repeatedly refuses to embrace its conclusion[2].

I believe that Kripkenstein's argument is flawed. More precisely, I believe that we can regard most of the suggested straight solutions as the first horn of a rather puzzling dilemma whose second horn is the paradox itself. As in every true dilemma, both horns are untenable. As with every true dilemma, the dilemma is generated by an assumption that we can drop. Here

[1] Saul A. Kripke, *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language – An Elementary Exposition* (1981), Oxford, Blackwell, 1982.
[2] *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*, *cit.*, preface, p. IX, 1, p. 5 and 2, pp. 21-22.

the assumption is a foundationalist assumption, which generates a sceptical paradox with its foundationalist solutions. As always, scepticism is no more than the *Doppelgänger* of foundationalism. The foundationalist sets the bar. The sceptic simply remarks that no one can jump that high.

In the first two parts of the paper, I will focus on the swinging between the two horns of the dilemma. In the third part, I will pass to the assumption behind them. This last section should also make clear why, in spite of its weaknesses, I count myself among the fans of Kripkenstein's sceptical solution.

I – The Paradox and Its Non-Dispositional Straight Solutions

In this section, I will focus on the *non-dispositional* straight solutions to the paradox; I will deal with the *dispositional* ones in the next section[3]. I believe that the very same argument I will use to disprove the former can also show that no set of dispositions can determine the correctness criteria for linguistic behaviour. However, there are good reasons for dealing with the two strategies separately.

I will now outline a common-sense *answer* to the question *What determines the correctness criteria for linguistic behaviour?*. Afterwards, I will sketch a Kripkenstein-like *objection* to the answer. Afterwards, I will describe a non-dispositional *answer* to the objection, followed by a second Kripkenstein-like *objection*, and so on. In the next section, the *non-dispositional* answers will be replaced by *dispositional* answers, while the *Kripkenstein-like* objections will be replaced by *Kripke's* objections. All these objections, taken together, are equivalent to Kripkenstein's paradox; on the other hand, each answer can be seen as a straight solution (or one part of a straight solution) to the paradox; that is: the two horns of our dilemma. What I will show is that both horns are untenable and that the swinging between them is, to some extent, inevitable.

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[3] For present purposes, we can be content with an intuitive understanding of the concept of a disposition. However, it is worth noting that some steps into the ongoing debate on the metaphysics of dispositions would lead us to another line of argument against dispositional straight solutions to Kripkenstein's paradox (see my *Rule-Following, Ideal Conditions and Finkish Dispositions*, forthcoming in *Philosophical Studies*).

Some may protest that my question is not Kripke's question, that is *What constitutes the state of meaning something by a sign?*. Of course, in his essay, Kripke states the matter this way. But in his terminology the concept of *the state of meaning something by a sign* is tantamount to the concept of *whatever determines the correctness criteria for a sign* (obviously, the source of the terminology is Wittgenstein himself[4]). Therefore, the two questions are ultimately one and the same. As Kripke says:

> The basic point is this. Ordinarily, I suppose that, in computing "68 + 57" as I do, I do not simply make an unjustified leap in the dark. I follow directions I previously gave myself that uniquely determine that in this new instance I should say "125". What are these directions?[5]

However, I regard the formulation I gave as more straightforward. *Moreover*, I believe that Kripke's formulation can be somewhat misleading, since it can lead one to think that Kripke's Wittgenstein is a "behaviourist in disguise", while I take it to be quite clear that neither Kripke's Wittgenstein nor the actual Wittgenstein fully deserves such a label[6]. *Finally*, Kripke's formulation has led many philosophers to think that the paradox must be construed as a two-step argument, with a first stage aimed at proving a sceptical conclusion concerning sentences of the form *"X means Y by Z"* and a second stage aimed at extending the conclusion to the whole of language[7], and I must confess that I believe that the paradox is better construed as a one-step argument.

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[4] See, *e. g.*, Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (1953), Oxford, Blackwell, 1953, part I, §§ 305-306 (concerning the state of remembering).

[5] *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*, *cit.*, 2, p. 10.

[6] See, *e. g.*, *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*, *cit.*, 2, pp. 14-15 and *Philosophical Investigations*, *cit.*, part I, §§ 307-308.

[7] Something along the following lines. Step one: nothing constitutes the state of meaning something by a sign, hence no possible state of affairs corresponds to sentences of the form *"X means Y by Z"*, hence such sentences are meaningless. Step two: sentences of the form *"X means Y by Z"* are meaningless, hence such sentences are never true, hence no one ever means something by a sign, hence all sentences are meaningless. This is pretty rough, but it can give you an idea of what I am talking about. Here I assumed that if there is something that corresponds to sentences of the form *"X means Y by Z"*, then it must be a possible state of affairs; the assumption is questionable (see Kevin Mulligan, Peter Simons, Barry Smith, *Truth-Makers*, in *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, vol. XLIV, 1984, pp. 287-321), but also inessential to the argument. For another two-step argument see Paul A. Boghossian, *The Rule-Following Considerations*, IV, §§

So much for the introductory remarks. We can now turn to the two horns of our dilemma. Here is the common-sense *answer*: «The correctness criteria for, say, "carmine" are determined by the paradigmatic applications of "carmine". An application of "carmine" is correct if and only if it is an application of "carmine" to an X whose colour is similar enough to the colours of which the objects of the paradigmatic applications seemed to be during the relevant paradigmatic application»[8] (the formulation is not the one you would hear from the man in the street, but the idea behind it is really quite straightforward).

Some may say that such an answer cannot work simply because *similarity* is something too subjective to determine what is right and what is wrong. This is not my objection. I believe we can grant (at least for the sake of argument) that, even though it is a vague relation, similarity is as objective as the proponent of the common-sense answer could want[9]. Others may say that if we change the example, we can see that the answer must deal with a problem concerning *intentionality*: «According to the common-sense answer, the paradigmatic applications of "cube" determine that a given application of "cube" is correct only because the relevant objects looked like cubes; if these objects had looked like triangular prisms, these paradigmatic applications would have determined that that very same application is incorrect. But seeing a cube is having something like the picture of a cube "in our mind", and something is the picture of a cube only if someone interprets it this way; something is the picture of a cube only under a certain interpretation, and under another interpretation it could be the picture of a triangular

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14-15, in *Mind*, vol. XCVIII, 1989, pp. 507-549, as well as Crispin Wright, *Kripke's Account of the Argument against Private Language* (1984), § II, p. 104, in Crispin Wright, *Rails to Infinity – Essays on Themes from Wittgenstein's* Philosophical Investigations, Cambridge-London, Harvard University Press, 2001.

[8] Why "seemed to be" instead of "were"? Suppose that all the paradigmatic applications of "carmine" have been performed in anomalous conditions, so that their objects just seemed carmine; in fact, they were yellow. Suppose now that we come to know that these objects just seemed carmine; what would we say? No doubt, we would say (as I have said) that these objects just seemed carmine, while in fact they were yellow. Now put "were" instead of "seemed to be" in the common-sense answer. We could no longer speak this way. We would have to say that these objects were carmine, even if carmine turned out to be a different colour from the one we thought it was. All rather strange (here we have a link to Saul Kripke, *Naming and Necessity* (1972), Oxford, Blackwell, 1980, lecture III, note 71).

[9] See *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*, *cit.*, 3, note 45.

prism. Therefore, the paradigmatic applications of "cube" may determine that a given application of "cube" is correct under a certain interpretation and that it is incorrect under another interpretation; and this means that the paradigmatic applications of "cube" cannot *really* determine the correctness criteria for "cube"»[10]. Once again, this is not my objection. I believe we can grant (at least for the sake of argument) that something can be a visual perception of a cube in itself, without any interpretation. That is: I believe we can grant that the relation between an intentional state and its intentional object is an internal relation, not an external one. In Wittgenstein's terminology: I believe we can grant that intentional states are images [*Vorstellungen*], not pictures [*Bilder*][11]. My first Kripkenstein-like *objection* runs as follows: «The paradigmatic applications of "carmine" can determine how "carmine" has to be used only if it is already determined how these applications have to be used. The common-sense answer assumes that it is determined that they have to be used to show what something carmine looks like (more or less). But what justifies such an assumption? If I used these applications as if, for example, they have to be used to show what something *non*-carmine looks like, I would be a pretty strange guy. But in order to say that I was wrong, you could not simply point out that I was strange. So, what justifies such an assumption? Hard to tell».

It is worth noting that the scope of the objection is wider than one might expect. If the objection is sound, then an application of "carmine" to an X whose colour is *exactly like* the colour of which the object of a paradigmatic application seemed to be hangs in the air no less than an application of "carmine" to an X whose colour is *only similar* to the apparent colours of the objects of the paradigmatic applications (the objection from the subjectivity of similarity would not have been able to get so far). Nor does an application *to the very same object* of a paradigmatic application (nor an application – via time travel – *to the very same spatio-temporal part of the very same object* of a paradigmatic application) rest on safer ground (even if we suppose that the paradigmatic application has been performed in standard conditions).

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[10] Tim Thornton, *John McDowell*, Chesham, Acumen, 2004 interprets McDowell as maintaining that this is one of Kripkenstein's main claims. On the point, see also my *Il Mito del Dato*, Milano-Udine, Mimesis, 2009.

[11] *Philosophical Investigations*, *cit.*, part I, § 389.

And here is a possible *answer* to the objection: «Can we not suppose that these applications had been accompanied by elucidations which intended to explain how these applications have to be used? And cannot such elucidations actually determine how the paradigmatic applications of "carmine" have to be used?».

Well, of course, they can. But (and here is my second Kripkenstein-like *objection*) these elucidations can determine how the paradigmatic applications of "carmine" have to be used only if it is already determined how these elucidations have to be used. At the end of the day, we find ourselves with the very same problem we started with (namely, that of explaining what determines the correctness criteria for a given set of words).

Some may protest that the source of our troubles lies in the fact that we underestimated "the powers of the human mind" and suggest something like the following less common-sense *answer*: «The common-sense answer failed because it could not explain the passage from a given set of particulars (namely from a given set of spatio-temporal parts of the objects of the paradigmatic applications of "carmine" – taken as they appear) to another set of particulars (namely to the set of all the spatio-temporal parts that should be labelled "carmine"). But suppose we could "see" the universal carmine. Since the relation between a universal and its occurrences is extra-strong, there can be no problem of passing from the universal carmine to the set of all the spatio-temporal parts that should be labelled "carmine". Therefore, it must be the baptism of the universal carmine with the name "carmine" that determines the correctness criteria for "carmine". An application of "carmine" is correct if and only if it is an application of "carmine" to an X that instantiate the universal carmine»[12].

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[12] Lewis maintained that if there are universals, then there is a straight solution to Kripkenstein's paradox (David Lewis, *New Work for a Theory of Universals*, § 7 (The Content of Language and Thought), in *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, vol. LXI, 1983, pp. 343-377). Pettit maintained that universals satisfy his "objective condition" (Philip Pettit, *The Reality of Rule-Following*, § 2, p. 7, in *Mind*, vol. XCIX, 1990, pp. 1-21). McDowell maintained that the fact that intentional states are conceptual makes available a straight solution to Kripkenstein's paradox (John McDowell, *One Strand in the Private Language Argument* (1989), § 3, p. 286, in John McDowell, *Mind, Value, and Reality*, Cambridge-London, Harvard University Press, 1998; but remember that McDowell's position is now slightly different – see John McDowell, *Avoiding the Myth of the Given*, in Jakob Lindgaard, *John McDowell – Experience, Norm, and Nature*, Oxford, Blackwell, 2008), and the Kantian context in which he speaks of concepts suggests that his notion of

Clearly, we could question such an answer on a nominalistic basis («We cannot "see" universals», or even «There are no such things as universals»)[13], but I must confess that I find this strategy rhetorically ineffective (albeit philosophically sound). My third Kripkenstein-like *objection* runs as follows: «The baptism of the universal carmine can determine how "carmine" has to be used only if it is already determined how this baptism has to be used. The less common-sense answer assumes that it is determined that it has to be used to show what something carmine looks like. But what justifies such an assumption?». And so on (after the remarks concerning the scope of the first objection, this third objection should come as no surprise).

Maybe what we need is a relativistic turn, and the following coherentist *answer* enjoys some popularity: «It is the agreement among the members of the linguistic community that determines the correctness criteria for "carmine". An application of "carmine" is correct if and only if, in certain conditions, the members of the linguistic community agree in regarding it as correct».

Maybe, in some sense, we really need a relativistic turn. But (and here is my fourth Kripkenstein-like *objection*) the agreement among the members of the linguistic community can determine how "carmine" has to be used only if it is already determined how this agreement has to be used. The coherence theory assumes that it is determined that it has to be used to define (along the previous lines) what should be labelled "carmine". But what justifies such an assumption? And so on, as always (in the past, the claim that Kripke shares with his critics a "foundationalist" assumption had already been put forward by Henry Jackman[14]; this last objection should make clear that by "foundationalist", Jackman and I mean quite different things).

Well, no doubt, the list could go on (the idea of a "general" mental episode can be developed in other ways, there are straight solutions in terms of non-intentional mental episodes[15], simplicity considerations[16], *etc...*), but

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concept has much to do with the notion of universal (see especially John McDowell, *Mind and World* (1994), Cambridge-London, Harvard University Press, 1996).

[13] See *Philosophical Investigations*, *cit.*, part I, § 73.

[14] Henry Jackman, *Foundationalism, Coherentism and Rule-Following Scepticism*, in *International Journal of Philosophical Studies*, vol. XI, 2003, pp. 25-41.

[15] See *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*, *cit.*, 2, pp. 40-51.

[16] See *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*, *cit.*, 2, pp. 37-40.

the point should already be clear. However, it may be of some interest to see how such a strategy can be applied to Kripke's favourite example.

So, what determines the correctness criteria for "+"? In particular, what determines that when asked for "68 + 57", the answer I have to give is "125"? (We can treat the question as one concerning the correctness criteria for "+" even if, in fact, it concerns the correctness criteria for "+", "68", "57" and "125" – so conceived, the question is analogous to the question *What determines that when asked for the dictionary, the object I have to bring is this?*). Here is a common-sense answer: «The correctness criteria for "+" are determined by the paradigmatic applications of "+". In particular, when asked for "68 + 57", the answer I have to give is "125" because if in computing "68 + 57" I employ a procedure analogous to the procedures I (or my primary-school teacher, or whoever) employed in computing the sums of the paradigmatic applications, then I obtain "125"». And here is the relevant Kripkenstein-like objection: «The paradigmatic applications of "+" can determine how "+" has to be used only if it is already determined how these applications have to be used. The common-sense answer assumes that it is determined that they have to be used to show how to compute a sum. But what justifies such an assumption?».

Once again, the scope of the objection is wider than one would expect. In particular, some may be disposed, *on the one hand*, to grant that when asked for a sum that I have never performed before (or, at least, that I have never performed in the context of a paradigmatic application), the paradigmatic applications of "+" *cannot* determine which answer I have to give and, *on the other hand*, to stress that when asked for the very same sum of a paradigmatic application, this paradigmatic application *can* determine which answer I have to give: the answer I *have to give* is the answer I *gave*[17]. However, the objection can be raised in the latter as well as in the former situation (once again, an objection from the subjectivity of similarity would not have been able to come so far). Kripke himself stresses that even if it can be useful to introduce (what he takes to be) Wittgenstein's paradox as a paradox concerning a sum that I have never performed before, the problem is in fact general:

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[17] See Pasquale Frascolla, *Wittgenstein's Philosophy of Mathematics*, London-New York, Routledge, 1994, 3, § 1 (The Crisis of Verificationism: Rule-Following).

> […] although it is useful […] to *begin* the presentation of the puzzle with the observation that I have thought of only finitely many cases, it appears that in principle this particular ladder can be kicked away. Suppose that I had explicitly thought of *all* cases of the addition table. How can this help me answer the question "68 + 57"? Well, looking back over my own mental records, I find that I gave myself explicit directions. «If you are ever asked about "68 + 57", reply "125"!». Can't the sceptic say that these directions, too, are to be interpreted in a non-standard way?[18]

Once again, no elucidation can help. Once again, no "general" entity can help: the recursive definition of addition can determine how "+" has to be used only if it is already determined how "s", "=", "0" *etc…* have to be used, the baptism of the addition function can determine how "+" has to be used only if it is already determined how this baptism has to be used (see again the passage just quoted[19]), and so on. And once again, the coherence theory can be of no help.

So much for the non-dispositional straight solutions. We can now turn to the dispositional ones.

II – The Paradox and Its Dispositional Straight Solutions

I have already stressed that I believe that the very same argument I used to criticize non-dispositional straight solutions can also show that no set of dispositions can determine the correctness criteria for linguistic behaviour. The point becomes apparent if we note that the coherentist answer can be seen as «[…] a social, or community-wide, version of the dispositional theory […]»[20]. Be that as it may, here I will follow another line of reasoning.

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[18] *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*, *cit.*, 2, note 34, p. 52.

[19] But also *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*, *cit.*, 2, pp. 53-54, where Kripke misses the point.

[20] *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*, *cit.*, 3, p. 111. Such theories have been criticized in *ibidem*, pp. 110-112 and Colin McGinn, *Wittgenstein on Meaning – An Interpretation and Evaluation* (1984), Oxford-New York, Blackwell, 1987, 2, pp. 82-88, which erroneously attributes such a theory to Kripke's Wittgenstein (John McDowell, *Wittgenstein on Following a Rule* (1984), § 5, in *Mind, Value, and Reality*, *cit.* attributes it to Crispin Wright, *Wittgenstein on the Foundations of Mathematics*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1980; it is worth noting that, at least in subsequent works, Wright explicitly rejects such a theory – see, *e. g.*, Crispin Wright, *Wittgenstein's Rule-Following Considerations and the Central Project of Theoretical Linguistics* (1989), § II, pp. 188-

By so doing, I will have the opportunity to say something on a major topic that, up to this point, has been kept in the background.

Here is a simple dispositional *answer*, the one with which Kripke begins his criticism: «The correctness criteria for my use of, say, "+" are determined by my past dispositions concerning its use (in a mathematical context, of course). When I perform an application of "+", the application is correct if and only if it is in accordance with these dispositions. When asked for "68 + 57", the answer I *have* to give is "125" because this is the answer that, in the past, I *was disposed* to give when queried about this sum»[21].

The sense of "correct" at issue here, what Kripke calls "the metalinguistic sense", is pretty minimal: correctness as accordance with some fact in my past history[22]. Kripke assumes that in order for dispositions to be able to determine the correctness criteria for linguistic behaviour in some semantically relevant sense of "correct", it is necessary that they can determine these correctness criteria in this metalinguistic sense. That is: he assumes that we can show that dispositions cannot determine the correctness criteria for linguistic behaviour in any semantically relevant sense of "correct" simply by showing that they cannot determine these correctness criteria in this metalinguistic sense. In what follows, I will join Kripke in making this assumption, although I will not try to prove that it is right. However, it is not hard to see what makes it plausible.

Well, can this simple dispositional analysis work? Kripke maintains that it cannot. *Firstly*, he *objects* that «It is not true […] that if queried about the sum of any two numbers […] I will reply with their actual sum, for some pairs of numbers are simply too large for my mind – or my brain – to grasp»[23]. When asked for such sums, I may have been disposed to shrug my shoulders. According to the analysis in question, this would be the correct response. And this is a *reductio ad absurdum* of the analysis. *Secondly*, he *objects* that some of us have dispositions to make mistakes[24]. When asked for the sum "68 + 57", I may have been disposed to give the response "5",

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189, in *Rails to Infinity*, *cit.*). A theory of this kind has been suggested and defended from McGinn's attack in David Bloor, *Wittgenstein, Rules and Institutions*, London-New York, Routledge, 1997, 5, pp. 63-73 and 7, pp. 84-86.

[21] See *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*, *cit.*, 2, pp. 22-23 and 26.

[22] See *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*, *cit.*, 2, p. 8.

[23] *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*, *cit.*, 2, pp. 26-27.

[24] *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*, *cit.*, 2, pp. 28-29.

and according to the analysis in question, this would be the correct response. And this is, once again, a *reductio ad absurdum* of the analysis.

The *second* point can seem unconvincing. No doubt, it is true that when asked for a given sum, some speakers are disposed to give a wrong response. But it is also true that some of these speakers have, in addition to dispositions to give responses, dispositions to withdraw them and substitute others[25]. Therefore, if only we allow a "tolerant" reading of expressions like "my past dispositions concerning the use of "+"" (a reading according to which also my dispositions to withdraw answers and substitute others fall under such labels), then it is no longer true that if a speaker may have been disposed to give the response "5" when asked for the sum "68 + 57", then this would be, according to the analysis in question, the correct response. And this may seem sufficient to dismiss the point as, at the very least, unconvincing. But what about the *first* point? Well, Kripke introduces the point by saying that «[…] the totality of my dispositions […] is finite»[26]. And it is pretty clear that if the point is this, Kripke's objection is not all that good, since it is not obvious that the totality of my dispositions is either finite or infinite[27].

Does this show that this simple dispositional analysis stands undefeated against Kripke's twofold attack? I think it does not. As for the *first* point, it is worth noting that saying that "the totality of my dispositions is finite" is just sloppy talking. The point is, as Kripke himself stresses, that the totality of my dispositions covers only a finite segment of the total function[28] (and, clearly, the story is at root the same with every word). As for the *second* point, it is sufficient to notice, on the one hand, that when asked for the sum "68 + 57", I may have been disposed to give the response "5" without being disposed to withdraw it (that is: I may have been uneducable) and, on the other hand, that even applying the tolerant reading of the analysis in question, this would be the correct response. In order to avoid this consequence, *all* (not just *some*) of the speakers that were disposed to give a wrong response would have to be disposed to withdraw it; but this is not the case.

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[25] See Simon Blackburn, *The Individual Strikes Back*, § 2, p. 290, in *Synthese*, vol. LVIII, 1984, pp. 281-301.
[26] *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*, *cit.*, 2, p. 26.
[27] See *The Individual Strikes Back*, *cit.*, § 2, pp. 289-290.
[28] *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*, *cit.*, 2, p. 32.

Therefore, I believe we can conclude that Kripke's twofold attack actually proves that the analysis in question does not work.

But maybe something less simple could work. Kripke considers the following ideal-condition dispositional *answer*: «The correctness criteria for my use of "+" are determined by my past dispositions concerning its use *in ideal conditions*. When I perform an application of "+", the application is correct if and only if it is in accordance with these dispositions. When asked for "68 + 57", the answer I have to give is "125" because this is the answer that, in the past, I was disposed to give when queried about this sum *in ideal conditions*»[29].

But what does "ideal conditions" mean here? If it means something like *the conditions in which when asked for a sum, I am disposed to give the right response*, the account is viciously circular, since it presupposes the very notion it should explain (the notion of right answer). But is it possible to clarify what "ideal conditions" means here without reference to such a notion? Kripke maintains that we might try, but a little experimentation will reveal the futility of such an effort[30]. This is Kripke's *first objection* to this ideal-condition dispositional account.

It is not hard to see that the objection is unsatisfactory. Kripke maintains that if we cannot clarify the notion of ideal conditions without reference to the notion of right response, then the account is bound to be viciously circular. So far, so good: the conditional definitely holds. However, Kripke fails to prove its antecedent. His last word on the topic is that "a little experimentation" is sufficient to see that the former concept cannot be clarified without reference to the latter; and this, no doubt, underestimates the complexity of the problems involved[31]. *But above all*: since the objection focuses on the notion of ideal conditions, it is apparent that it cannot be employed against dispositional accounts that refine that with which Kripke begins his criti-

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[29] See *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*, *cit.*, 2, p. 27.
[30] *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*, *cit.*, 2, pp. 30-31.
[31] See *The Rule-Following Considerations*, *cit.*, V, part IV (Optimal Dispositions), § 23, p. 537.

cism without using such a notion[32]. What we need is an objection that focuses on the very idea of a disposition[33].

However, Kripke also puts forward a *second*, more general, *objection*:

> […] «"125" is the response you are disposed to give, and […] it would also have been your response in the past». Well and good, I know that "125" is the response I am disposed to give […], and maybe it is helpful to be told […] that I would have given the same response in the past. How does any of this indicate that […] "125" was an answer *justified* […], rather than a mere jack-in-the-box unjustified and arbitrary response?[34]
> The relation of meaning and intention to future action is *normative*, not *descriptive*[35].

To this, we could simply reply: «To say that the concept of right response is normative, while that of disposition is descriptive is to say that while the former has something to do with "should", the latter has something to do with "will" and "would". Clearly, we cannot simply equate what I should do if… to what I will do if…; otherwise, the very idea of a mistake would be lost. Therefore, we cannot simply equate the right response to the one I am disposed to give. But this does not imply that we cannot define what I should do if… in terms of what I *would have done* if… *plus something else* (ideal conditions or whatever). Therefore, this does not imply that we cannot define the right response in terms of the one I *was* disposed to give *plus something else*». However, I believe that the conclusion to be drawn is not that the objection is flawed, but rather that its formulation is sloppy. Therefore, I will now outline what I believe is a better formulation of Kripke's insight[36].

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[32] See, *e. g.*, Fred I. Dretske, *Knowledge and the Flow of Information*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1981 and Jerry A. Fodor, *A Theory of Content, II: the Theory*, in Jerry A. Fodor, *A Theory of Content and Other Essays*, Cambridge-London, MIT Press, 1990.

[33] For a different diagnosis see *The Rule-Following Considerations*, *cit.*, V, part IV.

[34] *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*, *cit.*, 2, p. 23.

[35] *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*, *cit.*, 2, p. 37. See also *The Individual Strikes Back*, *cit.*, § 2, p. 291.

[36] For further details see my *The Argument from Normativity against Dispositional Analyses of Meaning*, in Volker A. Munz, Klaus Puhl, Joseph Wang, *Language and World – Papers of the XXXII International Wittgenstein Symposium*, Kirchberg am Wechsel, Austrian Ludwig Wittgenstein Society, 2009 and *Is Meaning Normative?*, in Piotr Stalmaszczyk, *Philosophy of Language and Linguistics*, Frankfurt, Ontos, 2010, vol. II.

As the previous quotations show, Kripke's claim that meaning is normative has two different, albeit related, components. The first is that it is constitutive of our understanding of the concept of meaning that its application implies an ought; the second is that there is a certain kind of bond between this concept and that of justification. In order to understand Kripke's argument, it is better to focus on the latter component.

The relevant bond can be made explicit as follows:

> A word has a *meaning* only if there are correctness criteria for its use, and something can determine these criteria only if it can *justify* the use that a speaker makes of the word

(the formulation I chose should make clear that this leads to no regress[37]). Two things are worth noting. First, the latter conditional can be seen as a sort of normative constraint that a straight solution to Kripkenstein's paradox should satisfy. Second, this normative constraint implies an epistemological constraint:

> Something can determine the correctness criteria for a word only if speakers can have non-inferential knowledge of it.

Kripke states the point as follows:

> Do I not know, directly, and with a fair degree of certainty, that I mean plus? Recall that a fact as to what I mean now is supposed to *justify* my future actions […]. This was our fundamental requirement on a fact as to what I meant. No "hypothetical" state could satisfy such a requirement: if I can only form hypotheses as to whether I now mean plus or quus […], then in the future I can only proceed hesitatingly and hypothetically […]. Remember that I immediately and unhesitatingly calculate "68 + 57" as I do, and the meaning I assign to "+" is supposed to *justify* this procedure. I do not form tentative hypotheses, wondering what I should do if one hypothesis or another were true[38].

But can a suitable set of dispositions (a set of dispositions that withstands all the other criticisms we have seen) satisfy the epistemological constraint?

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[37] See John Heil, C. B. Martin, *Rules and Powers*, § 2, pp. 292-293, in *Philosophical Perspectives*, vol. XII, 1998, pp. 283-312.

[38] *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*, *cit.*, 2, p. 40. For "quus" see *ibidem*, pp. 8-9.

Well, how can I gain non-inferential knowledge of my past dispositions concerning the use of a word? (I specified "*past* dispositions" in accordance with our assumptions concerning the sense of "correct" at issue here. However, since it is pretty clear that I can only gain non-inferential knowledge of *past* dispositions, I could have omitted the specification. The point is of some interest, since it shows that we could have made weaker assumptions). A first strategy is that of keeping track of my past brain history: in order to non-inferentially know that at a certain time I had a certain disposition concerning the use of a certain word, it is sufficient to non-inferentially know that at that time my brain was in a state that, together with a certain stimulus, causes a certain response (this is pretty rough, but it can give you an idea of what I am talking about). Although it might be argued that Sellars has shown that such a knowledge can be non-inferential[39], it is pretty clear that this first strategy can be of no help in the present context simply because, as a matter of fact, speakers do not keep track of their own past brain history. A second strategy may be to keep track of my past linguistic behaviour: the idea is that in order to non-inferentially know that at a certain time I had a certain disposition concerning the use of a certain word, it is sufficient to non-inferentially know that at that time I underwent a certain stimulus, to which I gave a certain response (once again, this is pretty rough). Since I am inclined to believe that a disposition concerning the use of a word *is* a brain state (or at least the second-order property of having some suitable brain state or other[40]), I am also inclined to believe that having non-inferential knowledge of the fact that at a certain time I underwent a certain stimulus, to which I gave a certain response is not sufficient to have *non-inferential* knowledge of the fact that at that time I had a certain disposition concerning the use of a certain word. But suppose I am wrong. It is pretty clear that this second strategy cannot supply non-inferential knowledge of unmanifested dispositions, while it is not hard to see that if there is a set of dispositions that withstands all the other criticisms we have seen, then it must count, among its elements, also some unmanifested dispositions. I believe we can conclude that no suitable set of dispositions can satisfy the

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[39] See, *e. g.*, Wilfrid Sellars, *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind* (1956), Cambridge-London, Harvard University Press, 1997, VIII.

[40] See David Lewis, *Finkish Dispositions*, II, § 2 (Towards an Analysis: Beginning), p. 151, in *The Philosophical Quarterly*, vol. XLVII, 1997, pp. 143-158.

epistemological constraint. And if no suitable set of dispositions can satisfy this constraint, then no set of dispositions can determine the correctness criteria for linguistic behaviour[41].

As I myself have done, Kripke sees the *epistemological* constraint as a consequence of the *normative* constraint (the point is apparent in the passage just quoted), but it is worth noting that the former does not occur, at least not explicitly, in his treatment of dispositional straight solutions (the previous passage closes the analysis of the straight solution in terms of simplicity considerations). However, I believe that the epistemological constraint underlies Kripke's "argument from normativity". The following passage (already partially quoted) is revealing (although anything but straightforward):

> […] «"125" is the response you are disposed to give, and […] it would also have been your response in the past». Well and good, I know that "125" is the response I am disposed to give […], and maybe it is helpful to be told […] that I would have given the same response in the past. How does any of this indicate that […] "125" was an answer *justified* […], rather than a mere jack-in-the-box unjustified and arbitrary response? Am I supposed to justify my present belief that I meant addition […], and hence should answer "125", in terms of a *hypothesis* about my *past* dispositions? (Do I record and investigate the past physiology of my brain?) Why am I so sure that one particular hypothesis of this kind is correct […]? Alternatively, is the hypothesis to refer to my *present* dispositions alone, which would hence give the right answer by definition?[42]

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[41] For an analogous argument, see *Kripke's Account of the Argument against Private Language*, *cit.*, § III, p. 109, *Wittgenstein's Rule-Following Considerations and the Central Project of Theoretical Linguistics*, *cit.*, § I, pp. 175-176 and Crispin Wright, *On Making Up One's Mind: Wittgenstein on Intention* (1987), § II, pp. 122-123, in *Rails to Infinity*, *cit.*, but note that Wright does not ascribe his argument to Kripke (actually, he uses it against Kripkenstein). Finally, see *Philosophical Investigations*, *cit.*, part I, § 153.

[42] *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*, *cit.*, 2, p. 23. Kripke goes on by saying that «Nothing is more contrary to our ordinary view – or Wittgenstein's – than is the supposition that «[…] whatever is going to seem right to me is right» […]» (*ibidem*, pp. 23-24 – the passage that Kripke quotes is an excerpt from *Philosophical Investigations*, *cit.*, part I, § 258, p. 92). It is worth noting that what Kripke says here is a *comment* to *the last sentence* of the passage I quoted in the text, not a *précis* of *the whole passage*. Failure to recognize the point can lead to assimilating erroneously Kripke's argument from normativity to his "argument from mistake": his second objection to the simple dispositional answer (the two arguments are distinguished very clearly in *The Rule-Following Considerations*, *cit.*, V, part II (Dispositions and Meaning: Normativity)).

We can now draw some conclusions. On the one hand, we have a set of answers to the question *What determines the correctness criteria for linguistic behaviour?*. On the other hand, we have a battery of objections to these answers. That is: the first and the second horn of our dilemma. I think the previous pages have given us some reason to believe the first horn to be untenable. Kripke's argument from normativity proves (under certain plausible assumptions) that no dispositional answer can be regarded as satisfactory. Moreover, the way the same kind of objection has been raised against every non-dispositional answer, together with the fact that this kind of objection relies on no particular metaphysical assumption, seems to rule out the possibility of finding a non-dispositional answer that works. But what about the second horn? Clearly, the conclusion that nothing determines the correctness criteria for linguistic behaviour cannot be endorsed light-heartedly, but this is not to say that it cannot be endorsed, period. Even if it may seem unacceptable, maybe there is, as Kripke's Wittgenstein maintains, a sceptical solution that proves that we can live with it. As far as I can see, only one sceptical solution has been suggested in the literature: the one Kripke ascribes to Wittgenstein. Therefore, the question is: does this sceptical solution prove that we can live with such a conclusion?

In order to answer this question, we do not need to cast full light on Kripkenstein's proposal. The following remarks should suffice.

In a nutshell, Kripkenstein's sceptical solution is an argument to the conclusion that, although there are no facts of the form *X means Y by Z*, nonetheless we are sometimes entitled to use sentences of the form *"X means Y by Z"*[43]. Since in the essay's terminology the concept of *the state of meaning something by a sign* is tantamount to the concept of *whatever determines the correctness criteria for a sign*, this is to say that, although there are no correctness criteria for linguistic behaviour, nonetheless we are entitled to act as if there were. What enables us to act this way would be our belonging to a community[44].

It must be stressed that, according to Kripke's Wittgenstein, our belonging to a community enables us to act *as if* there were correctness criteria for linguistic behaviour: nothing more. In particular, it does not make available

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[43] See, *e. g.*, *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*, *cit.*, 3, pp. 90-91.
[44] See, *e. g.*, *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*, *cit.*, 3, p. 89.

real correctness criteria. If Kripke's Wittgenstein maintained that our belonging to a community makes available real correctness criteria, his sceptical solution would be "a straight solution in disguise". In particular, it would be "a social version of the dispositional theory". I already sketched a Kripkenstein-like objection to such a theory. And Kripke himself stresses that (what he takes to be) Wittgenstein's sceptical solution should not be confused with it[45]. There are many roles that can be attributed to the community[46].

Can such a sceptical solution prove that we can live with Kripkenstein's sceptical conclusion? I think not. In the following passages Kripke *defines* the notion of sceptical solution. However, they also implicitly state some *constraints* that a sceptical solution should satisfy:

> The philosopher advocates a view apparently in patent contradiction to common sense. Rather than repudiating common sense, he asserts that the conflict comes from a philosophical misinterpretation […][47].
>
> A *sceptical* solution of a sceptical philosophical problem begins […] by conceding that the sceptic's negative assertions are unanswerable. Nevertheless our ordinary practice or belief is justified because – contrary appearances notwithstanding – it need not require the justification the sceptic has shown to be untenable[48].

Now, I believe we can grant (at least for the sake of argument) that Kripkenstein's sceptical solution *actually* shows that "our ordinary practice need not require the justification the sceptic has shown to be untenable". Namely: I believe we can grant that it *actually* proves that we are entitled to act as if there were correctness criteria for linguistic behaviour even in the case in which there are not (in fact, the point is controversial[49]). However, it

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[45] *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language, cit.*, 3, pp. 110-112.

[46] See, *e. g.*, John McDowell, *Intentionality and Interiority in Wittgenstein* (1991), § 8, p. 315, in *Mind, Value, and Reality, cit.*

[47] *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language, cit.*, 3, p. 65.

[48] *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language, cit.*, 3, p. 66.

[49] See, *e. g.*, *The Individual Strikes Back, cit.*, § 1, *The Rule-Following Considerations, cit.*, IV, §§ 16-17, Alex Byrne, *On Misinterpreting Kripke's Wittgenstein*, § II, in *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, vol. LVI, 1996, pp. 339-343, Scott Soames, *Facts, Truth Conditions, and the Skeptical Solution to the Rule-Following Paradox*, in *Philosophical Perspectives*, vol. XII, 1998, pp. 313-348, *Kripke's Account of the Argument against Private Language, cit.*, § II and, above all, Martin Kusch, *A Sceptical Guide to Meaning and Rules – Defending Kripke's Wittgenstein*, Montreal-Kingston, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2006, 5-7.

is apparent that Kripkenstein's sceptical solution does not even *try* to prove the irenic claim that the idea that such criteria actually exist "comes from a philosophical misinterpretation" (it may be useful to compare Kripkenstein's proposal with Sellars' efforts to show not only that to reject traditional empiricism is not to argue that empirical knowledge has no foundation, but also that traditional empiricism is nothing but a philosophical daydream[50]).

I believe we can conclude that both horns of the dilemma are untenable. To my knowledge, this is always a sign of the fact that the dilemma rests on some principle that we can drop. And, as I stated at the beginning, I think that ours is no exception.

III – Foundationalism, Relativism and Scepticism

Henceforth, I will refer to the following principle as "Wittgenstein's Principle":

> Speakers can make reference to a given something in order to justify a certain use of a word only if they use this something in a certain way.

As Wittgenstein puts it (here the "given something" is supposed to be *something like* a universal):

> […] what does the picture of a leaf look like when it does not show us any particular shape, but "what is common to all shapes of leaf"? […] "But might there not be such "general" samples? Say a schematic leaf, or a sample of *pure* green?" – Certainly there might. But for such a schema to be understood as a *schema*, and not as the shape of a particular leaf, and for a slip of pure green to be understood as a sample of all that is greenish and not as a sample of pure green – this in turn resides in the way the samples are used[51]

(it should be clear that a slip of pure green is a sample of all that is greenish only if speakers can make reference to it in order to justify the application of certain words to all that is greenish). The principle is rather intuitive; in a certain sense, it is almost a platitude. A slip of pure green cannot be a sam-

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[50] See, *e. g.*, *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind*, *cit.*, VIII.
[51] *Philosophical Investigations*, *cit.*, part I, § 73, p. 35.

ple of *anything* unless someone uses it as a sample. And it cannot be a sample of *all* that is greenish if those that use it as a sample look at its shape as one of its "key" properties (in the same sense in which its colour is). Unfortunately, the principle may be easily mistaken for a not so intuitive principle, which we can label "Kripkenstein's Principle":

> Speakers can make reference to a given something in order to justify a certain use of a word only if they use this something in a certain way *and they have a good reason for using it that way*.

This latter principle is somehow tied to the main maxim of the philosophy of foundationalism:

> Something can justify something else only if it is itself justified.

And the maxim is anything but a piece of common sense: as any educated person who has dealt with curious children well knows, at least at first sight, we often justify practices, prohibitions, beliefs, *etc…* in terms of practices, prohibitions, beliefs, *etc…* that we are unable to justify.

Now, no doubt, Kripke's Wittgenstein endorses Kripkenstein's Principle (*nomen est omen*). All the Kripkenstein-like objections of the first part assume the principle as a premise. My first Kripkenstein-like objection, for instance, can be set out as follows:

> First premise: the paradigmatic applications of "carmine" can determine the correctness criteria for "carmine" only if speakers can make reference to them in order to justify their use of the word (an application of the normative constraint).
> Second premise: speakers can make reference to the paradigmatic applications of "carmine" in order to justify their use of "carmine" only if they use them in a certain way and they have a good reason for using them that way (an application of Kripkenstein's Principle).
> Third premise: speakers use the paradigmatic applications of "carmine" in a certain way, but they do not have a good reason for using them that way (I omit the details).
> Conclusion: the paradigmatic applications of "carmine" cannot determine the correctness criteria for "carmine".

But it is worth noting that, as long as we see them as answers to the Kripkean sceptic, the straight solutions I sketched endorse the principle as well. As long as we see them this way, these straight solutions are simply attempts to satisfy Kripkenstein's Principle. As I stated in the introduction, our dilemma is generated by a foundationalist assumption.

However, in order to prove that our dilemma is generated by an *illicit* assumption, we cannot simply stress that it relies on a *foundationalist* principle. We must prove that, at least in the present case, foundationalism is not an option. But why should foundationalism be an option here? I believe that what pushes us towards meaning foundationalism is the feeling that a conception of linguistic justification (of justification in linguistic contexts) not satisfying Kripkenstein's Principle is bound to be "theoretically unsatisfactory". But what does it mean to say that a given conception of linguistic justification is theoretically satisfactory (or *un*satisfactory)? In order to answer this question, I suggest the following adequacy criterion:

> A given conception of linguistic justification is theoretically satisfactory if and only if linguistic justifications conceived that way can ground communication.

After all, in a context like the present one, we talk of linguistic justifications, correctness criteria for linguistic behaviour and the like just to explain (away?) meaning. And the sole theoretical aim of the concept of meaning is that of explaining communication.

Well, does the conception of linguistic justification we find ourselves with once Kripkenstein's Principle is dropped satisfy the criterion? Consider the following situation[52]: Kyle is a builder and Stan is his assistant; Kyle is building a house and Stan has to pass him blocks, pillars, slabs and beams in the order in which Kyle thinks he needs them; in order to speed up the work, the two builders, who up to now had no language, build a language; the main feature of this language-building process has to do with a set of paradigmatic applications of the word "block" to blocks, of "pillar" to pillars, of "slab" to slabs and of "beam" to beams; in order to justify their linguistic behaviour, the two builders would make reference to these applications, *but neither would be able to justify his use of them*. Can such a justification protocol ground communication between the two builders? I be-

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[52] Inspired by *Philosophical Investigations*, *cit.*, part I, § 2.

lieve there is strong *prima facie* evidence that it can. However, it would be bad philosophy to appeal to this *prima facie* evidence and then call it a day. First of all, we must identify the motivations of those who are inclined to deny that such a justification protocol can ground something. Afterwards, we must evaluate these motivations and weigh them against our *prima facie* evidence. Only then will we be entitled to draw our conclusions.

Since Kripkenstein's Principle is usually assumed tacitly, its motivations are generally well hidden. As far as I can see, those who embrace the principle are pushed towards it by some possible by-products of Wittgenstein's Principle[53]. Consider, once again, the situation just outlined.

Wittgenstein's Principle, together with the assumption that meaning is normative, implies that what meaning a builder attaches to the words of his rudimentary language depends on the way he uses the relevant paradigmatic applications. Since Kyle and Stan can communicate with each other only if they attach roughly the same meanings to the words of their language, this means that the two builders can communicate with each other only if they use the relevant paradigmatic applications in roughly the same way. Since neither Kyle nor Stan can justify his own use of these paradigmatic applications, such an agreement cannot be the outcome of an exercise of rational capacities: it can only be the outcome of the fact that the two builders share a common animal nature. Such an agreement is a primitive agreement, a kind of agreement for which there are causes (mainly evolutionistic causes), but no reasons. If we want to use a Wittgensteinian concept (even if not a Wittgensteinian wording), we can say that such an agreement is an agreement that concerns primitive certainties[54] (Kripke says that it is his hope that Wittgenstein's remarks on the concept of certainty become fairly clear from an understanding of the Rule-Following Considerations[55]; I believe it is much more likely that the Rule-Following Considerations become fairly clear from an understanding of Wittgenstein's remarks on the concept of certainty). From this it follows that *not every rational animal can under-*

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[53] There is clearly a link between these by-products and the corollaries of *The Reality of Rule-Following*, *cit.*, § 4.

[54] For Wittgenstein's account of the concept see Ludwig Wittgenstein, *On Certainty* (1969), Oxford, Blackwell, 1979, for the wording see Kevin Mulligan, *Certainty, Soil and Sediment*, in Mark Textor, *The Austrian Contribution to Analytic Philosophy*, London, Routledge, 2006.

[55] *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*, *cit.*, preface, pp. VII-VIII.

stand the two builders' language: animals whose nature is too different from that of Kyle and Stan cannot possibly understand their utterances (not even in principle).

And it should be clear that the principle also implies that *we are not necessarily rejecting "The Ideal of Rationality" if, in spite of not being entitled to label them "irrational", we nevertheless refuse to accept the two builders' linguistic justifications.* If there are no rational reasons either for accepting or for refusing a given practice, then neither accepting it nor refusing it should be viewed as irrational (if there are no rational reasons either for believing that God exists or for believing that God does not exist, then neither believing that God exists nor believing that God does not exist should be viewed as irrational). From this it follows that we are not necessarily rejecting "The Ideal of Rationality" if, in spite of not being entitled to label it "irrational", we nevertheless refuse to embrace Kyle and Stan's use of the relevant paradigmatic applications. And from this Wittgenstein's Principle (which links the two builders' linguistic justifications to their use of the relevant paradigmatic applications) allows us to draw the aforementioned conclusion.

The list could go on, but it should already be clear what I am talking about: the by-products in question are all relativistic in nature. The question is: are these possible relativistic by-products of Wittgenstein's Principle so puzzling that we had better forget our *prima facie* evidence? Considered in themselves, they are definitely not so puzzling. However, such a meaning relativism can seem to lead to overtly absurd consequences.

First, the claim that an utterance is correct or incorrect only relative to a community (a community defined by the sharing of a common animal nature) can seem to imply that for the community itself there is no authority, no standard to meet and, therefore, no possibility of error. Roughly, the idea is that we made room for an application of the notion of error, but only in the weak sense of "going out of step with one's fellows", and saying that the community itself "has gone out of step with its fellows" is nonsensical. *Second*, such a meaning relativism can seem to lead to a kind of idealism. It is not hard to see that the notion of correctness, as applied to language behaviour, and that of truth are related notions; but what does it mean to say that they are related notions? A popular answer is that the idea is that an utterance of a declarative sentence is correct if and only if it expresses a true

proposition (such a correlation principle is not unproblematic[56]; however, the main alternative to this answer, according to which the point is that an utterance of a declarative sentence is correct if and only if it is true, avoids the problems in question only as far as it does nothing to link the truth of utterances to that of what is said; not to mention that it is tied to the notion of utterance truth, which does not currently have a good press[57]). On the other hand, the proposition that p is true if and only if p. And, according to a widespread interpretation, this is to say that the proposition expressed by an utterance of a declarative sentence is true if and only if the corresponding state of affairs obtains. Taken together, these two biconditionals imply that an utterance of a declarative sentence is correct if and only if the corresponding state of affairs obtains, and this can seem to imply that if an utterance is correct or incorrect only relative to a community, then also a state of affairs (*Apples are delicious* as well as *Snow is white*) obtains or not only relative to a community (similar points have been raised, in a slightly different context, by McDowell[58]).

Let us start with the problem of error. No doubt, there is a sense in which for the community itself there is no authority, no standard to meet and, therefore, no possibility of error. If Stan and Kyle believe that certain paradigmatic applications determine certain correctness criteria (if they believe that those paradigmatic applications justify a certain linguistic behaviour, if they are naturally inclined to use those paradigmatic applications in a certain way), then no man, or woman, on earth, not even God, can be entitled to say that they are wrong. But this is not to say that for the community itself there is no possibility of error, period. Suppose that Stan and Kyle, because of some misleading perception, stick the label "block" to a building stone that in standard conditions they would have labelled otherwise; there is nothing to prevent a meaning relativist from saying that they are wrong, since their own correctness criteria can be used to show it.

As Wright pointed out, «The difficulty is to stabilise the emphasis on basic propensities of judgement against a drift to a fatal simplification: the

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[56] See Elia Zardini, *Truth and What Is Said*, in *Philosophical Perspectives*, vol. XXII, 2008, pp. 545-574.
[57] See, *e. g.*, John MacFarlane, *Making Sense of Relative Truth*, § I, pp. 322-323, in *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, vol. CV, 2005, pp. 321-339.
[58] *Wittgenstein on Following a Rule*, *cit.*, respectively § 2, pp. 225-226 and § 1, p. 222.

idea that the requirements of a rule, in any particular case, are simply *whatever we take them to be»*[59]. Wittgenstein's Principle implies that an utterance is correct or incorrect only relative to a community defined by the sharing of the basic propensity to use the relevant paradigmatic applications in a certain way (you can call this "a propensity of judgement", but maybe it is better to call it "a propensity to act"[60]). This is not to say that the corresponding correctness criteria make any reference to the community in question. Roughly: the requirements of the rule governing the use of the relevant paradigmatic applications are whatever the community takes them to be, but those of the rule governing the use of the word are not[61].

But what about the charge of idealism? Well, I do not want to deny that the proposition that p is true if and only if p, nor do I want to deny that this *schema* "says" that a certain relation between language and world holds; I am also willing to grant that the *schema* can be paraphrased as "The proposition expressed by an utterance of a declarative sentence is true if and only if the corresponding state of affairs obtains". Finally, I must confess that I have nothing against the idea that an utterance of a declarative sentence is correct if and only if it expresses a true proposition. Hence, I believe we can grant that an utterance of a declarative sentence is correct if and only if the corresponding state of affairs obtains. However, I do not believe that such a biconditional implies that if an utterance is correct or incorrect only relative to a community, then also a state of affairs obtains or not only relative to a community.

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[59] Crispin Wright, *Rule-Following without Reasons: Wittgenstein's Quietism and the Constitutive Question*, § II, p. 487, in *Ratio*, vol. XX, 2007, pp. 481-502.

[60] See *Philosophical Investigations*, *cit.*, part I, § 241.

[61] An anonymous referee for this journal remarked that my "theory" is unable to satisfy what seems to be the *real* requirement behind the "objection from error". More precisely, the referee remarked that what the proponents of this objection seem to *actually* complain about when they say that "for the community itself there is no possibility of error" is that in a theory such as mine it cannot possibly be the case that some aspect of language is standardly used in an incorrect way *because the community erroneously believes that, say, certain paradigmatic applications determine certain correctness criteria.* I agree. However, I also believe that this requirement seems plausible only as long as it is unduly identified with the one I discussed in the text. After all, while it is quite clear that it is actually possible that some aspect of language is standardly used in an incorrect way, it is far from being clear that this can happen *because of a widespread false belief about the relevant correctness criteria* (obviously, the reason being that it is far from being clear that the community can have such erroneous beliefs). Hence, I find that the best way to deal with the objection from error is to take it at face value.

Suppose that, in order to define the word "block", Kyle and Stan paradigmatically applied it to some blocks (to some building stones that we too would call "blocks"). Suppose then that the two builders believe that these paradigmatic applications determine that an application of "block" is correct if and only if it is an application of "block" to a pillar (to a building stone that we would call "pillar"). Consider now an application of "block" to a pillar. According to the two builders' correctness criteria, the utterance, let us call it "U", is correct. According to ours, it is incorrect (take a minute to figure out how odd we would find the two builders' behaviour). Since neither our nor their criteria can be said to be "the right ones", the conclusion that we should draw is that U is correct relative to the community consisting of Kyle and Stan, let us call it "C_1", and incorrect relative to our community, let us call it "C_2". So far, so good. But what about an argument like the following?

First premise: U is an utterance of the declarative sentence S (it sounds like a fact).
First lemma: U expresses the proposition P (U is uttered in a context and S possesses a character[62]).
Second premise: P corresponds to the state of affairs SA (once again, a fact).
Third premise: U is correct relative to C_1 and incorrect relative to C_2.
Fourth premise: U is correct if and only if P is true.
Second lemma: P is true relative to C_1 and false relative to C_2.
Fifth premise: P is true if and only if SA obtains.
Conclusion: SA obtains relative to C_1 and does not obtain relative to C_2.

Well, the problem with such an argument is that it relies on an inconsistent set of assumptions. As we have seen, the third premise is a consequence of the fact that C_1 and C_2 possess *different correctness criteria* for "block". But this implies that C_1 and C_2 associate *different characters* to this sign-type. And this in turn implies that C_1 and C_2 regard U as an utterance of *different sentences*, since the character of a sentence is essential to it. And since neither our nor their criteria can be said to be "the right ones", the conclusion that we should draw is that U is an utterance of S_1 relative to C_1

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[62] In the sense of David Kaplan, *Demonstratives – An Essay on the Semantics, Logic, Metaphysics, and Epistemology of Demonstratives and Other Indexicals*, § VI. (ii), in Joseph Almog, John Perry, Howard Wettstein, *Themes from Kaplan*, New York-Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1989.

and an utterance of S_2 relative to C_2, a conclusion that clashes with the first premise (what if we chose to say that the character of a sentence is *not* essential to it? The fact that C_1 and C_2 associate *different characters* to "block" would still imply that C_1 and C_2 associate *different propositions* to U[63]).

I believe we can conclude that, as far as we can tell, meaning relativism has no absurd consequence. But if meaning relativism has no absurd consequence, then it seems that we can let our *prima facie* evidence lead us to conclude that the conception of linguistic justification we find ourselves with once Kripkenstein's Principle is dropped can explain communicative phenomena and, therefore, that the dilemma between meaning scepticism and (a more straightforward) meaning foundationalism is generated by an unnecessary assumption.

In a certain sense, this is a straight solution to Kripkenstein's paradox. But it is worth noting that the position I advocated is much more similar to Kripkenstein's sceptical solution than to most of the straight solutions discussed in the literature (see especially Kripke's insightful remarks on the role of the notions of agreement and form of life[64]).

There are countless relevant issues that I have not discussed, but I hope that what I have said can throw some light on them too. In particular, I have not discussed the so-called "Private Language Argument", but, nonetheless, I hope that what I have said on the role of the concept of agreement can help in understanding the underlying problems.

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[63] Would this be a kind of assessment-indexicality (or expressive relativism), in the sense of *Making Sense of Relative Truth*, *cit.*, § I, p. 326 and John MacFarlane, *The Assessment Sensitivity of Knowledge Attributions*, § 4.2, p. 220-221, in *Oxford Studies in Epistemology*, vol. I, 2005, pp. 197-233? It should be clear from *Making Sense of Relative Truth*, *cit.*, § I, note 6 that it would not.

[64] *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*, *cit.*, 3, pp. 91-93 and 96-98.

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