MIND, VALUE, AND REALITY

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Wittgenstein on Following a Rule[1]

These things are finer spun than crude hands have any inkling of.
(*RFM* VII-57.)[2]

The contractual picture of meaning, and Wright's claim against it.

1. We find it natural to think of meaning and understanding in, as it were, contractual terms.[3] Our idea is that to learn the meaning of a word is to acquire an understanding that obliges us subsequently—if we have occasion to deploy the concept in question—to judge and speak in certain determinate ways, on pain of failure to obey the dictates of the meaning we have grasped; that we are "committed to certain patterns of linguistic usage by the meanings we attach to expressions".[4] According to Crispin Wright, the burden of

1. This paper originated in an attempt to respond to Simon Blackburn, "Rule-Following and Moral Realism"; I was also stimulated, in writing the first draft, by an unpublished paper of Blackburn's, a revised version of which is Blackburn, "The Individual Strikes Back". I benefited from comments on the first draft from Margaret Gilbert, Susan Hurley, Saul Kripke, David Lewis, Christopher Peacocke, Philip Pettit, David Wiggins, and Crispin Wright, who also kindly let me see a draft of his "Kripke's Wittgenstein", a forerunner of his "Kripke's Account of the Argument against Private Language".

2. I shall use "*RFM*" for Wittgenstein, *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*.

3. See p. 19 of Crispin Wright, *Wittgenstein on the Foundations of Mathematics*.

4. Wright, p. 21. This idea of commitment to patterns must be treated with care if we are not to falsify the intuition. The most straightforward sort of case, on which it is familiar that Wittgenstein concentrates, is the continuation of a numerical series. Here it is natural to think of the correct expansion of the series as constituting a pattern to which understanding of its principle commits one. In the general case, the "pattern" idea is the idea of a series of things that, given the way the world develops, it would be correct to say if one chose to express a given concept; outside the series-expansion case, this idea is obviously metaphorical at best, since what it is correct to say with the use of a given concept,

Wittgenstein's reflections on following a rule, in his later work, is that these natural ideas lack the substance we are inclined to credit them with: "there is in our understanding of a concept no rigid, advance determination of what is to count as its correct application".[5]

Objectivity at risk: things being thus and so anyway, or idealism.

If Wittgenstein's conclusion, as Wright interprets it, is allowed to stand, the most striking casualty is a familiar intuitive notion of objectivity. The idea at risk is the idea of things being thus and so anyway, whether or not we choose to investigate the matter in question, and whatever the outcome of any such investigation. That idea requires the conception of how things could correctly be said to be anyway—whatever, if anything, we in fact go on to say about the matter; and this notion of correctness can only be the notion of how the pattern of application that we grasp, when we come to understand the concept in question, extends, independently of the actual outcome of any investigation, to the relevant case. So if the notion of investigation-independent patterns of application is to be discarded, then so is the idea that things are, at least sometimes, thus and so anyway, independently of our ratifying the judgement that that is how they are. It seems fair to describe this extremely radical consequence as a kind of idealism.[6]

We may well hesitate to attribute such a doctrine to the philosopher who wrote:

> If one tried to advance *theses* in philosophy, it would never be possible to debate them, because everyone would agree to them. (*PI* §128.)[7]

even supposing a determinate state of affairs one aims to describe, depends on what other concepts one chooses to express in the same utterance. (The non-metaphorical kernel is simply the idea that the meaning of what one says is a matter of the conditions under which it would be true.) It is important, also, not to falsify the connection between the patterns and meaningfulness—e.g., by suggesting that the idea is that making sense depends on *conforming* to the appropriate commitments. Tracing out the patterns is what the "pattern" idea takes consistently speaking the truth to be; to make sense (in an affirmation) one needs to do no more than felicitously make as if to be doing what one takes that to require. (See, further, n. 46 below.)

5. *Wittgenstein on the Foundations of Mathematics*, p. 21. "Rigid" will call for comment; see n. 21 below.

6. Wright does this at p. 252 of "Strict Finitism". See also pp. 246–7 of his "Anti-Realist Semantics: The Role of *Criteria*".

7. I shall use "*PI*" for Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*. Stanley Cavell's correction of the usual reading of this passage, at pp. 33–4 of *The Claim of Reason*, does not make it any easier to reconcile with Wright's view of Wittgenstein.

Notice that the destructive effect of the doctrine goes far beyond Wittgenstein's hostility to the imagery of mathematical platonism, in which mathematics is pictured as "the natural history of mathematical objects" (*RFM* II-40). The remarks about rule-following are not confined to mathematics; on Wright's reading they would undermine our ordinary intuitive conception of natural history, literally so called—the very model on which that suspect platonist picture of mathematics is constructed.

More specific grounds for doubting the attribution might be derived from passages like this (*PI* §195):

> "But I don't mean that what I do now (in grasping a sense) determines the future use *causally* and as a matter of experience, but that in a *queer* way, the use itself is in some sense present."—But of course it is, 'in *some* sense'! Really the only thing wrong with what you say is the expression "in a queer way". The rest is all right. . . .[8]

The target is a misconception, not the idea of commitment.

What this suggests is something we might anyway have expected: that Wittgenstein's target is not the very idea that a present state of understanding embodies commitments with respect to the future, but rather a certain seductive misconception of that idea.

Wright's purge, first stated: the patterns depend on our ratifying.

Not that Wright merely ignores such passages. His claim is that Wittgenstein seems *almost* to want to deny all substance to the "pattern" idea; what he attributes to Wittgenstein is not an outright abandonment of the idea but a reinterpretation of it.[9] Wright's view is that the intuitive contractual picture of meaning and understanding can be rendered innocuous—purged of the seductive misconception—by discarding the thought that the patterns are independent of our ratification. Later (§§5, 7, 10) I shall suggest that this purged version of the intuitive picture is not recognizable as a picture of meaning and understanding at all, and is not correctly attributed to Wittgenstein. But for the present, let me note only that Wright's reinterpretation, precisely by denying the ratification-independence of the patterns, leaves the intuitive conception of objectivity untenable, in the way I described above. So we are bound to wonder whether the concession that Wright envisages Wittgenstein making to the

8. See also, e.g., *PI* §§187, 692, 693.

9. See *Wittgenstein on the Foundations of Mathematics*, pp. 21, 227.

"pattern" idea can account satisfactorily for Wittgenstein's reassuring tone in his response to the interlocutor of *PI* §195.

Wright's target, and why explanations can't fix the pattern.

2. In Wright's view, then, the butt of Wittgenstein's reflections on rule-following is the idea that understanding an expression is "grasp of a pattern of application, conformity to which requires certain determinate verdicts in so far unconsidered cases" (p. 216). But (p. 216):

> We have to acknowledge . . . that the "pattern" is, strictly, inaccessible to definitive explanation. For, as Wittgenstein never wearied of reminding himself, no explanation of the use of an expression is proof against musunderstanding; verbal explanations require correct understanding of the vocabulary in which they are couched, and samples are open to an inexhaustible variety of interpretations. So we move towards the idea that understanding an expression is a kind of "cottoning on"; that is, a leap, an inspired guess at the pattern of application which the instructor is trying to get across.

The upshot: an idiolectic pattern, privately known.

The pictured upshot of this "leap" is something idiolectic. So the suggestion is that the "pattern" idea comes naturally to us, in the first instance, in the shape of "the idea that each of us has some sort of privileged access to the character of his own understanding of an expression; each of us knows of an idiolectic pattern of use, for which there is a strong presumption, when sufficient evidence has accumulated, that it is shared communally" (p. 217).[10]

What is wrong with this idea? Wright's answer is this:

> . . . *whatever* sincere applications I make of a particular expression, when I have paid due heed to the situation, will seem to me to conform with my understanding of it. There is no scope for a distinction here between the fact of an application's seeming to me to conform with the way in which I understand it and the fact of its really doing so.[11]

10. See also pp. 32, 354.

11. Ibid.; see also p. 36. Compare *PI* §258: "One would like to say: whatever is going to seem right to me is right. And that only means that here we can't talk about 'right'." (See §14 below.)

Why the community can't rescue the pattern idea either.

Now we are naturally inclined to protect the intuitive view that thoughts and utterances make sense by virtue of owing, or purporting to owe, allegiance to conceptual commitments. So, given that idiolectic understanding cannot make room for the "pattern" idea, it is tempting to appeal to communal understanding. But (the argument that Wright ascribes to Wittgenstein continues) this cannot rehabilitate the "pattern" idea. For (p. 218):

> Suppose that one of us finds himself incorrigibly out of line concerning the description of a new case. We have just seen that he cannot single-handed, as it were, give sense to the idea that he is at least being faithful to his *own* pattern; that is, that he recognises how he must describe the new case if he is to remain faithful to his own understanding of the relevant expressions. How, then, does his disposition to apply the expression to a new case become, properly speaking, recognition of the continuation of a pattern if it so happens that he is *not* out of line, if it so happens that there is communal agreement?

The communal parallel, and the thin surrogate for right and wrong.

The trouble is that there is a precise parallel between the community's supposed grasp of the patterns that it has communally committed itself to and the individual's supposed grasp of his idiolectic commitments. Whatever applications of an expression secure communal approval, just those applications will seem to the community to conform with its understanding of the expression.[12] If we regard an individual as aiming to speak a communal language, we take account of the possibility that he may go out of step with his fellows; thus we make room for an application of the notion of error, and so of right and wrong. But it is only going out of step with one's fellows that we make room for; not going out of step with a ratification-independent pattern that they follow. So the notion of right and wrong that we have made room for is at best a thin surrogate for what would be required by the intuitive notion of objectivity. That would require the idea of concepts as authoritative; and the move away from idiolects has not reinstated that idea. In sum (p. 220):

> None of us unilaterally can make sense of the idea of correct employment of language save by reference to the authority of securable com-

12. One would like to say: whatever is going to seem right to *us* is right. And that only means that here we can't talk about "right".

munal assent on the matter; and for the community itself there is no authority, so no standard to meet.

Wright's target, personal understanding, touches Kripke's reading.

3. According to Wright, then, Wittgenstein's reflections are directed, in the first instance, against the idea that a determinate practice can be dictated by a personal understanding—something that owes no allegiance to a communal way of going on. On the surface, at least, there is a point of contact here with Saul Kripke's influential reading of the remarks on rule-following, which I shall now outline.[13]

Kripke's sceptic: what fact made it addition I meant by 'plus'?

Suppose one is asked to perform an addition other than any one has encountered before, either in the training that gave one one's understanding of addition or in subsequently trying to put one's understanding into practice.[14] In confidently giving a particular answer, one will naturally have a thought that is problematic: namely—to put it in terms that bring out the point of contact with Wright's reading—that in returning this answer one is keeping faith with one's understanding of the "plus" sign. To show how this thought is problematic, Kripke introduces a sceptic who questions it. The natural idea is that one's understanding of "plus" dictates the answer one gives. But what could constitute one's being in such a state? Not a disposition: no doubt it is true that answering as one does is an exercise of a disposition that one acquired when one learned arithmetic, but the relation of a disposition to its exercises is in no sense contractual—a disposition is not something to which its exercises are faithful.[15] But nothing else will serve either: for—to quote Kripke's summary of a rich battery of argument—"it seems that no matter what is in my mind at a given time, I am free in the future to interpret it in different ways" (p. 107). That is, whatever piece of mental furniture I cite, acquired by me as a result of my training in arithmetic, it is open to the sceptic to point out that my present performance keeps

Not a disposition, and no mental item survives reinterpretation.

13. See Kripke, *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*. Wright notes the parallel at p. 249 of "Strict Finitism"; although he takes issue with Kripke in "Kripke's Account of the Argument against Private Language".

14. Where I say "other", Kripke has "larger". This makes the scepticism perhaps more gripping, but the difference is inessential.

15. This is the gist of the excellent discussion at Kripke, *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*, pp. 22–37.

faith with it only on one interpretation of it, and other interpretations are possible. So it cannot constitute my understanding "plus" in such a way as to dictate the answer I give. Such a state of understanding would require not just the original item but also my having put the right interpretation on it. But what could constitute my having put the right interpretation on some mental item? And now the argument can evidently be repeated.

The regress: each interpretation needs its own.

The upshot of this argument is a "sceptical paradox", which, according to Kripke (pp. 69–71), Wittgenstein accepts: there is no fact that could constitute my having attached one rather than another meaning to the "plus" sign.

The sceptical paradox, which Kripke's Wittgenstein accepts.

It may well seem that if Wittgenstein concedes this much to Kripke's sceptic, he has renounced the right to attribute meaning to expressions at all. According to Kripke, however, Wittgenstein offers a "sceptical solution" to the "sceptical paradox". A "sceptical solution" to a sceptical problem is one that "begins . . . by conceding that the sceptic's negative assertions are unanswerable" (p. 66). The essentials of the "sceptical solution" are as follows.

What a sceptical solution is: concede the sceptic's claims.

First, we must reform our intuitive conception of meaning, replacing the notion of truth-conditions with some notion like that of justification conditions. Kripke quotes with approval (p. 73) a claim of Michael Dummett's: "The *Investigations* contains implicitly a rejection of the classical (realist) Frege-*Tractatus* view that the general form of explanation of meaning is a statement of the truth conditions."[16] The "sceptical paradox", which we are to accept, is that there is no fact that could constitute my having attached one rather than another determinate meaning to the "plus" sign. We are inclined to understand this as a concession that I have attached *no* determinate meaning to the "plus" sign: but the suggestion is that this is only because we adhere, naively, to the superseded truth-conditional conception of meaning—applied, in this case, to the claim "I have attached a determinate meaning to the 'plus' sign".

First move: justification conditions in place of truth-conditions.

Second, when we consider the justification conditions of the statements in which we express the idea that someone attaches some determinate meaning to an expression (the conditions under which we

16. "Wittgenstein's Philosophy of Mathematics", p. 348.

Second move: meaning ascriptions record acceptance into the community.

affirm such statements, and the roles they play in our lives), we see that we can make sense of them in terms of their use to record acceptance of individuals into the linguistic community. (The thesis that we can make sense of the idea of meaning only in that connection is the core of Kripke's interpretation of the Private Language Argument.)

Doubt about the sceptical solution, via Dummett's question.

Now there is room for doubt about how successful this "sceptical solution" can be. The exegetical framework within which it is constructed—the Dummettian picture of the transition between the *Tractatus* and the *Investigations*—is not beyond dispute. But without opening that issue (which I shall touch on below: §§10, 11, 14), we can note that when Dummett expresses his doubts about the "realist" (truth-conditional) conception of meaning (which are supposed to be in the spirit of the later Wittgenstein's doubts about the *Tractatus*), it is typically by pressing such questions as this: "What could constitute someone's possession of the sort of understanding of a sentence that 'realism' attributes to him?" The implication is that, failing a satisfactory answer, no one could possess that sort of understanding.[17] It is natural to suppose that if one says "There is no fact that could constitute its being the case that P", one precludes oneself from affirming that P; and this supposition, so far from being a distinctively "realist" one, plays a central role in the standard arguments *against* "realism". Given this supposition, the concession that Kripke says Wittgenstein makes to the sceptic becomes a *denial* that I understand the "plus" sign to mean one thing rather than another. And now—generalizing the denial—we do seem to have fallen into an abyss: "the incredible and self-defeating conclusion, that all language is meaningless" (p. 71). It is quite obscure how we could hope to claw ourselves back by manipulating the notion of accredited membership in a linguistic community.

No fact, so no affirming: the concession becomes the abyss.

Kripke equates his paradox with the first paragraph of §201.

4. In any case, Kripke's thesis that Wittgenstein accepts the "sceptical paradox" seems a falsification. Kripke (see p. 7) identifies the "sceptical paradox" he attributes to Wittgenstein with the paradox Wittgenstein formulates in the first paragraph of *PI* §201:

17. See especially Dummett, "What Is a Theory of Meaning? (II)".

> This was our paradox: no course of action could be determined by a rule, because every course of action can be made out to accord with the rule. The answer was: if everything can be made out to accord with the rule, then it can also be made out to conflict with it. And so there would be neither accord nor conflict here.

But §201 goes on with a passage for which Kripke's reading makes no room:

> It can be seen that there is a misunderstanding here from the mere fact that in the course of our argument we give one interpretation after another; as if each one contented us at least for a moment, until we thought of yet another standing behind it. What this shews is that there is a way of grasping a rule which is *not* an *interpretation,* but which is exhibited in what we call "obeying the rule" and "going against it" in actual cases.

The regress of interpretations, each contenting us for a moment.

What could constitute my understanding, say, the "plus" sign in a way with which only certain answers to given addition problems would accord? Confronted with such questions, we tend to be enticed into looking for a fact that would constitute my having put an appropriate *interpretation* on what I was told and shown when I was instructed in arithmetic. Anything we hit on as satisfying that specification contents us only "for a moment"; then it occurs to us that whatever we have hit on would itself be capable of interpretation in such a way that acting in conformity with it would require something quite different. So we look for something that would constitute my having interpreted the first item in the right way. Anything we come up with as satisfying that specification will in turn content us only "for a moment"; and so on: "any interpretation still hangs in the air along with what it interprets, and cannot give it any support" (*PI* §198). Kripke's reading has Wittgenstein endorsing this reasoning, and consequently willing to abandon the idea that there is anything that constitutes my understanding an expression in some determinate way. But what Wittgenstein clearly claims, in the second paragraph of §201, is that the reasoning is vitiated by "a misunderstanding". The right response to the paradox, Wittgenstein in effect tells us, is not to accept it but to correct the misunderstanding on which it depends: that is, to realize "that there is a way of grasping a rule which is *not* an *interpretation*".

Kripke endorses the reasoning, §201 calls it a misunderstanding.

The paradox as one horn, and the mythology as the other.

The paradox of §201 is one horn of a dilemma with which the misunderstanding presents us. Suppose we are not disabused of the misunderstanding—that is, we take it that our problem is to find a fact that constitutes my having given some expression an interpretation with which only certain uses of it would conform. In that case, the attempt to resist the paradox of §201 will drive us to embrace a familiar mythology of meaning and understanding, and this is the second horn of the dilemma. My coming to mean the expression in the way I do (my "grasping the rule") must be my arriving at an interpretation; but it must be an interpretation that is not susceptible to the movement of thought in the sceptical line of reasoning—not such as to content us only until we think of another interpretation standing behind it.

> What one wants to say is: "Every sign is capable of interpretation; but the ***meaning*** mustn't be capable of interpretation. It is the last interpretation." (***Blue Book***, p. 34.)[18]

An interpretation that can't be interpreted: the ethereal machine.

Understanding an expression, then, must be possessing an interpretation that cannot be interpreted—an interpretation that precisely bridges the gap, exploited in the sceptical argument, between the instruction one received in learning the expression and the use one goes on to make of it. The irresistible upshot of this is that we picture following a rule as the operation of a super-rigid yet (or perhaps we should say "hence") ethereal machine.

> How queer: It looks as if a physical (mechanical) form of guidance could misfire and let in something unforeseen, but not a rule! As if a rule were, so to speak, the only reliable form of guidance. (***Zettel*** §296.)[19]

One of Wittgenstein's main concerns is clearly to cast doubt on this mythology. But his attacks on the mythology are not, as Kripke suggests, arguments for acceptance of the "sceptical paradox".[20]

18. Compare ***Zettel***, §231.

19. There is a good description of the mythological ideas expressed here, with a wealth of citations of relevant passages, in Gordon Baker, "Following Wittgenstein: Some Signposts for *Philosophical Investigations* §§143–242".

20. See ***Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language***, pp. 65, 69: Kripke cannot distinguish rejecting the "superlative fact" of *PI* §192—rejecting the mythology—from refusing to countenance a fact in which my attaching a determinate meaning to "plus" consists—accepting the paradox.

The attack on the mythology hits the misunderstanding, not the paradox.

That would be so if the dilemma were compulsory; but the point of the second paragraph of PI §201 is precisely that it is not. The mythology is wrung from us, in our need to avoid the paradox of the first paragraph, only because we fall into the misunderstanding; the attack on the mythology is not support for the paradox, but rather constitutes, in conjunction with the fact that the paradox is intolerable, an argument against the misunderstanding.

It is worth noting two points about the second horn of the dilemma that correspond to two aspects of Wright's reading of Wittgenstein.

First point: the second horn makes understanding idiolectic.

First, if we picture an interpretation that would precisely bridge the gap between instruction and competent use, it seems that it can only be one that each person hits on for himself—so that it is at best a fortunate contingency if his interpretation coincides with the one arrived at by someone else subjected to the same instruction, or with the one intended by the instructor.

> "But do you really explain to the other person what you yourself understand? Don't you get him to *guess* the essential thing? You give him examples,—but he has to guess their drift, to guess your intention." (***PI*** §210.)

This is clearly the basis in Wittgenstein for Wright's remarks (quoted in §2 above) about "the idea that understanding an expression is a kind of 'cottoning on'; that is, a leap, an inspired guess at the pattern of application which the instructor is trying to get across".

Second point: the rule as rails laid out ahead (PI §218).

Second, a concomitant of the picture of the super-rigid machine is a picture of the patterns as sets of rails. (See, for instance, *PI* §218.) At each stage, say in the extending of a series, the rule itself determines what comes next, independently of the techniques that we learn in learning to extend it; the point of the learning is to get our practice of judging and speaking in line with the rule's impersonal dictates. (An omniscient God would not need to do mathematics in order to know whether "777" occurs in the decimal expansion of π;

see *RFM* VII-41.) Now this conception figures regularly in Wright's formulations of the "pattern" idea:

> . . . the pattern extends *of itself* to cases which we have yet to confront . . .
>
> . . . the investigation-independent truth of statements requires that their truth is settled, ***autonomously and without the need for human interference,*** by their meanings and the character of the relevant facts.[21]

It is clear, again, that these formulations have a basis in Wittgenstein's polemic against the second horn of the dilemma. A remark like "I give the rule an extension" (*RFM* VI-29) is meant as a corrective of the inclination to say "The rule extends of itself". (And "even God can determine something mathematical only by mathematics": *RFM* VII-41.)

Wright's purge: keep the contract, drop independence of ratification.

5. In Wright's reading, as I said (§§1 and 2 above), Wittgenstein's point is that the natural contractual conception of understanding should not be discarded, but purged of the idea—which it must incorporate if the intuitive notion of objectivity is to have application—that the patterns to which our concepts oblige us are ratification-independent. I expressed a suspicion (in §1 above) that this purging would not leave a residue recognizable as a conception of meaning and understanding at all, or recognizable as something that Wittgenstein recommends. I want now to begin on an attempt to back up this suspicion.

At *PI* §437 Wittgenstein writes:

> A wish seems already to know what will or would satisfy it; a proposition, a thought, what makes it true—even when that thing is not there at all! Whence this ***determining*** of what is not yet there? This despotic demand? ("The hardness of the logical must.")

Note the parenthesis: clearly he thinks that the discussion in which this passage occurs—dealing with the relation between wishes or expectations and their fulfilment, and the relation between orders and their execution—raises the same issues as his reflections on the continuation of a series.[22] We can bring out the connection by focusing on the case of orders and their execution: it is natural to say that the execution of an order is faithful to its meaning, and in saying this we clearly express a version of the idea that we express when we say that the competent continuation of a series is faithful to its principle.

21. Wright, *Wittgenstein on the Foundations of Mathematics*, p. 216, and "Strict Finitism", p. 250, both with my emphasis. "Rigid", at *Wittgenstein on the Foundations of Mathematics*, p. 21 (which I quoted in §1 above), is an expression of the same idea—Wright does not mean "rigid" as opposed to, say, "vague" (see Baker,"Following Wittgenstein", pp. 40–1).

Orders and their execution raise the same issue as series.

Wright's reading transposed to the case of orders.

What would Wright's reading of Wittgenstein be like, transposed to this case? Something on these lines (compare §2 above). The temptation to say that my execution of an order conforms with my understanding of it arises primarily out of a conception of my understanding as idiolectic—something that cannot be definitively conveyed to someone else, so that it is at best a happy contingency if it coincides with the understanding of the order possessed by the person who issued it. On reflection, however, we should realize that this is an illusion: we cannot make sense of anything that would constitute an essentially personal understanding of an order, but would nevertheless impose genuine constraints on what I did in "execution" of it. For whatever I "sincerely" did would seem to be in conformity with my supposed personal understanding of the order. We naturally want to protect the intuitive notion of an action's fulfilling an order; so we are tempted at this point to appeal to the idea of my membership in a linguistic community. This does make room for my going wrong. But all that my going wrong can amount to is this: my action does not secure the approval of my fellows, or is not what they would do in attempted fulfilment of such an order. When the community does approve, that is not a matter of its collectively recognizing the conformity of my action to an antecedent communal understanding of the order: for this supposed communal understanding would be in exactly the same position as my supposed idiolectic understanding. We cannot hold, then, that the community "goes right or wrong", by the lights of its understanding, when it awards my action the title "execution of the order"; "rather, it just goes".

The appeal to the community, which only 'just goes'.

Given the correspondence (which I noted in §4 above) between aspects of Wright's reading and aspects of Wittgenstein's polemic against the second horn of the dilemma, it is not surprising that part,

22. See Kripke, *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*, pp. 25–6, n. 19.

at least, of this transposed version of Wright's reading should neatly fit parts of Wittgenstein's discussion. Consider, for instance, *PI* §460:

> Could the justification of an action as fulfilment of an order run like this: "You said 'Bring me a yellow flower', upon which this one gave me a feeling of satisfaction; that is why I have brought it"? Wouldn't one have to reply: "But I didn't set you to bring me the flower which should give you that sort of feeling after what I said!"?

It seems correct and illuminating to understand this as an attack on the idea that the understanding I act on is essentially idiolectic.[23]

The parody: the flower all the bystanders approved.

Taken as a whole, however, I think this reading gets Wittgenstein completely wrong. I can perhaps begin to explain my disbelief with this remark: it would have been fully in character for Wittgenstein to have written as follows:

> Could the justification of an action as fulfilment of an order run like this: "You said 'Bring me a yellow flower', upon which the one received approval from all the bystanders; that is why I have brought it"? Wouldn't one have to reply: "But I didn't set you to bring the flower which should receive approval from everyone else after what I said!"?

'This is yellow' against 'would be called yellow'.

In his later work, Wittgenstein returns again and again to trying to characterize the relation between meaning and consensus. If there is anything that emerges clearly, it is that it would be a serious error, in his view, not to make a radical distinction between the significance of, say, "This is yellow" and the significance of, say, "This would be called 'yellow' by (most) speakers of English" (see, for instance, *Zettel* §§428–431). And my transposed version of Wright's reading seems to leave it mysterious, at best, why this distinction should be so important.

The easy answer for Wright, and why it only postpones things.

It may appear that the answer is both obvious and readily available to Wright: "To say 'This would be called "yellow" by speakers of English' would not be to *call* the object in question 'yellow', and that is what one does when one says 'This is yellow'." But this would merely postpone the serious question: does Wright's reading of Wittgenstein contain the means to make it intelligible that there should so much as *be* such an action as calling an object "yellow"? The picture Wright offers is, at the basic level, a picture of human beings vocalizing in certain ways in response to objects, with this behaviour (no doubt) accompanied by such "inner" phenomena as feelings of constraint, or convictions of the rightness of what they are saying. There are presumably correspondences in the propensities of fellow members of a linguistic community to vocalize, and to feel comfortable in doing so, that are unsurprising in the light of their belonging to a single species, together with similarities in the training that gave them the propensities. But at the basic level there is no question of shared commitments—of the behaviour, and the associated aspects of the streams of consciousness, being subject to the authority of anything outside themselves. ("For the community itself there is no authority, so no standard to meet.") How, then, can we be entitled to view the behaviour as involving, say, calling things "yellow", rather than a mere brute meaningless sounding off?

The basic level: vocalising, feelings of constraint, no authority.

The thought that is operative here is one Kripke puts by saying: "The relation of meaning and intention to future action is *normative, not descriptive*" (p. 37). It is a thought Wright aims to respect. This is the point of his aspiration not to discard the contractual conception of meaning, but only to purge it of the idea of ratification-independence. But the purging yields the picture of what I have been calling "the basic level"; and at that level Wright's picture has no room for norms, and hence—given the normativeness of meaning—no room for meaning. Wright hopes to preserve a foothold for a purified form of the normativeness implicit in the contractual conception of meaning, by appealing to the fact that individuals are susceptible to communal correction. It is problematic, however, whether the picture of the basic level, once entertained as such, can be prevented from purporting to contain *the real truth* about linguistic behaviour. In that case its freedom from norms will preclude our attributing any genuine substance to the etiolated normativeness Wright hopes to preserve. The problem for Wright is to distinguish the position he attributes to Wittgenstein from one according to which the possibility of going out of step with our fellows gives us the *illusion* of being subject to norms, and consequently the *illusion* of entertaining and expressing meanings.

Meaning is normative, and the basic level has no norms in it.

Why the norm-free picture claims to be the real truth.

23. That is, the passage is of a piece with the passage from *PI* §258 that I quoted in n. 11 above. This suggestion does not compete with, but rather complements, Kripke's suggestion (pp. 25–6, n. 19) that the passage refers obliquely to Russell's treatment of desire in *The Analysis of Mind*.

6. Moved by the insight that meaning relates normatively to linguistic behaviour, Kripke—like Wright—reads Wittgenstein as concerned to preserve a role for the intuitive contractual conception. But Kripke's Wittgenstein locates that conception only in the context of the "sceptical solution"—a response to a supposedly accepted "sceptical paradox". Applied to the case of orders and their execution, Kripke's "sceptical paradox" will take this form: there is nothing that constitutes my understanding an order in a way with which only acting in a certain determinate manner would conform. And, here as before (compare §4 above), it is open to question whether, once that much is conceded to scepticism, a "sceptical solution" can avert the destructive effect that the concession threatens to have.

In any case, this line of interpretation gets off on the wrong foot, when it credits Wittgenstein with acceptance of a "sceptical paradox", so that a "sceptical solution" would be the best that could be hoped for. Just as in the case of the continuation of a series, the reasoning that would lead to this "sceptical paradox" starts with something Wittgenstein aims to show up as a mistake: the assumption, in this case, that the understanding on which I act when I obey an order must be an interpretation. The connection with the thought of *PI* §201 is made clear by this juxtaposition (*RFM* VI-38):

> How can the word "Slab" indicate what I have to do, when after all I can bring any action into accord with any interpretation?
>
> How can I follow a rule, when after all whatever I do can be interpreted as following it?

The parallel can be extended (see §4 above). If we assume that understanding is always interpretation, then the need to resist the paradox of *PI* §201 drives us into a fantastic picture of how understanding mediates between order and execution. Consider, for instance, *PI* §431:

> "There is a gulf between an order and its execution. It has to be filled by the act of understanding."
>
> "Only in the act of understanding is it meant that we are to do THIS. The order—why, that is nothing but sounds, ink-marks.—"[24]

24. Compare the passage from *Blue Book*, p. 34, that I quoted in §4 above.

The act of understanding, conceived in terms of hitting on an interpretation that completely bridges the gulf between an order and its execution, demands to be pictured as setting up a super-rigid connection between the words and the subsequent action (hence the allusion, in *PI* §437, to "the hardness of the logical must"). It is this idea that Wittgenstein is mocking in *PI* §461:

> In what sense does an order anticipate its execution? By ordering *just that* which later on is carried out?—But one would have to say "which later on is carried out, or again is not carried out." And that is to say nothing.
>
> "But even if my wish does not determine what is going to be the case, still it does so to speak determine the theme of a fact, whether the fact fulfils the wish or not." We are—as it were—surprised, not at anyone's knowing the future, but at his being able to prophesy at all (right or wrong).
>
> As if the mere prophecy, no matter whether true or false, foreshadowed the future; whereas it knows nothing of the future and cannot know less than nothing.

And the parallel goes further still. When we are tempted to conceive the understanding of an order in this way, what we have in mind is something essentially personal: a guess at the meaning of the person who issued the order. This idea is Wittgenstein's target in, for instance, *PI* §433:

> When we give an order, it can look as if the ultimate thing sought by the order has to remain unexpressed, as there is always a gulf between an order and its execution. Say I want someone to make a particular movement, say to raise his arm. To make it quite clear, I do the movement. This picture seems unambiguous until we ask: how does he know *he is to make this movement*?—How does he know at all what use he is to make of the signs I give him, whatever they are?—Perhaps I shall now try to supplement the order by means of further signs, by pointing from myself to him, making encouraging gestures, etc.. Here it looks as if the order were beginning to stammer.
>
> As if the signs were precariously trying to produce understanding in us.—But if we now understand them, by what token do we understand?

If we read Wittgenstein in Kripke's way, we shall take Wittgenstein's mockery of these ideas as argument in favour of the "sceptical paradox"—the thesis that there is nothing that could constitute my

The dilemma rests on one assumption: understanding is interpretation.

understanding an order in a determinate way. That is what the mockery would amount to if there were no options besides the paradox and the ideas that Wittgenstein mocks. But Wittgenstein's point is that this dilemma seems compulsory only on the assumption that understanding is always interpretation; his aim is not to shift us from one horn of the dilemma to the other, but to persuade us to reject the dilemma by discarding the assumption on which it depends.

7. Having diagnosed the dilemma as resting on the mistaken idea that grasping a rule is always an interpretation, Wittgenstein goes on, famously, to say (*PI* §202):

> And hence also 'obeying a rule' is a practice. And to ***think*** one is obeying a rule is not to obey a rule. Hence it not possible to obey a rule 'privately': otherwise thinking one was obeying a rule would be the same thing as obeying it.

Obeying a rule is a practice, as the answer §201 left open.

The diagnosis prompts the question "How can there be a way of grasping a rule which is not an interpretation?", and I think the thesis that obeying a rule is a practice is meant to constitute the answer to this question. That is, what mediates the inference ("hence also") is this thought: we have to realize that obeying a rule is a practice if we are to find it intelligible that there is a way of grasping a rule which is not an interpretation. (The rest of §202—the crystallization into two sentences of the Private Language Argument—is offered as a corollary.)

There is another formulation of the same line of thought in *PI* §198:

> "Then can whatever I do be brought into accord with the rule?"—Let me ask this: what has the expression of a rule—say a sign-post—got to do with my actions? What sort of connexion is there here?—Well, perhaps this one: I have been trained to react to this sign in a particular way, and now I do so react to it.
>
> "But that is only to give a causal connexion: to tell how it has come about that we go by the sign-post; not what this going-by-the-sign really consists in."—On the contrary; I have further indicated that a person goes by a sign-post only in so far as there exists a regular use of sign-posts, a custom.[25]

The sign-post: trained to react, no interpretation in between.

This passage opens with an expression of the paradox formulated in the first paragraph of §201. Then Wittgenstein introduces the case of sign-posts, in order to adumbrate the diagnosis that he is going to state more explicitly in §201. When I follow a sign-post, the connection between it and my action is not mediated by an interpretation of sign-posts that I acquired when I was trained in their use. I simply act as I have been trained to.[26] This prompts an objection, which might be paraphrased on these lines: "Nothing in what you have said shows that what you have described is a case of following a rule; you have only told us how to give a causal explanation of certain bit of (what might as well be for all that you have said) mere behaviour." The reply—which corresponds to the first sentence of §202—is that the training in question is initiation into a custom. If it were not that, then the account of the connection between sign-post and action would indeed look like an account of nothing more than brute movement and its causal explanation; our picture would not contain the materials to entitle us to speak of following (going by) a sign-post.[27]

The reply: training is initiation into a custom.

Now how exactly is this to be understood?

'I obey the rule blindly', and agreement not in opinions.

Wittgenstein's concern is to exorcize the insidious assumption that there must be an interpretation that mediates between an order, or the expression of a rule given in training, on the one hand, and an action in conformity with it, on the other. In his efforts to achieve this, he is led to say such things as "I obey the rule ***blindly***" (*PI* §219). This is of a piece with his repeated insistence that the agreement that is necessary for the notion of following a rule to be applicable is not agreement in opinions:

> "So you are saying that human agreement decides what is true and what is false?"—It is what human beings *say* that is true and false; and

25. I have ventured to change the punctuation in the second paragraph, in order to make the dialectical structure of the passage clearer.

26. Compare *PI* §506: "The absent-minded man who at the order 'Right turn!' turns left, and then, clutching his forehead, says 'Oh! right turn' and does a right turn.—What has struck him? An interpretation?"

27. Compare *RFM* VI-43.

> they agree in the ***language*** they use. That is not agreement in opinions but in form of life. (*PI* §241.)[28]

Bedrock, where the spade is turned (PI §217), and RFM VI-28.

I take it that at least part of the point of this passage is that an opinion is something for which one may reasonably be asked for a justification; whereas what is at issue here is below that level—the "bedrock" where "I have exhausted the justifications" and "my spade is turned" (*PI* §217). The thought is clear in *RFM* VI-28:

> Someone asks me: What is the colour of this flower? I answer: "red".—Are you absolutely sure? Yes, absolutely sure! But may I not have been deceived and called the wrong colour "red"? No. The certainty with which I call the colour "red" is the rigidity of my measuring-rod, it is the rigidity from which I start. When I give descriptions, ***that*** is not to be brought into doubt. This simply characterizes what we call describing.
>
> (I may of course even here assume a slip of the tongue, but nothing else.)
>
> Following according to the rule is FUNDAMENTAL to our language-game. It characterizes what we call description.

Again (*RFM* VI-35):

> How do I know that the colour that I am now seeing is called "green"? Well, to confirm it I might ask other people, but if they did not agree with me, I should become totally confused and should perhaps take them or myself for crazy. That is to say: I should either no longer trust myself to judge, or no longer react to what they say as to a judgement.
>
> If I am drowning and I shout "Help!", how do I know what the word Help means? Well, that's how I react in this situation.—Now ***that*** is how I know what "green" means as well and also know how I have to follow the rule in the particular case.[29]

Using an expression without a justification (PI §289).

What Wittgenstein is trying to describe is a use of language in which what one does is "to use an expression without a justification" (*PI* §289; compare *RFM* VII-40). One may be tempted to protest: when I say "This is green", in the sort of case he envisages, I do have a justification, namely that the thing in question is green.

28. See also *RFM* VI-30, VI-9.

29. With "Well, that's how I react in this situation", compare *PI* §217: ". . . I am inclined to say: 'This is simply what I do.'"

But how can I justify the use of an expression by repeating it? It is thoughts of this sort that lead Wittgenstein to say (*On Certainty* §204):

> Giving grounds, however, justifying the evidence, comes to an end;—but the end is not certain propositions' striking us immediately as true, i.e. it is not a kind of ***seeing*** on our part; it is our ***acting***, which lies at the bottom of the language-game.[30]

The temptation: at bedrock nothing but behaviour and feelings.

Now there is a temptation to understand this on the following lines. At the level of "bedrock" (where justifications have come to an end), there is nothing but verbal behaviour and (no doubt) feelings of constraint. Presumably people's dispositions to behaviour and associated feelings match in interesting ways; but at this ground-floor level there is no question of shared commitments—everything normative fades out of the picture.

Bedrock is Wright's basic level, but §289 adds 'not without right'.

This is the picture of what I called "the basic level" that is yielded, in Wright's reading, by the rejection of ratification-independence (see §5 above). I expressed disbelief that a position in which this is how things are at the basic level can accommodate meaning at all. If it is true that a failure to accommodate meaning is the upshot of the position, then it can be attributed to Wittgenstein only at the price of supposing that he does not succeed in his aims. But we are now equipped to see that the attribution falsifies his intentions. When he describes the "bedrock" use of expressions as "without justification", he nevertheless insists (to complete the quotation from *PI* §289):

> To use an expression without a justification does not mean to use it without right.[31]

And it seems clear that the point of this is precisely to prevent the leaching out of norms from our picture of "bedrock"—from our picture, that is, of how things are at the deepest level at which we may

30. It is worth noting how paradoxical "it is not a kind of seeing" can seem in the case of such uses of language as saying that something is green. For an illuminating discussion of Wittgenstein's stress on acting as "lying at the bottom of the language-game", see Peter Winch, "Im Anfang war die Tat".

31. Or "wrongfully" (*RFM* VII-30). For a discussion of the translation of "zu Unrecht", see Kripke, p. 74, n. 63.

sensibly contemplate the place of language in the world. To quote again from *RFM* VI-28:

> Following according to the rule is FUNDAMENTAL to our language-game.

Digging below norms is the mistake Wittgenstein warns against.

By Wittgenstein's lights, it is a mistake to think we can dig down to a level at which we no longer have application for normative notions (like "following according to the rule"). Wright's picture of the basic level, so far from capturing Wittgenstein's view, looks like a case of succumbing to a temptation that he is constantly warning against:

> The difficult thing here is not, to dig down to the ground; no, it is to recognize the ground that lies before us as the ground. (*RFM* VI-31.)

Scylla and Charybdis, and the middle course by custom or practice.

Wittgenstein's problem is to steer a course between a Scylla and a Charybdis. Scylla is the idea that understanding is always interpretation. This idea is disastrous because embracing it confronts us with the dilemma of §4 above: the choice between the paradox that there is no substance to meaning, on the one hand, and the fantastic mythology of the super-rigid machine, on the other. We can avoid Scylla by stressing that, say, calling something "green" can be like crying "Help!" when one is drowning—simply how one has learned to react to this situation. But then we risk steering on to Charybdis—the picture of a basic level at which there are no norms; if we embrace that, I have suggested, then we cannot prevent meaning from coming to seem an illusion. The point of *PI* §198, and part of the point of §§201–202, is that the key to finding the indispensable middle course is the idea of a custom or practice. How can a performance both be nothing but a "blind" reaction to a situation, not an attempt to act on an interpretation (avoiding Scylla); and be a case of going by a rule (avoiding Charybdis)? The answer is: by belonging to a custom (*PI* §198), practice (*PI* §202), or institution (*RFM* VI-31).

Only a programme for a solution, until practice is explained.

Until more is said about how exactly the appeal to communal practice makes the middle course available, this is only a programme for a solution to Wittgenstein's problem. But even if we were at a loss as to how he might have thought the programme could be executed (and I shall suggest that we need not be: see §§10 and 11 below), this would be no ground for ignoring the clear textual evidence that the programme is Wittgenstein's own.

Kripke's publicity looks the same, but it emerges differently.

8. What I have claimed might be put like this: Wittgenstein's point is that we have to situate our conception of meaning and understanding within a framework of communal practices. Kripke's reading credits Wittgenstein with the thesis that the notion of meaning something by one's words is "inapplicable to a single person considered in isolation" (p. 79). The upshot is similar, then; and it cannot be denied that the insistence on publicity in Kripke's reading corresponds broadly with a Wittgensteinian thought. But it makes a difference how we conceive the requirement of publicity to emerge.

Three positions, and Kripke conflating two of them.

In my reading, it emerges as a condition for the intelligibility of rejecting a premise—the assimilation of understanding to interpretation—that would present us with an intolerable dilemma. So there are three positions in play: the two horns of the dilemma, and the community-oriented conception of meaning that enables us to decline the choice. Kripke conflates two of these, equating the paradox of *PI* §201—the first horn of the dilemma—with Wittgenstein's conclusion; only so can he take it that when Wittgenstein objects to the "superlative fact" of *PI* §192, he is embracing the paradox of §201.[32] But this is quite wrong. The paradox that Wittgenstein formulates at §201 is not, as Kripke supposes, the mere "paradox" that if we consider an individual in isolation, we do not have the means to make sense of the notion of meaning (something we might hope to disarm by appealing to the idea of a linguistic community). It is the genuine and devastating paradox that meaning is an illusion. Focusing on the individual in isolation from any linguistic community is not the way we fall into this abyss; it is, rather, an aspect of the way we struggle not to, so long as we retain the assumption that generates the dilemma. (See §4 above, on the idiolectic implications of the second horn.) The fundamental trouble is that Kripke makes nothing of Wittgenstein's concern to reject the assimilation of understanding to interpretation; and the nemesis of this oversight is the unconvincingness (see §3 above) of the "sceptical solution" on which Kripke's Wittgenstein must rely.

The paradox isn't the mild one about the isolated individual.

9. Kripke suggests (p. 3) that, in the light of *PI* §202, we should take it that the essentials of the Private Language Argument are contained

32. See n. 20 above.

in the general discussion of rule-following, rather than in the section of the *Investigations* that begins at §243, where it has been more usual to look. I cannot accept Kripke's view that the Private Language Argument is a corollary of the "sceptical solution"; but his structural proposal can be detached from that.

Kripke remarks (pp. 79–80) that the lesson of Wittgenstein's reflections on rule-following is particularly counter-intuitive in two areas: mathematics and talk of "inner" facts. This remark is still true after we have corrected Kripke's account of what the lesson is. In the case of mathematics, the difficulty is that we tend to construe the phenomenology of proof as a matter of glimpses of the super-rigid machinery in operation. In the case of talk of "inner" facts, the difficulty lies in the temptation to suppose that one knows what one means from one's own case (*PI* §347). How can one's linguistic community have any bearing on the matter—beyond its control over the circumstances in which one gave oneself one's private ostensive definitions? Kripke's illuminating suggestion is that the passages usually regarded as containing the Private Language Argument are not rightly so regarded; the argument is essentially complete by *PI* §202, and the familiar passages (§§258, 265, 293, and so forth) are attempts to dissipate this inclination to cite talk of "inner" facts as a counter-example to its conclusion.

This implies that whether those familiar passages carry conviction is, in a sense, irrelevant to the cogency of Wittgenstein's argument. If the inclination to regard talk of "inner" facts as a counter-example persists through them, that by itself cuts no ice. And we are now in a position to see what would be needed in order to undermine the argument. One would need to show either that one or the other of the horns of the dilemma can be comfortably occupied, or that it is not the case that the assimilation of understanding to interpretation, which poses the dilemma, can be resisted only by locating meaning in a framework of communal practices.

If the target of Wittgenstein's reflections is the assimilation of understanding to interpretation, we should expect the areas where his conclusion is peculiarly counter-intuitive to be areas where we are strongly inclined to be comfortable with that assimilation. In the mathematical case, we are particularly prone to the assimilation because—as I remarked above—we are especially inclined to accept its natural accompaniment, the picture of the super-rigid machine.

What about talk of "inner" facts? We are strongly tempted, in this context, to think there could be a private grasp of a concept—something by which, for all its privacy, it would make sense to think of judgements and utterances as constrained. What Wittgenstein's argument, as I read it, requires is the diagnosis that we are here toying with the picture of an interpretation (placed by us on a private ostensive definition)—that it is only so that we can contrive to conceive the matter in terms of concepts and judgements at all. It is true that this pictured interpretation does not readily succumb to the softening effect of the sceptical reasoning—"one interpretation after another, as if each one contented us at least for a moment, until we thought of yet another standing behind it" (*PI* §201). We imagine that in this case we can picture an interpretation that stays hard—one that comprehensively bridges the gap between the private ostensive definition and the judgements that we picture it as dictating. But there cannot be exceptions to the thesis that no interpretation can bridge the gap between the acquisition of a concept and its subsequent employment. It is this, I think that Wittgenstein is trying to make vivid for us in the battery of passages of which the following might stand as an epitome:

> Always get rid of the idea of the private object in this way: assume that it constantly changes, but that you do not notice the change because your memory constantly deceives you (*PI* p. 207).[33]

The idea that a private interpretation can be immune to the softening effect must be an illusion. If we conceive such an interpretation as comprehensively filling the gap, whatever the gap turns out to be, we deprive of all substance the hardness that we picture it as having.

Blackburn's question: why not the practice of an individual?

It may be tempting to locate a weakness, in the argument I attribute to Wittgenstein, in the claim that we can steer between Scylla and Charybdis only by appealing to the practice of a community. If it is the notion of a practice that does the work, can we not form a conception of the practice of an individual that would do the trick?[34]

33. See, e.g., *PI* §§258, 265, 270. See Anthony Kenny, "The Verification Principle and the Private Language Argument".

34. Simon Blackburn presses what is in effect this question, in "The Individual Strikes Back".

But if one is tempted by this thought, one must search one's conscience to be sure that what one has in mind is not really, after all, the picture of a private interpretation; in which case one is not, after all, steering between Scylla and Charybdis, but resigning oneself to Scylla, leaving oneself fully vulnerable to the line of argument that I have just sketched.[35]

Wright's hinge conditional: patterns mean no knowing others' meaning.

10. Wright's reading of Wittgenstein hinges on this conditional: if possession of a concept were correctly conceived as grasp of a (ratification-independent) pattern, then there would be no knowing for sure how someone else understands an expression. This conditional underlies Wright's conviction that, when we entertain the "pattern" idea,

> . . . the kind of reflective grasp of meaning appealed to is essentially *idiolectic*—it is a matter of each of us discerning the character of his own understanding of expressions. There is no temptation to claim a reflective knowledge of features of *others'* understanding of a particular expression—except against the background of the hypothesis that it coincides with one's own.[36]

The modus tollens: idiolectic knowledge is an illusion.

We can summarize Wright's reading by saying that he takes Wittgenstein to propound a *modus tollens* argument with the conditional as major premise. Thus: the idea of knowledge of idiolectic meaning is an illusion; therefore possession of a concept cannot be correctly conceived as grasp of a (ratification-independent) pattern.

Both premises rest on anti-realism's manifestation thesis.

The basis of this argument is, as Wright points out, "the fundamental anti-realist thesis that we have understanding only of concepts of which we can distinctively manifest our understanding" (p. 221). Wright would ground both premises of the *modus tollens* argument on anti-realism. The justification for the minor premise (see §2 above) is that the picture of an idiolectic rule makes no room for a distinction between actually conforming and merely having the impression that one is conforming. In Wright's reading the thought

35. In this section I have aimed to describe only the *structure* of the Private Language Argument. A fuller account of how it works would require, in addition, discharging the unfinished business noted at the end of §7 above. See especially §11 below.

36. Wright, *Wittgenstein on the Foundations of Mathematics*, p. 354. A footnote adds: "Or with one's understanding of another specified expression."

here is an anti-realist one: that in an idiolectic context one could not distinctively manifest—not even with a manifestation to oneself—a difference in one's understanding of "I am actually conforming" and "I have the impression of conforming".[37] What underlies the major premise—the conditional—is the anti-realist conception of what it is to manifest understanding to others.

Manifesting understanding to others, without command of the language.

According to that conception, the behaviour that counts as manifesting understanding to others must be characterizable, in such a way as to display its status as such a manifestation, without benefit of a command of the language in question. Without that proviso, the "manifestation challenge" that anti-realists direct against the truth-conditional conception of meaning would be trivialized.[38] The challenge would hold no fears for the truth-conditional conception if one were allowed to count as satisfying the requirement of manifestation by such behaviour as saying—manifestly, at least to someone who understands the language one is speaking—that such-and-such is the case. So the distinctive manifestations allowed by anti-realism consist, rather, in such behaviour as assenting to a sentence in such-and-such circumstances.[39]

Now what—besides itself—could be fully manifested by a piece of behaviour, or a series of pieces of behaviour, described in accordance with the anti-realist requirement?[40] Perhaps the behaviour would license us to attribute a disposition; but how can we extrapolate to a determinate conception of what the disposition is a disposition to do? Our characterization of the manifesting behaviour is not allowed to exploit understanding of the language in question; so even if, in

37. This is how Wright thinks the Private Language Argument is to be understood. Note that the requirement of manifestation is not initially imposed, in this line of thought, as a requirement of *public* manifestation. We are supposed to be brought to see that public manifestation is what is required in consequence of an independent (non-question-begging) critique of the idea of idiolectic understanding. On the structure of Wright's reading, see §14 below.

38. For the terminology "manifestation challenge", see Wright, "Realism, Truth-Value Links, Other Minds and the Past", pp. 112–3. For the substance of the challenge, see, e.g., Dummett, *Frege: Philosophy of Language*, p. 467.

39. It is actually an illusion to think that this kind of characterization of behaviour conforms to the anti-realist requirement: see my "Anti-Realism and the Epistemology of Understanding". But in the course of arguing, as I am, that the programme is misconceived in principle, there is no point in jibbing at the details of its purported execution.

40. For "fully" see Dummett, *Frege: Philosophy of Language*, p. 467.

Only inductive extrapolation, so no grasp of a network of patterns.

our innocence, we start out by conceiving that as grasp of "a network of determinate patterns",[41] we are debarred from extrapolating along the pathways of the network. It seems clear that within the rules of this game any extrapolation could only be inductive, which means that if we accept the requirement that understanding be fully manifested in behaviour, no extrapolation is licensed at all. The upshot is this: the anti-realist requirement of manifestation precludes any conception of understanding as grasp of a network of patterns. And this is precisely the conclusion Wright draws.[42]

Norms obliterated, and the norm-free picture claims primacy.

The obstacle to accepting this argument is the normative character of the notion of meaning. As I have granted, Wright aims to accommodate that: he would insist that his conclusion is not that concepts have no normative status, but that the patterns they dictate are not independent of our ratification. But the trouble is (see §§5 and 7) that the denial of ratification-independence, by Wright's own insistence, yields a picture of the relation between the communal language and the world in which norms are obliterated. And once we have this picture, it seems impossible simply to retain alongside it a different picture, in which the openness of an individual to correction by his fellows means that he is subject to norms. The first picture irresistibly claims primacy, leaving our openness to correction by our fellows looking like, at best, an explanation of our propensity to the illusion that we are subject to norms. If this is correct, it turns

41. Wright, *Wittgenstein on the Foundations of Mathematics*, p. 220.

42. At least in *Wittgenstein on the Foundations of Mathematics*. Contrast "Strawson on Anti-Realism", p. 294: ". . . supppose [someone] has this knowledge: of every state of affairs criterially warranting the assertion, or denial, of 'John is in pain', he knows in a practical sense both that it has that status and under what conditions it would be brought out that its status was merely criterial; that is, he knows the 'overturn-conditions' of any situation criterially warranting the assertion, or denial, of 'John is in pain'. *No doubt we could not know for sure* that someone had this knowledge; but the stronger our grounds for thinking that he did, the more baffling would be the allegation that he did not grasp the assertoric content of 'John is in pain'." (My emphasis.) Here Wright contemplates maintaining a version (formulated in terms of criteria) of the idea that understanding is grasp of a pattern of use, and accordingly opts—as his overall position indeed requires—for the other horn of this dilemma: the thesis, namely, that one cannot have certain knowledge of the character of someone else's understanding. What is remarkable is Wright's insouciance about this move: it openly flouts the fundamental motivation of anti-realism, which is what Wright is supposed to be defending against Strawson in the passage I have quoted. It seems clear that the contrasting position of *Wittgenstein on the Foundations of Mathematics* is the only one an anti-realist can consistently occupy.

Wright's argument on its head: a condition for the possibility of finding real application for the notion of meaning at all is that we reject anti-realism.

The transcendental argument, 'fully cogent' but needing a supplement.

I think this transcendental argument against anti-realism is fully cogent. But it is perhaps unlikely to carry conviction unless supplemented with a satisfying account of how anti-realism goes wrong. (Providing this supplementation will help to discharge the unfinished business that I noted at the end of §7.)

Anti-realism's recoil from hidden meaning, keeping the surface.

11. According to anti-realism, people's sharing a language is constituted by appropriate correspondences in their dispositions to linguistic behaviour, as characterized without drawing on command of the language, and hence not in terms of the contents of their utterances. The motivation for this thesis is admirable: a recoil from the idea that assigning a meaning to an utterance by a speaker of one's language is forming a hypothesis about something concealed behind the surface of his linguistic behaviour. But there are two possible directions in which this recoil might move one. One—the anti-realist direction—is to retain the conception of the surface that makes the idea natural, and resolutely attempt to locate meaning on the surface, so conceived. That this attempt fails is the conclusion of the transcendental argument. The supplementation that the argument needs is to point out the availability of the alternative direction: namely, to reject the conception of the surface that anti-realism shares with the position it recoils from. According to this different view, the outward aspect of linguistic behaviour—what a speaker makes available to others—must be characterized in terms of the contents of utterances (the thoughts they express). Of course such an outward aspect cannot be conceived as made available to just anyone; command of the language is needed in order to put one in direct cognitive contact with that in which someone's meaning consists.[43] (This might seem to represent command of the language as a mysterious sort of X-ray vision; but only in the context of the rejected conception of the surface.)

The other direction: reject the surface, and the X-ray worry.

Wittgenstein warns us not to try to dig below "bedrock". But it is difficult, in reading him, to avoid acquiring a sense of what, as it

43. See my "Anti-Realism and the Epistemology of Understanding".

were, lies down there: a web of facts about behaviour and "inner" episodes, describable without using the notion of meaning. One is likely to be struck by the sheer contingency of the resemblances between individuals on which, in this vision, the possibility of meaning seems to depend, and hence impressed by an apparent precariousness in our making sense of one another.[44] There is an authentic insight here, but one that is easily distorted; correcting the distortion will help to bring out what is wrong with the anti-realist construal of Wittgenstein.

The distorted version of the insight can be put as a dilemma, on these lines. Suppose that, in claiming a "reflective knowledge" of the principle of application of some expression, I claim to speak for others as well as myself. In that case my claim (even if restricted to a definitely specified other: say my interlocutor in a particular conversation) is indefinitely vulnerable to the possibility of an unfavourable future. Below "bedrock" there is nothing but contingency; so at any time in the future my interlocutor's use of the expression in question may simply stop conforming to the pattern that I expect. And that would retrospectively undermine my present claim to be able to vouch for the character of his understanding. So I can claim to know his pattern now only "against the background of the hypothesis that it coincides with [my] own".[45] If, then, we retain the conception of understanding as grasp of patterns, the feeling of precariousness becomes the idea that what we think of as a shared language is at best a set of corresponding idiolects, with our grounds for believing in the correspondence no better than inductive. The only alternative—the other horn of the dilemma—is, with Wright, to give up the conception of understanding as grasp of (ratification-independent) patterns. This turns the feeling of precariousness into the idea that I cannot know for sure that my interlocutor and I will continue to march in step. But on this horn my present claim to understand him is not undermined by that concession: my understanding him now is a matter of our being in step now, and does not require a shared pattern extending into the future.

44. See *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language,* p. 97; compare Cavell, *Must We Mean What We Say?,* p. 52, and Essay 10 above.

45. Wright, *Wittgenstein on the Foundations of Mathematics,* p. 354.

What is wrong with this, in Wittgensteinian terms, is that it conflates propositions at (or above) "bedrock" with propositions about the contingencies that lie below. (See, for instance, *RFM* VI-49.) Its key thought is that, if I claim to know someone else's pattern, I bind myself to a prediction of the uses of language that he will make in various possible future circumstances, with these uses characterized in sub-"bedrock" terms. (That is why coming to see the contingency of the resemblances, at this level, on which meaning rests is supposed to induce appreciation that knowledge of another person's pattern could at best be inductive.) But when I claim understanding of someone else, and construe this as knowledge of the patterns to which his present utterance owes allegiance, what I claim to know is not that in such-and-such circumstances he will do so and so, but rather at most that that is what he will do if he sticks to his patterns.[46] And that is not a prediction at all. (Compare *RFM* VI-15.)

It is true that a certain disorderliness below "bedrock" would undermine the applicability of the notion of rule-following. So the underlying contingencies bear an intimate relation to the notion of rule-following—a relation that Wittgenstein tries to capture by saying "It is as if we had hardened the empirical proposition into a rule" (*RFM* VI-22). But recognizing the intimate relation must not be allowed to obscure the difference of levels.[47] If we respect the difference of levels, what we make of the feeling of precariousness will be as follows. When I understand another person, I know the rules he is going by.

46. Even this is too much. It passes muster where the "pattern" idea is least metaphorical, namely in the case of continuation of a series. But in the general case, the idea of a corpus of determinate predictions to which a claim of present understanding would commit one is absurd. (See n. 4 above.) The point I am making here is a version of one that Rush Rhees makes, in terms of a distinction between the general practice of linguistic behaviour and the following of rules, at pp. 55–6 of "Can There Be a Private Language?". It disarms, as an objection to Wittgenstein, the insightful remarks of Jerry A. Fodor, *The Language of Thought,* pp. 71–2.

47. The difference of levels is the subject of Wittgenstein's remarks about "the limits of empiricism": *RFM* III-71, VII-17, VII-21. (The source of the phrase is Russell's paper of that name.) See Wright, *Wittgenstein on the Foundations of Mathematics,* p. 220. I think the point of the remarks is, very roughly, that empiricism can deal only with what is below "bedrock"; the limits of empiricism (which "are not assumptions unguaranteed, or intuitively known to be correct: they are ways in which we make comparisons and in which we act": *RFM* VII-21, compare *On Certainty* §204, quoted in §7 above) lie above it (outside its reach), at "bedrock" level. Wright, by contrast, seems to interpret the passages as if Wittgenstein's view were that for all its limits empiricism contained the truth.

My right to claim to understand him is precarious, in that nothing but a tissue of contingencies stands in the way of my losing it. But to envisage its loss is not necessarily to envisage its turning out that I never had the right at all. The difference of levels suffices to drive a wedge between these; contrast the second horn of the above dilemma, on which inserting the wedge requires abandonment of the idea that mutual understanding is mutual knowledge of shared commitments.[48]

Anti-realists hold that initiation into a common language consists in acquisition of linguistic propensities describable without use of the notion of meaning. They thereby perpetrate exactly the conflation of levels against which Wittgenstein warns; someone's following a rule, according to anti-realism, is constituted by the obtaining of resemblances, describable in sub-"bedrock" terms, between his behaviour and that of his fellows. Not that anti-realists would put it like that: it is another way of making the same point to say that they locate "bedrock" lower than it is—not accommodating the fact that "following according to the rule is FUNDAMENTAL to our language-game" (*RFM* VI-28; see §7 above). If, by contrast, we satisfy the motivation of anti-realism in the different way that I distinguished above, then we refuse to countenance sub-"bedrock" (meaning-free) characterizations of what meaning something by one's words consists in, and thus respect Wittgenstein's distinction of levels.

A different conception of community: not matching exteriors.

We make possible, moreover, a radically different conception of what it is to belong to a linguistic community. Anti-realists picture a community as a collection of individuals presenting to one another exteriors that match in certain respects. They hope to humanize this bleak picture by claiming that what meaning consists in lies on those exteriors as they conceive them. But the transcendental argument reveals this hope as vain. A related thought is this: if regularities in the verbal behaviour of an isolated individual, described in norm-free terms, do not add up to meaning, it is quite obscure how it could somehow make all the difference if there are several individuals with

48. Christopher Peacocke, at p. 88 of "Rule-Following: The Nature of Wittgenstein's Arguments", implies that statements about rule-following *supervene*, in Wittgenstein's view, on sub-"bedrock" statements. There may be an acceptable interpretation of this; but on the most natural interpretation, it would make statements about rule-following vulnerable to future loss of mutual intelligibility in just the way I am objecting to.

matching regularities.[49] The picture of a linguistic community degenerates, then, under anti-realist assumptions, into a picture of a mere aggregate of individuals whom we have no convincing reason not to conceive as opaque to one another. If, on the other hand, we reject the anti-realist restriction on what counts as manifesting one's understanding, we entitle ourselves to this thought: shared membership in a linguistic community is not just a matter of matching in aspects of an exterior that we present to anyone whatever, but equips us to make our minds available to one another, by confronting one another with a different exterior from that which we present to outsiders.

Aggregate of opaque individuals, or minds made available.

Wittgenstein's problem was to explain how understanding can be other than interpretation (see §7 above). This non-anti-realist conception of a linguistic community gives us a genuine right to the following answer: shared command of a language equips us to know one another's meaning without needing to arrive at that knowledge by interpretation, because it equips us to hear someone else's meaning in his words. Anti-realists would claim this right too, but the claim is rendered void by the merely additive upshot of their picture of what it is to share a language. In the different picture I have described, the response to Wittgenstein's problem works because a linguistic community is conceived as bound together, not by a match in mere externals (facts accessible to just anyone), but by a capacity for a meeting of minds.

Hearing a speaker's meaning in his words: a meeting of minds.

When we had no more than an abstract characterization of Wittgenstein's response, as an appeal to the notion of communal

49. Blackburn writes ("Rule-Following and Moral Realism", p. 183): ". . . we can become gripped by what I call a *wooden* picture of the use of language, according to which the only fact of the matter is that in certain situations people use words, perhaps with various feelings like 'that fits', and so on. This wooden picture makes no room for the further fact that in applying or withholding a word people may be conforming to a pre-existent rule. But just because of this, it seems to make no room for the idea that in using their words they are expressing judgments. Wittgenstein must have felt that publicity, the fact that others do the same, was the magic ingredient turning the wooden picture into the full one. It is most obscure to me that it fills this role: a lot of wooden persons with propensities to make noises is just more of whatever one of them is." It will be apparent that I have a great deal of sympathy with this complaint. Where I believe Blackburn goes wrong is in thinking it tells against Wittgenstein himself, as opposed to the position that Wittgenstein has been saddled with by a certain set of interpreters (among whom I did not intend to enrol myself in Essay 10 above, the paper to which Blackburn is responding).

Why the practice must be communal, answering Blackburn.

practice, there seemed to be justice in this query: if the concept of a communal practice can magic meaning into our picture, should not this power be credited to the concept of a practice as such—so that the practice of an individual might serve just as well? (See §7 above.) But if Wittgenstein's position is the one I have described in this section, it is precisely the notion of a *communal* practice that is needed, and not some notion that could equally be applied outside the context of a community. The essential point is the way in which one person can know another's meaning without interpretation. Contrary to Wright's reading, it is only because we *can* have what Wright calls "a reflective knowledge of features of *others'* understanding of a particular expression"[50] that meaning is possible at all.[51]

The picture of genuine truth as an exercise of pure thought.

12. Wittgenstein's reflections on rule-following attack a certain familiar picture of facts and truth, which I shall formulate like this. A genuine fact must be a matter of the way things are in themselves, utterly independently of us. So a genuinely true judgement must be, at least potentially, an exercise of pure thought; if human nature is necessarily implicated in the very formation of the judgement, that precludes our thinking of the corresponding fact as properly independent of us, and hence as a proper fact at all.[52]

The supposition that meanings take care of themselves.

We can find this picture of genuine truth compelling only if we either forget that truth-bearers are such only because they are meaningful, or suppose that meanings take care of themselves, needing, as it were, no help from us. This latter supposition is the one that is relevant to our concerns. If we make it, we can let the judging subject, in our picture of true judgement, shrink to a locus of pure thought,

50. *Wittgenstein on the Foundations of Mathematics*, p. 354.

51. If I am right to suppose that any merely aggregative conception of a linguistic community falsifies Wittgenstein, then it seems that the parallel Kripke draws with Hume's discussion of causation (independently proposed by Blackburn, "Rule-Following and Moral Realism", pp. 182–3) is misconceived. Wittgenstein's picture of language contains no conception of the individual such as would correspond to the individual cause-effect pair, related only by contiguity and succession, in Hume's picture of causation.

52. The later Wittgenstein may have (perhaps unjustly) found a form of this picture in the *Tractatus*. On the relation between the later work and the *Tractatus*, see Peter Winch, "Introduction: The Unity of Wittgenstein's Philosophy", especially the very illuminating discussion at pp. 9–15.

while the fact that judging is a human activity fades into insignificance.

A judgement answers to a concept's constraints, a communal custom.

Now Wittgenstein's reflections on rule-following undermine this picture by undermining the supposition that meanings take care of themselves. A particular performance, "inner" or overt, can be an application of a concept—a judgement or a meaningful utterance—only if it owes allegiance to constraints that the concept imposes. And being governed by such constraints is not being led, in some occult way, by an autonomous meaning (the super-rigid machinery), but acting within a communal custom. The upshot is that if something matters for one's being a participant in the relevant customs, it matters equally for one's being capable of making any judgements at all. We have to give up that picture of genuine truth, in which the maker of a true judgement can shrink to a point of pure thought, abstracted from anything that might make him distinctively and recognizably one of us.

A realism in two senses: universals, and facts not up to us.

It seems right to regard that familiar picture as a kind of realism. It takes meaning to be wholly autonomous (one is tempted to say "out there"); this is reminiscent of realism as the term is used in the old debate about universals. And it embraces an extreme form of the thesis that the facts are not up to us; this invites the label "realism" understood in a way characteristic of more recent debates. But if we allow ourselves to describe the recoil from the familiar picture as a recoil from realism, there are two points that we must be careful not to let this obscure.

First caveat: not a recoil from truth-conditions, the diamonds example.

First: the recoil has nothing to do with rejection of the truth-conditional conception of meaning, properly understood. That conception has no need to camouflage the fact that truth-conditions are necessarily given by us, in a language that we understand. When we say "'Diamonds are hard' is true if and only if diamonds are hard", we are just as much involved on the right-hand side as the reflections on rule-following tell us we are. There is a standing temptation to miss this obvious truth, and to suppose that the right-hand side somehow presents us with a possible fact, pictured as a unconceptualized configuration of things in themselves. But we can find the connection between meaning and truth illuminating without succumbing to that temptation.

Second: the recoil is from an extreme form of the thesis that the facts are not up to us, not from that thesis in any form whatever.

The middle position, without platonistic autonomy.

What Wittgenstein's polemic against the picture of the super-rigid machine makes untenable is the thesis that possessing a concept is grasping a pattern of application that extends *of itself* to new cases. (See §4 above.) In Wright's reading, that is the same as saying that it deprives us of the conception of grasp of ratification-independent patterns. But rejection of ratification-independence obliterates meaning altogether (see §§5, 7, 10 above). In effect, the transcendental argument shows that there *must* be a middle position. Understanding is grasping patterns that extend to new cases independently of our ratification, as is required for meaning to be other than an illusion (and—not incidentally—for the intuitive notion of objectivity to have a use); but the constraints imposed by our concepts do not have the platonistic autonomy with which they are credited in the picture of the super-rigid machinery.

Calling a new object 'yellow': the community goes right or wrong.

As before (compare §11 above), what obscures the possibility of this position is the "anti-realist" attempt to get below "bedrock". Wright suggests that the emergence of a consensus on whether, say, to call some newly encountered object "yellow" is subject to no norms. That is indeed how it seems if we allow ourselves to picture the communal language in terms of sub-"bedrock" resemblances in behaviour and phenomenology. But if we respect Wittgenstein's injunction not to dig below the ground, we must say that the community "goes right or wrong" according to whether the object in question is, or is not, *yellow;* and nothing can make its being yellow, or not, dependent on our ratification of the judgement that that is how things are. In Wittgenstein's eyes, as I read him, Wright's claim that "for the community itself there is no authority, so no standard to meet" can be, at very best, an attempt to say something that cannot be said but only shown. It may have some merit, conceived in that light; but attributing it to Wittgenstein as a doctrine can yield only distortion.

Wittgenstein writes, at *RFM* II-61:

> Finitism and behaviourism are quite similar trends. Both say, but surely, all we have here is. . . . Both deny the existence of something, **both with a view to escaping from a confusion.**[53]

53. Kripke discusses this passage at pp. 106–7; but I believe his attribution to Wittgenstein of the "sceptical paradox" and the "sceptical solution" prevents him from fully appreciating its point.

The point about finitism is this. It recoils, rightly, from the mythology of the super-rigid machinery—the patterns that extend of themselves, without limit, beyond any point we take them to. But it equates this recoil with rejecting any conception of patterns that extend, without limit, beyond any such point. This is like the behaviourist idea that in order to escape from the confused idea of the mental as essentially concealed from others behind behaviour, we have to reject the mental altogether. The idealism that Wright reads into Wittgenstein seems to be another similar trend. (Clearly the remark does not applaud the trends it discusses.)

13. In this section I want to mention two sets of passages in Wittgenstein of which we are now placed to make better sense than Wright can.

First: in Wright's reading, the "pattern" idea is inextricably connected with the picture of idiolectic understanding. But this does not seem to be how Wittgenstein sees things. Wittgenstein does not scruple to say that a series "is defined . . . by the training in proceeding according to the rule" (*RFM* VI-16). And at *Zettel* §308 he writes:

> Instead of "and so on" he might have said: "Now you know what I mean." And his explanation would simply be a *definition* of the expression "following the rule +1" . . .

Again, *PI* §208 and the remarks that follow it contain a sustained attack on the idea that successfully putting someone through the sort of training that is meant to "point beyond" the examples given (see §208) is getting him "to *guess* the essential thing" (*PI* §210). For Wright, when these passages reject the picture of a leap to a personal understanding, they should be *eo ipso* rejecting the "pattern" idea. But Wittgenstein combines criticism of the "leap" picture with conceding (§209) how natural it is to think of our understanding as reaching beyond all the examples given. (Wright would construe this concession in terms of his purged version of the "pattern" idea. But we can make sense of what Wittgenstein says without saddling him with the problems generated by denial of ratification-independence.)

Second: Wittgenstein sometimes (for instance at *PI* §151) discusses the idea that one can grasp the principle of a series, or a meaning, "in a flash". Wright suggests that the idea of this "flash" can be

nothing but the idea of a leap to a purely personal understanding.[54] But I see no reason to accept that Wittgenstein intends this identification. In fact, the suggestion casts a gratuitous slur on his phenomenological perceptiveness. The idea that the meaning of an expression can be present in an instant is just as tempting about someone else's meaning as it is about one's own; and Wittgenstein is perfectly aware of this:

> **When someone says the word "cube" to me, for example, I know what it means. But can the whole *use* of the word come before my mind, when I *understand* it in that way? (*PI* §139; compare §138.)**

Wright's view must be that the intended answer to this question is "No"—that Wittgenstein intends to show up as an illusion the idea that one can grasp someone else's pattern in a flash. But the only illusion that Wright explains to us in this neighbourhood is the illusion of supposing that one could have an idiolectic grasp of a pattern. So Wright's Wittgenstein owes us something for which we search the writings of the actual Wittgenstein in vain: an explanation of how it is that we not only fall into that illusion but misconceive its character—mistaking what is in fact the supposition that we can guess at someone else's pattern for (what seems on the face of it very different) the supposition that we can hear it in his utterances.

We are now placed to see that this latter supposition is not, in Wittgenstein's view, an illusion at all. "Grasping the whole use in a flash" is not to be dismissed as expressing an incorrigibly confused picture—the picture of a leap to an idiolectic understanding—but to be carefully understood in the light of the thesis that there is a way of grasping a rule which is not an interpretation. In that light, we can see that there is nothing wrong with the idea that one can grasp in a flash the principle of a series one is being taught; and equally that there is nothing wrong with the idea that one can hear someone else's meaning in his words. The "interpretation" prejudice insidiously tempts us to put a fantastic mythological construction on these conceptions; the right response to that is not to abandon the conception but to exorcize the "interpretation" prejudice and so return them to sobriety. ("Really the only thing wrong with what you say is the expression 'in a queer way'": *PI* §195.)

54. *Wittgenstein on the Foundations of Mathematics*, pp. 30–1.

At *PI* §534, Wittgenstein writes:

> Hearing a word in a particular sense. How queer that there should be such a thing!
>
> Phrased *like this*, emphasized like this, heard in this way, this sentence is the first of a series in which a transition is made to *these* sentences, pictures, actions.
>
> ((A multitude of familiar paths leads off from these words in every direction.))[55]

What are these "familiar paths"? Presumably, for instance, continuations of the conversation that would make sense: not, then, "patterns" in precisely the sense with which we have been concerned (which would be, as these paths would not, cases of "going on doing the same thing"), but they raise similar issues. Suppose that, in describing a series of utterances that in fact constitutes an intelligible conversation, we conform to the anti-realist account of how meaning must be manifested. We shall have to describe each member of the series without drawing on command of the language in question. Such a description will blot out the relations of meaning between the members of the series, in virtue of which it constitutes an intelligible conversation; what is left will be, at best, a path that one could trace out inductively (whether predicting or retrodicting).[56] Wright's demonstration that anti-realism cannot countenance ratification-independent patterns should work for these "familiar paths" too. An anti-realist cannot extrapolate, from what is done in his presence on an occasion, along paths marked out by meaning; and inductive extrapolation is against the rule that we must restrict ourselves to what is fully manifested in linguistic behaviour. It is obscure to me what

55. The last sentence is quoted from *PI* §525. A related passage is *PI* II.xi: the connection between the topics of seeing an aspect and "experiencing the meaning of a word" is drawn explicitly at pp. 214, 215.

56. At pp. 130–1 of "What Is a Theory of Meaning? (II)", Dummett writes: "We do not expect, nor should we want, to achieve a deterministic theory of meaning for a language, even one which is deterministic only in principle: we should not expect to be able to give a theory from which, together with all other relevant conditions (the physical environment of a speaker, the utterances of other speakers, etc.), we could predict the exact utterances of any one speaker, any more than, by a study of the rules and strategy of a game, we expect to be able to predict actual play." But in the context of the anti-realist restriction, all that this can mean is that we must content ourselves with weaker relations of the same general kind (inductively traceable, not meaning-dependent) as those that would be involved in a theory of the deterministic sort we are to renounce.

interpretation of the passage I have quoted is available to Wright. What seems to be the case is that anti-realism, by, in effect, looking for "bedrock" lower than it is, blocks off the obvious and surely correct reading: that hearing a word in one sense rather than another is hearing it in one position rather than another in the network of possible patterns of making sense that we learn to find ourselves in when we acquire mastery of a language.

14. We can centre the issue between Wright's reading and mine on this question: how does Wittgenstein's insistence on publicity emerge? In my reading, the answer is this: it emerges as a condition of the possibility of rejecting the assimilation of understanding to interpretation, which poses an intolerable dilemma. In Wright's reading, the answer is this: it emerges as the only alternative left, after the notion of idiolectic understanding has been scotched by a self-contained argument that is epitomized by this passage (*PI* §258):

> . . . One would like to say: whatever is going to seem right to me is right. And that only means that here we can't talk about "right".

Wright takes the thought here to be an anti-realist one, to the effect that the distinction between being right and seeming right is shown to be empty, in the idiolectic case, by the impossibility of manifesting a grasp of it, even to oneself. (See §10 above.) Given this, I suppose Wright takes it that sheer consistency requires construing the appeal to the community, shown to be obligatory by virtue of being the only remaining possibility, in an anti-realist way.

Now it is true that the idiolectic conception of understanding is a corollary of the second horn of the dilemma. (See §4 above.) So my reading need not exclude a self-contained argument against that idea, constituting part of the demonstration that the dilemma is intolerable. On such a view, the insistence on publicity would emerge twice over: first as a direct implication of the self-contained argument, and second, indirectly, as required by the rejection of the dilemma. In fact I think this complexity is unnecessary. Wittgenstein has plenty to say against the second horn of the dilemma—the picture of the super-rigid machine—without needing, for his case against it and therefore against accepting the dilemma, the envisaged self-contained argument against this corollary. And I have explained

(in §9 above) how passages like the one I quoted above from *PI* §258, which Wright takes as formulations of the self-contained argument, are intelligible in the context of the second, indirect route to the requirement of publicity. But the real flaw in Wright's reading, in my view, is not that it countenances the first route, but that it omits the second. Like Kripke (see §8 above), Wright makes nothing of Wittgenstein's concern—which figures at the centre of my reading—to attack the assimilation of understanding to interpretation.

This oversight shows itself in Wright's willingness to attribute the following line of thought to Wittgenstein:

> . . . the investigation-independent truth of statements requires that their truth is settled, autonomously and without the need of human interference, by their meanings and the character of the relevant facts. For a complex set of reasons, however, no notion of meaning can be legitimised which will play this role . . . the meaning of a statement, if it is to make the relevant autonomous contribution towards determining that statement's truth-value, cannot be thought of as fully determined by previous uses of that statement or, if it is a novel statement, by previous uses of its constituents and by its syntax; for those factors can always be reconciled with the statement's having any truth-value, no matter what the worldly facts are taken to be. The same goes for prior phenomenological episodes—imagery, models—in the minds of the linguistically competent. Nothing, therefore, in the previous use of the statement, or of its constituents, or in the prior streams of consciousness of competent speakers, is, if its meaning is in conjunction with the facts to determine its truth-value, sufficient to fix its meaning. So what does?[57]

This is essentially the argument that generates the paradox of *PI* §201; and it can be attributed to Wittgenstein only at the cost of ignoring, like Kripke, that section's second paragraph.

The result of the oversight is that, whereas Wittgenstein's key thought is that the dilemma must be avoided, Wright's reading leaves the dilemma unchallenged. Wittgenstein obviously attacks the

57. "Strict Finitism", p. 250. Note also *Wittgenstein on the Foundations of Mathematics*, p. 22, where Wright identifies the second speaker in the dialogue of *RFM* I-113 ("However many rules you give me—I give a rule which justifies *my* employment of your rules") with Wittgenstein himself; and p. 216 (a passage I quoted in §2 above), where it is the susceptibility of all explanations to unintended *interpretations* that is said to push us into the idea of understanding as essentially idiolectic.

Wright lands on the first horn, against his own intentions.

second horn of the dilemma—the picture of the super-rigid machinery. The consequence of leaving the dilemma unchallenged is thus to locate Wittgenstein on its first horn—embracing the paradox of §201. This disastrous upshot does not, of course, correspond to Wright's *intentions* in his interpretation of Wittgenstein. (Contrast Kripke, who can be content to attribute acceptance of the paradox of §201 to Wittgenstein because he misses its devastating character.) Nevertheless, it is where his reading leaves us (see §§5, 7, 10 above): a fitting nemesis for its inattention to Wittgenstein's central concern.

The villain: the anti-realist conception of knowing others.

The villain of the piece—what makes it impossible for Wright to accommodate Wittgenstein's insistence that understanding need not be interpretation—is the anti-realist conception of our knowledge of others. (See §§11 and 12 above. Contrary to what, at the beginning of this section, I took Wright to suppose, the cogency of a passage like *PI* §258, against the picture of idiolectic understanding, is quite unconnected with the anti-realist view of what it is to manifest understanding to others.) From Wright's reading, then, we can learn something important: that there cannot be a position that is both anti-realist and genuinely hospitable to meaning, and that the construal of Wittgenstein as the source of anti-realism, often nowadays taken for granted, is a travesty.

No position both anti-realist and hospitable to meaning.

Part III

Realism piecemeal