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The Meaning That Matters

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ABSTRACT

This paper looks at Kripke's interpretation of *Philosophical Investigations*. First, we begin with a picture of the world. An individual uses their awareness of *physical* and *non-physical* things to discover *meaning* in the world. Once an individual is aware of *meaning*, they understand an *accordance*. Individuals talk about their *meaning* of *accordances* and, through their use of language, come to *agree*. Then, this paper investigates an example, introduced by Wittgenstein, that captures his *paradox*. The section after that uses Kripke's interpretation of the *paradox* to make it more concise. The *paradox*, as written by both Wittgenstein and Kripke, claims that there is no fact about an individual determining whether their current *meaning accords* with their past *meaning*. Kripke offers the solution of *agreement*; an individual remembers what they have previously learned as their community's *agreement* to check whether their current *meaning accords* with their past *meaning*. We end our observation of Kripke's interpretation with his private language argument. Kripke's private language argument claims that an individual cannot *mean* anything other than what their community *agrees* with and, thus, that the concept resulting from the phrase "private language" is a semantic contradiction. I argue that the private language argument does nothing more than claim that the phrase "private language" cannot exist; the resulting concept can exist but requires different phrasing to capture its *meaning*. A "private behavior" or "private frame of reference" does not require *agreement* to exist and, additionally, does not create a semantic contradiction.

I will be introducing my interpretation of Kripke's *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*. In that book, Saul Kripke offers his view of Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*. So, I will be offering my interpretation of Kripke's interpretation. First, we will develop a picture of the world. Then, we will use this picture to observe Wittgenstein's *paradox*, which we make concise using Kripke's interpretation. The *paradox* questions whether an individual's current *meaning* is the same as their past *meaning*. Kripke answers by saying that individuals use *agreement* to determine whether their current *meaning* is the same as their past *meaning*.

Regarding Kripke's solution of *agreement*, we will find worries suggesting that Kripke's view diverges from Wittgenstein's work. These worries show us that Kripke's take on the private language argument goes further than it should; while Wittgenstein claims that the phrase "*private* language" results in semantic contradiction, Kripke takes it further by saying that the concept of the phrase "*private* language" is impossible. But while the meaning of "*private* language" may be an impossible concept, the meaning of "*private* behavior" and "*private* frame of reference" are not. This leads us to assert that his interpretation should be revised. My thesis is that it is possible for each of us, as individuals, to have a concept of a *private* thought process. "*Private* language" just might not be the correct phrase for the concept.

I. A PICTURE OF THE WORLD

Let's begin with a picture of the world. (It could also be called a picture of everything.)

A. Things

As it is ordinarily used, the word "physical"[1] refers to things that can be pointed to. For example, suppose you are on a stroll, wandering along a river. You see a tree. You can point to the wavering waters along the river; they are "physical". Or you can point to the tree, a bush, those flowers, a duck, some geese, fish, and so on; they are all "physical" things too. In the next paragraph, I suggest that *physical* things will be clarified when we add another condition to the phrase "can be pointed to".

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1.   Quotation marks signify that the words within them are either spoken or written language.

A *physical* thing can be pointed to but cannot be contained within a mind's experiences of non-perceptual mental states. Returning to the stroll example, the river, tree, animals, and many other things can be pointed to. But these things are not, themselves, contained within your mind's (non-perceptual) mental states! For example, the river is not within your mind; it does not flow into your thoughts, causing you to see it. Rather, the river is something external to you that causes your sight of a river. The same is true of the tree, a bush, those flowers, a duck, some geese, and fish; you must interact with these things in some way (for example, by changing your eye's or ear's view) in order to sense them. These things exist outside of the mind and, thus, are *physical*. This notion of *physical* things – being those things that are not contained within mental states – suggests that there may be other things that are, in fact, contained in mental states. Thus, we are led to add *non-physical* things to our picture.

A *non-physical* thing is the opposite of a *physical* thing; it cannot be pointed to but can be contained within the experiences of mental states. If you imagine the stroll again, there are many *non-physical* things involved in your experience of wandering down a river. For example, you become aware of a tree because you become aware of *non-physical* parts of the concept of a 'tree'.[2] A 'tree' has some necessary parts: 'a trunk', 'branches', 'leaves', 'bark', 'canopy', 'veins', and so on. Your 'tree' concept has been organized with respect to a specific structure: 'the trunk has little trunks emerging from it, there are leaves on the little trunks, the leaves have a pattern to their veins, the canopy looks a certain way, …'. From this specific order, you have your *non-physical* concept of 'tree'. All of the conceptual information I have just written are composed of *non-physical* things; they cannot be pointed to, but they are the things contained within experiences of mental states. You cannot point to 'tree' but you can think of a 'tree' or contemplate what a 'tree' is.

B. Relations

In our stroll example, we have implied that there are relationships between *physical* and *non-physical* things. To see this, consider how you become aware of

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2. In contrast with quotation marks, apostrophes denote a concept. Concepts are one of the many groups of *non-physical* things. For example, the written phrase "the concept of a tree" is communicated by the following form: 'tree'. If I write the word tree without use of apostrophes, I intend for you to imagine a picture of a tree. If I write the word 'tree' with apostrophes, I intend for you to imagine your concept of a tree.

a tree. An assortment of *physical* parts – such as a trunk, branches, leaves, bark, a canopy, and so on – fits with a specific *non-physical* concept – such as 'tree'. *Physical* parts cause your awareness of their corresponding *non-physical* concepts because they relate in a specific way.

Why does 'tree' relate to a trunk, branches, leaves, barks, a canopy, and the tree's other parts? I suggest that things relate to one another because they have a *meaningful*, structured relationship. Relations are *non-physical*; you can sometimes point to their corresponding things, but doing so does not capture the structure of relation between those things. Instead, the structure of relation between those things is a *non-physical* thing within a mind.

We will call this *non-physical* relation – the one between things and their effects upon a mind – *meaning*. *Meaning* will be very useful to us; it is the focus of Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* and, thus, the focus of Kripke's interpretation as well. Often, Kripke and Wittgenstein synonymize "meaning" with "use". Wittgenstein writes: "[…] the meaning of a word is its use in the language." (Wittgenstein 2001, §43). This does not need much explanation; it explicitly identifies *meaning* as "use". Kripke does not do so explicitly but, rather, embeds the claim – that of synonymizing "meaning" and "use" – within an example of addition. Kripke writes: "…Jones now means addition by '+' if he presently intends to use the '+' sign in one way…" (Kripke 2002, 77). In other words, an individual *means* something by using it in a certain way.

In my words, *meaning* is a structure of relation between things, where the related things are either *physical*, *non-physical*, or a combination of these types. *Meaning* is a structural relation. For reasons that will soon become clear, I will notate a relation as "*R*". When two things – 'a' and 'b' – relate, I notate this as "a*R*b".[3] I will emphasize that relations are *non-physical* by writing them in apostrophes. When an individual speaks or writes, they show that they are aware of a specific structure – and, thus, *meaning* – of R. Individuals put *meaning* into an empty R.

A good linguistic test to see whether "*meaning*" and "structure of relation" are the same things is to consider the following questions. On one hand, "how does that relate?" is a question about the structural relation between things that have been said in the past. While "how" begins a question about structure ('*R*'), "does", "that", and "relate" add the concept 'relation' to the structure of the

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3.   Where 'a' and 'b' may be replaced by anything.

question and identify the content (the things) under consideration. Thus, with our relation notation, this is a question that reflects the structure: '"that" *R*b'. On the other hand, "what does that *mean*?" is also a question of structural relation. "What" asks for content ('a' and 'b'). "*Mean*" expands the question (from "'a' and 'b'") to ask about relation and structure ('a*R*b'). So, both questions – one about relation and the other about *meaning* – investigate the structure of a relation ('a*R*b').

Now that we have tested whether "*meaning*" and "structure of relation" are the same thing, we can make our discussion a bit more specific by investigating two subgroups of *meaning*. Paul Grice distinguishes between two of the most prominent forms of *meaning*.[4] To show that our notion of *meaning* – being a structural relation – is sufficient, we will now apply our picture of the world to Grice's two forms of *meaning*. First, take, for example, the sentence "those spots *mean* measles". In this sentence, the word "*mean*" establishes that its speaker is aware of two distinct things: *physical* spots and the *non-physical* concept of 'measles'. In our relation notation, we have: 'those spots *R* 'measles''. This sentence can be restated by choosing a word other than "*mean*" for the relation between its things, for example, by using the sentence "those spots correspond with 'measles'". This restatement – by substituting the word "*mean*" with "correspond with" – signifies that the relation between the relevant things is structured in a specific way; when we say things correspond, it is because they have a similar, related, structure. Thus, the sentence "those spots *mean* measles" reflects a specific, corresponding, relationship between these things: spots and 'measles'.

Second, consider the sentence "The recent budget *means* that we shall have a hard year". Similar to the spots and measles sentence, this sentence identifies two distinct things: 'the recent budget' and the relevant group's 'hard next year'.[5] (In our relation notation, we have: "recent budget' *R* 'hard next year"). The word "*means*" identifies a specific relationship between 'the recent budget' and a 'hard next year' and, thus, the sentence may be paraphrased as: "because of the recent budget, the next year will be hard".

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4. For this paper, it is not essential to know what Grice's two forms of *meaning* are. Rather, I leave implied that we investigate both forms.

5. Both of these things have a combination of *physical* and *non-physical* things but let us leave this debate behind because, for our present purpose, it is not necessary.

Grice's first sentence can replace "*mean*" with the phrase "'a' corresponds with 'b'". But, in contrast, Grice' second sentence can replace "*means*" with the structure "because 'a', 'b' will be". Both sentences set up a relation between things – in the form 'a*R*b' – but the structure of these relations are different.[6]

The main point is that *meaning* is a very broad and abstract notion of relation. *Meaning* acts as if it is an empty relationship, into which the thinker of that *meaning* incorporates the structure that reflects the way they believe two or more things relate.

Let us introduce yet another word – very closely related to *meaning* – often written by Kripke and Wittgenstein: *accordance*. Once an individual has discovered a *meaning* (once the empty structural relation has been filled), they have become aware of an *accordance*. When things relate to one another, they have a certain intended structure. These intended structures – *meanings* – are what humans hope to discover (in the broadest sense of 'discover') so that they can feel like they know an *accordance*. In other words, an *accordance* is a *meaning* that an individual has become aware of.

The individual's becoming aware of an *accordance* does not entail that the *meaning* has vanished; rather, once *meaning* is discovered, it exists alongside the newfound *accordance*. For example, suppose you see a vibrant bush while on your stroll. It has berries of a magnificent blue, something you have not been aware of before (it has a structure of bush that you do not recognize). 'Blue' is a part of this bush and it is structured on the bush in a specific way: blue is only on the berries and not on the stems or leaves, it is a shimmering blue, it effects the experience that individuals have of the entire bush, and so on. You ask yourself "what could these blue berries *mean*?". The blue may *mean* that they are poisonous or perhaps luscious and delicious. Maybe it *means* something else – or nothing. Regardless, there is a structured relationship between this blue and this berry bush; it seems like the blue part of the bush *means* something. As of now, the to-be-discovered *meaning* is not an *accordance* because you are not aware of what the relation between the bush and the blue is.

If you eat the berries, you will become aware of the structural relation between the bush and the blue; you will become aware of a *meaningful accordance*. You could get sick, have a delightful meal, or have any other possible experience. Let us suppose you get sick. In this situation, you become aware of the *accordance*

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6.   Much like the various interpretations of the accessibility relation in modal logic.

''I eat these blue berries' *means* (*R*) 'I get sick''. After you have become aware of a *meaningful* relation (*R*) between two or more things (a, b, c, d, e, …), you have become aware of an *accordance*.

There are many different types of *meaning* that reflect different structural relations. *Meaning* can be a one-sided relationship. For example, the sentence "the recent budget means that we shall have a hard year" *means* that a recent budget will cause a bad year for a company. But it does not follow from the same sentence that a bad year will cause a non-desirable budget; the 'bad year' could refer to bad social (non-professional) interaction in the workplace, which does not entail – but may contribute to – a bad budget.

Meaning can also be a double-sided, *symmetrical relation*. A *symmetrical relation* (which I may abbreviate as *Rs*) occurs when one thing relates to a second thing in the very same way that the second thing relates to the first thing ('a*Rs*b' iff 'a*R*b' & 'b*R*a'). For example, if you see a tree, you have become aware that the 'tree' relates to the *physical* trunk, branches, leaves, barks, canopy, and so on. Further, you may become aware that the *physical* trunk, branches, leaves, barks, canopy, and other parts relate to the concept 'tree'. In other words, you may become aware of a *symmetrical relation* (''tree' *Rs* trunk, branches, leaves, barks, canopy, …') between the *non-physical* 'tree' and the *physical* parts of the tree (''tree' *R* trunk, branches, leaves, barks, canopy, …' & 'trunk, branches, leaves, barks, canopy, … *R* 'tree'').

I'm sure that there are many other types of *meaning*. I encourage you to discover them.

So far, we have distinguished between *physical* and *non-physical* things, introduced *meaning* and *accordance*, and established two types of relations between things (*R* and *Rs*). This is not a complete picture; it is confined to a single individual's awareness of the world. In order to be able to understand each other's awareness, individuals must *agree*. Thus, to complete our picture, we must investigate *agreement*.

C. The Relation of *Agreement*

Let's call an *agreement* a *symmetrical relation* between two or more individuals' awareness of *accordances*. If an individual's thought is seen as one thought bubble, an *agreement* can be seen as the merging of two thought bubbles. So, an *agreement* is an embedded relation because it connects two different *meanings*,

which are relations themselves (but not necessarily a *symmetrical relation*). The following two paragraphs explain this by outlining our method of *agreement*.

First, for an *agreement* to happen, an individual must become aware of the *symmetrical relations* that a second individual is aware of. If I say "the tree is next to the river" and you listen to me, then you will become aware that I am aware of the relation 'the tree is next to the river' ("'tree' *Rs* 'river'"); you become aware of what I *mean* by my words; you become aware that I have put 'next to' into my empty *meaning* of '*Rs*'. You have gained knowledge about my mental states; you know, given the language we speak, some things I am aware of, such as that river, that tree, 'river', 'tree', 'next to', and so on.

The second criteria of *agreement* is for a second individual to become aware of the *symmetrical relations* that the first individual is aware of. After you are aware that I think 'the tree is next to the river', suppose you want to confirm that you think so too. In that case, you would say something like "I think so too". Once you say it, I become aware that you are aware of the same *symmetrical relation* that I am aware of – namely, 'the tree is next to the river'. Thus, I have gained some knowledge about your mental states; it seems like we have the same *meaning*; it seems like we have both put the same *meaning* – 'next to' – into the structural relation '*Rs*'. Since we are each aware that each other are aware of the same *meaning* of a *symmetrical relation*, we *agree*. In as few words as possible, *agreement* occurs when two or more individuals understand the same *meaning*.

A quick note: we do not have to be aware of the same exact *meaning* in order for us to *agree*. For example, my *meaning* of 'next to' may be confined to 'close enough' while your *meaning* of 'next to' may be 'within a 1-foot distance'. Even though we may have different *meaningful* concepts of 'next to', we can still *agree* about whether or not the 'tree' is 'next to' the 'river'– given that our *meanings* resemble each other enough.

We began investigating what 'things' are; there are two main kinds of things: *physical* and *non-physical*. Then, we saw that our experiences of *physical* things cause *non-physical* things to exist. Then, we saw how they relate, giving rise to *meaningful accordances*. *Meaning* is an empty structural relation, into which a mind put things and, once an individual has become aware of a *meaning*, they develop an *accordance*. There are many types of *meaningful* relations; we investigated one-sided relations and *symmetrical relations* for two examples. Finally, we attempted to understand another form of *meaningful* relation: *agreement*. Once

two or more individuals have become aware that each other are aware of the same *meaning*, they *agree*.

Now that we seem to have a complete picture of the world, we will turn to Kripke's interpretation of *Philosophical Investigations*. In doing so, we will identify a *paradox* and offer a solution to it.

II. KRIPKE'S INTERPRETATION

In this section, we first look to Wittgenstein for an example of the *paradox*. Then, we clarify the notion of the *paradox* using Kripke's interpretation. With the *paradox* out of the way, we will look at Kripke's solution and his take on the private language argument.

A. Wittgenstein's Paradox

Philosophical Investigations gives a great example of the *paradox*:

> […] Now we get [a] pupil to continue a series (say +2) beyond 1000 – and he writes 1000, 1004, 1008, 1012.

> We say to him: "Look what you've done!" – He doesn't understand. We say: "You were meant to add *two*: look how you began the series!" – He answers: "Yes, isn't it right? I thought that was how I was *meant* to do it. […] (Wittgenstein 2001, §185).

What should we tell the pupil to assist understanding the rule '+2'? Not much would help this situation. The pupil is stubborn: he persists that he is following the rule because, for example, he simply skips saying every other number in the series. If we tell him "You are not following '+2' right", he may respond "Yes I am, you just don't know that I am. I leave every other number in the series implied; I know what each number should be.". He insists that he is aware of the *accordance* between the rule '+2' and the series '1000, 1002, 1004, 1006, …'; he communicates his awareness of this *accordance* by saying "1000, 1004, 1008, 1012, …" and he says "I know what I *mean*, even if you don't.".

This seems problematic and, thus, we have our *paradox*. The following two paragraphs capture the *paradox* but it will be made more concise when we develop Kripke's interpretation.

If a student could always be misinterpreting the rule we are teaching, then how would we ever know that the student is learning the correct rule? We can't say we do. We use the words that the student tells us – "1000, 1004, 1008, 1012, …" – and the student could have uttered these words *according* to any *meaningful* interpretation of them. The student is the only person aware of their own interpretation and so, it is possible that the student's *meaning* of '+2' does not *agree* with our use of that rule.

To be sure that the student uses '+2' in a way that *agrees* with their community's use of it, they should have said "1000, 1002, 1004, 1006, …". However, we are simply clueless as to what the student *means* by their 'mistaken' interpretation. It seems like no matter what a student says, they could be misinterpreting their past learning. When an individual learns a new *meaning*, it is always possible for them to become aware of an *accordance* that their teacher is not aware of.[7] This could lead to misunderstanding, which is the focus of Kripke's interpretation of the *paradox*. However, to presuppose my problem with Kripke, I claim that a mistaken interpretation of *meaning* could also lead an individual to improve their own understanding of relations.

Wittgenstein explicitly words the *paradox* as: "[…] no course of action could be determined by a rule, because any course of action can be made out to accord with the rule." (Wittgenstein 2001, §201). I soon offer the *paradox* in my words but suggest that you think about this quote for yourself before I give Kripke's interpretation and my (somewhat) concise interpretation of it. Now, we turn to Kripke's interpretation of the *paradox*.

B. Kripke's Paradox

Kripke's *paradox*, in my words, is: there is no fact that determines whether an individual's current *meaning accords* with their past *meanings*. Given our picture of *meaning* and *accordance*, my interpretation of the *paradox* claims that an individual's current awareness of a *meaningful* structure does not necessarily *accord* with the exact structure of the individual's past *meaning*.

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7.   This presupposes my counter to Kripke. But this is not problematic because it is consistent with his interpretation of the *paradox*.

Throughout *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*, Kripke uses a rule called 'quaddition' – in contrast with 'addition' – to brew an example of the *paradox*. 'Quaddition' is a rule supplementary to 'addition'; once one of the 'added' numbers is greater than '57', 'quaddition' is followed instead of 'addition'; once 'quaddition' is followed, the sum of the two numbers is '5'. Just as a pupil in Wittgenstein's example could claim that their utterance of "1000, 1004, 1008, 1016, …" *accords* with the rule '+2', a pupil in Kripke's example could claim that their utterance of "68+57=5" *accords* with the rule 'addition'.

For example, suppose I am in a room – isolated from everyone else – and I add 68 Tonka trucks to 57 tonka trucks. I become aware of a new *accordance* and, thus, decide to follow 'quaddition'. 'Quaddition' tells me that the answer to '68+57' is '5'. How could '68+57' equal '5'? Which *accordance* could I have possibly become aware of? Based on the processes of 'addition' that others have taught me, it seems like the answer is always '125'. But, the *paradox* questions whether an individual, regardless of what processes they have been taught, can find a fact that determines whether their current *meaning* of 'addition' *accords* with their past *meaning* of it.

When searching for such a fact, no individual will find it. There is no fact – neither within their mind nor their surroundings – that determines whether an individual's current *meaning* of 'addition' *accords* with their past *meaning* of 'addition'. What determines the *meaning* of 'addition' is an interpretation instead of a fact; putting *meaning* into an empty structural relation is a method of interpretation rather than experimentation. An interpretation is not a fact itself but, rather, the way that facts are seen. For example, suppose you see a black figure in the corner of your vision and think "Did I see someone?". When you attempt to look at it, it disappears. The figure is not a fact; it is a part of the way that you were interpreting the facts around you, and, upon closer observation, you discover that there are no facts – no things around you – that *accord* with the figure. If the black figure had stayed within your vision, you may have had a new interpretation – influenced by a new awareness of *accordances* – that led you towards the claim "spirits are real". Applying this to 'quaddition', it is possible that, when encountering any new problem, an individual *means* to follow 'quaddition' because they claim to have discovered a new *accordance* between the problem '68+57' and the answer '5'.

Put more generally, an individual can always claim that they have discovered a new structural relation of *meaning* because individuals discover *meaning* through

interpretation instead of through facts. When a student believes, for example, that 'quaddition' should be followed instead of 'addition', they think they have become aware of a *meaningful* relation (thus, an *accordance*) between 'adding numbers greater than 57' and '5'. The student has found a new interpretation of 'addition' which they believe should replace our currently *agreed* upon interpretation of 'addition'. However, Kripke's solution – as discussed in the next section – prohibits any individual from discovering their own *meaning* from a newfound *accordance*.

Kripke writes "The relation of meaning and intention to future action is *normative*, not *descriptive*." (Kripke 2002, 37). In other words, the rules that we teach students – like 'addition' – are not learned through the student's direct experience of the world. Instead, rules are taught by learning the tips and tricks that other people have already figured out; rules embed past peoples' awareness of *accordances* into language. Once a community has *agreed* that they are aware of the same *accordance*, they create a rule – using language – that will be passed down to future generations; the community believes that the rule – such as 'addition' – will benefit the collective knowledge of their kind and, so, they pass it on. Kripke's point in the quote above is that individuals do not learn rules from their individual experience of *accordances*. Instead, an individual must interpret *physical* language in order to relate their (intellectual) ancestors' past awareness of *accordances* into their current awareness of *accordances*.

Learning language is learning past *meaning* and interpreting it into the learner's current, individual, *meaning*. There is a worrisome gap in this process made prevalent by the *paradox*; since we communicate language *physically* and we must indirectly interpret *non-physical meaning* from *physical* language, it is always possible that an utterance does not *accord* with the audience's interpretation of that utterance's *meaning*. As Wittgenstein puts it, "Following a rule is analogous to obeying an order. We are trained to do so; we react to an order in a particular way. But what if one person reacts in one way and another in another to the order and the training? Which one is right?" (Wittgenstein 2001, §206). I'd say: neither is right; all language can be misinterpreted but this does not entail that the individual lacks *meaning*. Kripke would disagree; he does not take it this far – or takes it too far – in saying: "[Wittgenstein] has shown *all* language, *all* concept formation, to be impossible, indeed unintelligible." (Kripke 2002, 62). While Kripke submits to the *paradox*, Wittgenstein only offers it as a question and

a mistaken one at that. After his explicit statement of the *paradox*, Wittgenstein claims this:

> 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 contended 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. (Wittgenstein 2001, §201).

This begins to show us that Kripke's interpretation diverges from Wittgenstein's work; perhaps there is a *non-physical* behavior that is not effected by the *paradox*. Maybe we follow rules without relying on facts by training our minds using our ancestors' language. While interpretations seem to vanish and alter, I feel – quite literally – something that does not.

C. Kripke's Solution

Kripke's solution to the *paradox* is *agreement*. For example, before I was taught the rule 'addition' by my teacher, I was uncertain whether the way I currently add things *accords* with the way I have added things in the past. Kripke would say that prior to learning a rule, an individual can never know whether their current *meaning accords* with their past *meaning*. Instead, the importance of *agreement* surfaces when I am able to show that I 'add' correctly – by solving novel problems and giving my answers to them – and when my teacher is able to tell that I follow 'addition' similar to the way that they do. My teacher saw that our answers were the same for a large number of problems and, thus, they inferred that we were both aware of the same *accordances* – between, for example, the problem '38+23' and the answer '61'. In other words, the teacher became aware of a *symmetrical relation* between our awareness and, so, uttered something like "right" to affirm that we were aware of the same *meaning* for the same *symmetrical relation*. Because two people – I and the teacher – were aware that each other were aware of the same *symmetrical relation*, we understood that we *agreed* about the *meaning* of 'addition'.[8]

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8. This sentence is past tense, an important tense for understanding the *paradox*. This becomes

This appears to solve the *paradox* because it gives the individual a frame of reference for checking whether their current *meaning accords* with their past *meaning*. For example, if I, a good time after learning 'addition', come across a novel problem such as '3,482+9,382', then I will be able to remember some of the times that my teachers and I had *agreed* about 'addition'. If I feel like I might be wrong, I will recall the experiences under which I learned 'addition' so that I can know whether my current *meaning accords* with my past *meaning*. The main idea is that, by recalling past experiences of *agreement*, an individual is able to have a reliable frame of reference to check whether their current *meaning agrees* with both their individual past *meaning* and their community's past *meaning*. (But why do we need a reliable frame?)

This frame of *agreement* has a twofold purpose. First, the frame of *agreement* allows an individual to know whether their *meaning* makes sense. Second, it allows an individual to know whether their *meaning* is useful. Kipke says:

> All that is needed to legitimize assertions that someone means something is that there be roughly specifiable circumstances under which they are legitimately assertable, and that the game of asserting them under such conditions has a role in our lives. (Kripke 2002, 77-78).

However, I feel that these two purposes alone do not give assertions their *meaning*. Circumstances of *meaning* do not get to the core of *meaning*. Rather, *meaning* is a mindful, *non-physical*, frame of reference which is caused by the circumstances relating to a *meaning*. In other words, *meaning* is caused by circumstances, but a *meaning* is not only determined by its relevant circumstances; while we may *physically agree*, we may fail to *non-physically* understand each other because of the gap in our learning process (discussed in II.B. of this paper). With respect to the second purpose (utility), why must *meaning* have "a role in our lives"? Often, individuals find *meaning* that is useful, but only to them. For example, I have created the saying "Go with the flow. Take it slow. Let it go.". This saying's *meaning* is only for me; I'm sure that, to many others, it *means* something vastly different than what I mean by it. I use it to reach a state of mind which I have recently discovered. Without more explanation of this state of mind, you (most likely) do not know what I *mean* by the phrase.

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clearer in the next paragraph.

Thus, I believe individuals have a *private* frame of reference – independent from a community's *agreement* – that the individual uses to understand things. I find that Wittgenstein would agree (not italicized).

D. Kripke's Private Language Argument

Kripke uses '*agreement*' as an essential premise within his interpretation of the private language argument. To make this interpretation clear, we must first investigate *privacy*.

Something is *private* when only one individual is aware of it; when an individual is aware of an *accordance*, and no other is aware that the individual is aware of that *accordance*, then the *accordance* is *private*. In other words, something is *private* when it has not yet been *agreed* upon.

Kripke uses '*agreement*' for his private language argument. The argument goes as follows. A language must have *agreement* in order to be a "language". Something "*private*" cannot have '*agreement*' because it has not yet been *agreed* upon. Thus, if we put "*private*" and "language" into one phrase that *accords* with a concept, the resulting concept is a contradiction; the phrase "*private* language" is a semantic contradiction; the *meaning* of "*private* language" cannot exist without incurring problems.

Kripke takes the private language argument a step further by claiming that the concept of a "*private* language" – regardless of its *according* phrase – does not exist. However, this is a step that Wittgenstein does not take. I believe Wittgenstein would say that the phrases "*private* behavior" and "*private* frame of reference" do not entail a semantic contradiction and, thus, its *according* concept could exist. If I am right, we must revise Kripke's interpretation to sufficiently reflect Wittgenstein's work. Briefly forget that we are interpreting others and ask yourself: don't we often have *private* thoughts that we choose not to say?

III. A PROBLEM WITH KRIPKE'S SOLUTION

Kripke's private language argument claims that an individual's *meaning* cannot exist unless other people *agree* with that *meaning*. But the private language argument does not entail that an individual's *meaning* does not exist; rather, the point of it is as simple as saying: the phrase "private language" is a semantic contradiction. The private language argument makes a claim about "language",

not about whether there exists a *private meaning*, *private* thoughts, a "*private* behavior", a "*private* frame of reference", or any other phrase sufficient for the concept we are looking for.

Although "*private* language" is a phrase of semantic contradiction, there could be processes – not "language" or 'language' – that are *private*. The *paradox* seems as if it is deeply problematic; if it is plausible, then individuals are always uncertain about what they *mean*. If I, for example, do not know whether my *meaning* of 'addition' has changed throughout my use of it, then it seems like I do not know whether 'addition' – and even my mind – is reliable. But the most important phrases in the past two sentences are "seems as if" and "seems like";[9] what seems to be is not always what is. Without these phrases, the *paradox* prevents an individual from having a *private*, *meaningful* behavior. With them, the *paradox* does no such thing.

Kripke's interpretation claims that *meaning* is never *private*; it seems like he believes that he does not *mean* anything *privately*. But without *private meaning*, the individual has no system of reference that may be used to check whether their community's language *accords* with that individual's *private* processes, whether or not those processes are "language" or 'language'. Even though the *paradox* is problematic when interpreting *meaning* as determined by *agreement*, it does not raise a problem when interpreting *meaning* as a system of reference; the individual's system of reference is not necessarily determined at all. My mind – my system of reference – often does things I do not approve of, but I trust it anyway.

I think Wittgenstein would reject Kripke's interpretation. Continuing a passage I introduced earlier, Wittgenstein writes:

> […] Suppose you came as an explorer into an unknown country with a language quite strange to you. In what circumstances would you say that the people there gave orders, understood them, obeyed them, rebelled against them, and so on?

> The common behaviour of mankind is the system of reference by means of which we interpret an unknown language. (Wittgenstein 2001; §206).

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9. The word "seem" is important for the literature concerned with Kripke and Wittgenstein, but only if you are interested. If so, I suggest looking at the words "seems", "seems like", "as if", and similar words after you have finished reading this paper.

Wittgenstein seems to say that individuals interpret language through *private* behavior or a *private* system of reference. It seems "common" to all of mankind, but the process itself is *private*. Think of *private* behavior as an individual mind's processes, such as carrying, counting, and putting together numbers to solve an 'addition' problem. These processes do not always follow language; they are learned through interpretation of language but, with enough practice, become automatic processes.[10] When an individual has become comfortable with 'adding', they do not, within their minds, tell themselves "Okay, '8+7=15', so I have to carry the one and put the five here. Now, '1+6+5=12', so I have to put twelve next to the five. …". Rather, they do the problem quickly, the speed of which (roughly) depends on the extent of their practice. For example, do the problem "92+34" and think about the "*private* behavior" that you follow.

Let us translate the problem with Kripke's solution of *agreement* into our picture of the world. I, an individual, do not need *agreement* to *mean* something. For example, if I point to someone and say the sentence "that guy's such an Austin", you do not know what I *mean* by 'Austin'. There are countless interpretations of 'Austin' that could make the sentence true or false because only the people involved with the inside joke would know what the sentence *means* and, thus, extract the correct interpretation. There may be people that have *agreed* on what the joke *means*, but it is also possible for me to have a *private* joke and chuckle to myself (as I just did, but don't try to figure out what it was). Thus, although Kripke's solution may be a solution to the question of whether an individual's *meaning accords* with their community's *meaning*, it is not a solution to the question of whether an individual's *meaning accords* with itself. *Agreement* connects two thought bubbles, but it does not connect one thought bubble to itself. Going beyond the *private* joke example, individuals often put language about *accordances* into the world and, frequently, their *meaning* fails to be correctly interpreted.

To make it even clearer, let us look at the problem from another angle. The problem with Kripke's solution is that there is not a second individual capable of completing a symmetrical relation of awareness regarding my current awareness of an *accordance*. I can be aware of an *accordance* when there is no one aware that I am aware of that *accordance*. I could dis*agree* with everyone (as may be

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10. Kripke calls these automatic processes "brute inclinations"; see page 15.

the situation when an individual seems to have Schizophrenia, be high on LSD, or believe in the spirit world).

I *mean* this: the thoughts I have are not fully determined by what I have interpreted as my community's *meaning*. Although *agreement* helps me in countless ways, I do not want to be committed to the claim that my *private* processes have no *meaning*. *Agreement* points to the *meaning* that I should follow, but I decide which *meaning* I actually follow. *Agreement* suggests to me what I should put in my empty structural relation, but I decide what actually goes in there. Wittgenstein says: "The line intimates to me which way I am to go" is only a paraphrase of: it is my *last* arbiter for the way I am to go." (Wittgenstein 2001, §230). Focus on that one word: "*last*". To emphasize my problem with Kripke's solution, I leave it to you to interpret your own *meaning* for this quote. (Although, I have already, implicitly, given you my interpretation of it.)

Why does all this matter? I suggest this: do not worry about the "genius" of other people. Instead, when you learn something new, trust your *private* thoughts. Then, see whether your *private* thoughts *accord* with what you are learning. In doing so, you will save yourself from much work, time, and, most importantly, from dangerous thoughts that may lead you to a mindset of insecure stupidity. You're not 'dumb', I know with certainty. Or, rather, should I put it like: "We are all 'dumb', endlessly figuring things out."?

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