E P I S O D E   III

Thinker and Speaker

In interpretation, understanding does not become something different. It becomes itself. Such interpretation is grounded existentially in understanding; the latter does not arise from the former.

<div align="right">– Martin Heidegger, Being and Time</div>

…language maintains a kind of independent life vis-à-vis the individual member of a linguistic community; and as he grows into it, it introduces him into a particular orientation and relationship to the world as well.

<div align="right">– Hans-Georg Gadamer, Truth and Method</div>

Custom

1.   In his preface of the celebrated *Word and Object*, Quine says, 'Language is a social art.'[1] Most, if not all, contemporary analytic philosophers regard the publicity of meaning as basically uncontroversial. Even Searle, as a dedicated 'internalist,' says that '[l]anguage is indeed public…'[2] Other key players like Davidson, Putnam, Burge, among others, have their own ways to conceive the crucial social elements. The idea often traces back to Wittgenstein, in particular his notion of 'custom.'[3] How this notion is relevant to McDowell's conception of thinker and speaker will become clear later on.

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[1] *Word and Object* (MIT Press, 1960), p.ix.
[2] 'Indeterminacy, Empiricism, and the First Person,' *Journal of Philosophy* 84 (1987), pp.123-46; reprinted in his *Consciousness and Language* (Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp.226-50, at p.250.
[3] *Philosophical Investigations*, §198.

The guiding question in the present episode is this: how does McDowell conceive the social / public elements of intentionality, and how does this conception connect to his diagnosis and treatment of the inner space model, as discussed in the previous episode? I answer this question by considering McDowell's criticisms against Saul Kripke's reading of Wittgenstein.[4] As we shall see, in formulating the 'skeptical paradox' of meaning, Kripke tacitly presupposes the inner space model. This may be somewhat surprising, for Kripke is often read as a critic of our *residual Cartesianism* about meaning, as we shall see. One of McDowell's main tasks here is to persuade us that Kripke's anti-Cartesianism does not go to the root.

So here goes Kripke's Wittgenstein, or 'Kripkenstein.'[5] Kripke attempts to shed light on the issue about meaning by discussing and elaborating Ludwig Wittgenstein's 'rule-following considerations.' We normally think that our linguistic behaviors are rule-governed: a concept is a rule; when we use it we need to follow the rule given by its content. This is where *normativity* comes in. The rule determines *correct and incorrect* uses of the concept in question. The Kripkenstein paradox challenges this conception of language. Kripke summarizes the paradox as follows:

> The Skeptic doubts whether any instructions I gave myself in the past compel (or justify) the answer '125' rather than 5.' He puts the challenge in terms of a skeptical hypothesis about a change in my usage. Perhaps when I used the term 'plus' in the *past*, I always mean quus: by hypothesis I never gave myself any explicit directions that were incompatible with such a hypothesis.[6]

The problem is this: one's past performances are *finite*, and we can always fit them into more than one rule, however deviant they might be. But if that is so, then the normativity vanishes, for it goes with rules. Given a set of past behaviors or intentions, including linguistic ones, the skeptic claims that we can always *interpret* them as confirming *infinitely* different rules. There is no principle to prevent him from doing so.

Kripke goes on to envisage a reply to the skeptic:

> [S]uppose we wish to add *x* and *y*. Take a huge bunch of marbles. First count out *x* marbles in one hip. Then count out *y* marbles in another. Put the two heaps together and count out the number of marbles in the union thus formed. The result is *x* + *y*. This set of directions, I may suppose, I explicitly gave myself at some earlier time. It

[4] *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language* (Harvard University Press, 1982).

[5] Part of the following paragraphs are drawn from my 'The Skeptical Paradox and the Nature of the Self,' under review.

[6] *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*, p.13.

is engraved on my mind as on a slate. It is incompatible with the hypothesis that I mean quus. It is this set of directions, not the finite list of particular additions I performed in the past, that justifies and determines my present response.[7]

And Kripke launches a Wittgensteinian rejoinder to this reply:

True, if 'count,' as I used the word in the past, referred to the act of counting…, then 'plus' must have stood for addition. But I applied 'count,' like 'plus,' to only finitely many past cases. Thus the Skeptic can question my present interpretation of my past usage of 'count' as he did with 'plus.' In particular, he can claim that by 'count' I formerly meant *quount*, where to 'quount' a heap is to count it in the ordinary sense, unless the heap was formed as the union of two heaps, one of which has 57 or more items, in which case one must automatically give the answer '5.'[8]

Here Kripke is applying again the *infinite* regress of *interpreting* rules. This time the regress is not within a single symbol, say '+,' but between different symbols. The basic insight, if any, is the same: a rule is never self-interpreting; we can always assign infinite interpretations to it, and if we attempt to interpret it with other rules, the series of interpretation are also infinite. Hence the paradox.[9]

Let me now briefly introduce Kripke's 'skeptical solution.' He says this kind of solution 'begins on the contrary by conceding that the sceptic's negative assertions are unanswerable. Nevertheless our ordinary practice or belief is justified because…it need not require the justification the sceptic has shown to be untenable.'[10] He goes on to say that 'Wittgenstein proposes a picture of language based, not on *truth conditions*, but on *assertability conditions* or *justification conditions*: under what circumstances are we allowed to make a given assertion?'[11] He then concludes by saying that '[t]he success of the practices…depends on the brute empirical fact that *we agree with each other in our responses*.'[12] This is the general guise of Kripke's skeptical solution.[13]

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[7] Ibid., p.15-6.

[8] Ibid., p.16.

[9] David McCarty reminds me that 'infinity' is not always a problem, especially when we notice examples form mathematics. I think the infinity in the present context is indeed a problem because it violates the normativity of meaning; it prevents us from deciding non-arbitrarily which interpretation is correct.

[10] Ibid., p.66.

[11] Ibid., p.74.

[12] Ibid., p.109, my italics.

[13] Some readers might have noticed that I do not have any surprising interpretation of Kripke. One thing to be noted, however, is that I do not accept George Wilson's *reductio* interpretation of the paradox, which is supposed to cast doubt on the standard interpretation I adopt. See his 'Kripke on Wittgenstein on Normativity,' in Peter A. French and Howard Wettstein (eds.) *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 19 (1994), pp.366-90; reprinted in Alexander Miller and Crispin Wright (eds.), *Rule-Following and Meaning* (McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002), pp.234-59. I side with Miller

2.   As we have seen, the first principle of the Kripkenstein paradox is the infinite regress of interpreting rule. We can equally interpret the '+' sign to mean 'plus' or 'quus,' and if we attempt to determine the its meaning by invoking another notion, say 'count,' the skeptic can still interpret it as 'quount,' which again is a deviant interpretation. This infinite regress seems to be the hardstand of the paradox. But is it well-grounded?

   In the early stage of his argumentation, Kripke identifies the skeptical paradox with the first paragraph of *Philosophical Investigations* §201:

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.[14]

But as McDowell notices, '§201 goes on with a passage for which Kripke's reading makes no room'[15]:

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.[16]

The problem identified in the first paragraph is the 'infinite regress of interpretations,' which is even clearer in *PI* §198: 'any interpretation still hangs in the air along with what it interprets, and cannot give it any support.'[17] Now a natural way to respond to the regress is this:

What one wants to say is: 'Every sign is capable of interpretation; but the meaning

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in thinking that Wilson's interpretation violates Kripke's distinction between the straight solution and the skeptical solution, which seems to me perfectly legitimate. See his introduction in the volume, pp.1-15. Obviously, this should not be regarded as a sweeping objection to Wilson, whose discussions are abundant and delicate. I temporarily ignore his interpretation because that will lead me too far away from my central concern. This remark applies to all other different interpretations to Kripke.

[14] *Philosophical Investigations*, §201. Kripke quotes this in his p.7.

[15] 'Wittgenstein on Following a Rule,' *Synthesis* 58 (1984); reprinted in his *Mind, Value, and Reality*, pp.221-62, at p.229.

[16] *Philosophical Investigations*, §201.

[17] Ibid., §198.

mustn't be capable of interpretation. It is the last interpretation.'[18]

But it should be crystally clear that this won't work, for if we let the chain of interpretations get started, on what ground we are entitled to stop it at any point? To simply insist that there will be 'the last interpretation' is *ad hoc* and dogmatic. McDowell's metaphor for this is 'a super-rigid yet (or perhaps we should say 'hence') ethereal machine.'[19] It is super-rigid because it sustains all other interpretations without being itself interpretable; it is therefore ('hence') ethereal because actually it cannot sustain anything: if every interpretation itself can be further interpreted but the supposed 'last' interpretation cannot, it is disqualified as 'interpretation' anyway.

The way Wittgenstein confronts the paradox is not, *pace* Kripke, to be acquiesce to the 'paradox' introduced in the first paragraph of *PI* §201; on the contrary, he asserts that 'there is a way of grasping a rule which is *not an interpretation*…' Although so far we have no idea about the general shape of solution, we can be sure that for Wittgenstein, it won't be a Humean 'skeptical solution,' which 'begins…by conceding that the sceptic's negative assertions are unanswerable.'[20] But does it follow that what Wittgenstein has in mind is a 'straight solution'? It depends on how we conceive the straightness. Kripke first introduces the notion of a straight solution like this: 'a straight solution…shows that on closer examination the scepticism proves to be unwarranted…'[21], but he later adds that a straight solution 'point[s] out to the silly sceptic a hidden fact he overlooked, a condition in the world which constitutes my meaning addition by 'plus.'[22] If we stick to the earlier formulation, Wittgenstein's solution is indeed a straight one, for he attempts to show that 'the scepticism proves to be unwarranted' by elaborating how there can be 'a way of grasping a rule which is *not an interpretation*.' If we adopt the later qualification, however, it is not clear that Wittgenstein would admit that he is providing a straight solution, for the second formulation presupposes certain *reductionism* about meaning and understanding: as Jerry Fodor famously declares, '[i]f aboutness is real, it must be really something else.'[23] Maybe we can accept the supervenience thesis about meaning, but to ask us 'cite the fact' is asking something more than that. 'Supervenience' is an ontological thesis; it does not further require that we are able to *cite* the very fact. I cannot go into the reductionism debate here, but it seems plausible to reply to the skeptic that the requirement of 'citing the fact' commits reductionism, and we have no reason to accept it without further arguments from the skeptic. What's important for our present

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[18] *The Blue and Brown Books* (Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1958), p.34.
[19] 'Wittgenstein on Following a Rule,' p.230.
[20] *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*, p.66.
[21] Ibid., p.66.
[22] Ibid., p.69.
[23] *Psychosemantics: The Problem of Meaning in the Philosophy of Mind* (MIT Press, 1989), p.97.

purpose is to recognize that though Wittgenstein is not offering a skeptical solution here, he is not offering a straight solution either, understood in the second formulation. As we shall see, he does not cite a fact and identify it with meaning; his talks about 'customs' and other related notion are not like that.[24]

Before going into the positive account, McDowell further quotes Wittgenstein for his denial of the thought that understanding is always a matter of interpretation:

> 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?[25]

If we accept McDowell's suggestion to read Wittgenstein as arguing against the thought that understanding is always interpretation, the question '[h]ow can there be a way of grasping a rule which is not an interpretation?' becomes urgent.[26] McDowell submits that we should turn to Wittgenstein's notion of 'practice' for the answer:

> 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.[27]

The ground for regarding the notion of practice as the answer is the 'hence also' in the first line of the above quotation: '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.'[28] The same line of thought goes further:

> '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 this sign in a particular way, and now I do so react to it.
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> '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

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[24] Here I am indebted to Scott Soames; we discussed this when I presented a version of 'The Skeptical Paradox and the Nature of the Self' at 2007 Soochow International Conference on Analytic Philosophy.

[25] *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics* (Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1978), VI-38. McDowell goes on to cite many other passages from *PI*; I am not going to repeat all of them here.

[26] 'Wittgenstein on Following a Rule,' p.238.

[27] *Philosophical Investigations*, §202, my italics.

[28] 'Wittgenstein on Following a Rule,' p.238, my italics.

there exists a regular use of sign-posts, a *custom*.[29]

When one goes by a sign-post in normal cases, what guides her is not an interpretation of the sign; she just does it in the way the relevant customs dictate. Consider *PI* §506: '[t]he 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*?'[30] It seems clear that there is no interpretation in play here. True, we do from time to time interpret man-made or natural signs, but that's not the general case.[31] Normally, we just do it in the way we trained. A natural objection, anticipated by Wittgenstein, is that this answer is also a '*causal* explanation'[32]; or worse, a *behavioristic* explanation. In response, McDowell reminds us that for Wittgenstein, 'the training in question is initiation into a custom.'[33] If the subject being trained is not a human being, but instead a mere animal, we would not say that in the training it has been initiated into a custom. The crucial difference is whether one has a language or not; I shall come back to this later.

Let's consider some of Kripke's remarks in details. The skeptics asks, '[h]ow do I know that '68 + 57,' as I *meant* 'plus' in the *past*, should denote 125?'[34] He goes on to ask that 'why I now believe that by 'plus' in the past, I meant addition rather than quaddition?'[35] A page later he asks, '[b]ut I can doubt that my past usage of 'plus' denoted plus.'[36] An assumption underlying all these queries is that we need to offer justifications here, but why should we think so? 'That is not agreement in opinions but in form of life,'[37] Wittgenstein writes. If what in play here are opinions, it might be reasonable to ask for justifications, but 'what is at issue here is below that level – the "bedrock" where "I have exhausted the justifications" and "my spade is turned" (*PI* §217).'[38] Also see this passage:

> Giving grounds, however, justifying the evidence, comes to an end; – but the end is not certain proposition' 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.[39]

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[29] *Philosophical Investigations*, §198, my italics.

[30] Ibid., §506.

[31] Wittgenstein and McDowell never make this qualification, but I think we should we them as saying that *in general cases*, understanding is not interpretation. To read them as holding the universal claim is uncharitable.

[32] 'Wittgenstein on Following a Rule,' p.239.

[33] Ibid., p.239.

[34] *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*, p.12.

[35] Ibid., p.12.

[36] Ibid., p.13. Also, '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.

[37] *Philosophical Investigations*, §241.

[38] 'Wittgenstein on Following a Rule,' p.240.

[39] *On Certainty* (Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1969), §204.

We can appreciate this move by comparing this with the debate about the structure of empirical knowledge. Foundationalism is one of the responses to the infinite regress of justification; it attempts to stop the regress by postulating so-called 'basic beliefs,' beliefs with certain special status. Now many have cast doubt on the cogency of this response, for after all, basic beliefs are *beliefs*. If they are beliefs, it is hard to see how they can be exempted from being in need of justification in one way or another. Now in our context, if what sustain all the understandings are themselves opinions or propositions, there seems to be little reason for thinking that they are not themselves in need of justifications. So the notion of customs and the like are not to be conceived as explicitly codified articles; instead, they are our forms of life pertaining to our language-games. At the level of 'bedrock,'[40] we just carry out actions without a justification, but 'without a justification does not mean…without right.'[41]

In introducing the notion of 'bedrock,' Wittgenstein is not embracing one horn of the dilemma, i.e. 'the last interpretation.' Rather, he is trying 'to steer a course between a Scylla and a Charybdis. Scylla is the idea that understanding is always interpretation,' but if we avoid this by insisting that at the 'bedrock' level, no justification is needed, 'then we risk steering on to Charybdis – the picture of a basic level at which there are no norms.'[42] But as McDowell warns, '[u]ntil 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.'[43]

3.   One might wonder why the practices in question have to be *communal* ones. Can't an individual form her own form of life so as to sustain linguistic abilities?[44] To this McDowell replies that '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…[one is] resigning oneself to Scylla…'[45] McDowell's remarks here are not very clear; I understand him as say this: how can an individual carry out actions with normativity, all by one's own? It appears that all one can do here is to launch one interpretation after another; as Kripke points out to us, this does not work.

But if McDowell's Wittgenstein invokes *communal* practice to the rescue, what distinguishes this picture from Kripkenstein's one? Recall that at the outset of this episode, I said that almost all analytic philosophers nowadays regard the social

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[40] *Philosophical Investigations*, §217.
[41] Ibid., §289.
[42] 'Wittgenstein on Following a Rule,' p.242.
[43] Ibid., p.242.
[44] This line of thinking is pursued by Simon Blackburn, 'The Individual Strikes Back,' *Synthesis* 58 (1984), pp.281-301.
[45] 'Wittgenstein on Following a Rule,' p.246.

elements as essential to or at least important for intentionality. 'But it makes a difference how we conceive the requirement of publicity to emerge.'[46] McDowell argues that Kripke (and Crispin Wright)

> 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…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 matching regularities. The picture of a linguistic community degenerates…into a picture of a mere aggregate of individuals whom we have no convincing reason not to conceive as opaque to one another.[47]

The picture McDowell recommends, by contrast, is that

> 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…[S]hared 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…[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.[48]

The above two passages convey one and the same thought from opposite angles. The negative part says that community in the relevant sense is not just aggregations of individual: there is no reason why quantity can explain the emergence of meaning. The positive part invokes the notion of membership, means that individuals need to be initiated into customs. The second line mentions 'anyone.' If we don't consider the 'membership' of the individuals, then meaning is available to 'anyone.' This collapses into behaviorism, or to use Simon Blackburn's phrase, 'a *wooden* picture of the use of language.'[49] Without the constraint of membership, anyone can access the meaning

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[46] Ibid., p.243.
[47] Ibid., pp.252-3.
[48] Ibid., p.253.
[49] 'Rule-Following and Moral Realism,' in Steven Holtzman and Christopher Leich (eds.) *Wittgenstein: To Follow a Rule* (Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1981), pp.163-87, at p.183.

fact, but what is available to anyone regardless their customs? Answer: behaviors. But this is obvious not what Wittgenstein has in mind, and not a good picture to have anyway.

Recall that in my previous episode, I discussed Brandom's accusation of residual individualism in McDowell's picture. Now it is interesting to learn that McDowell's counterargument against Brandom echoes his criticisms to Kripke and Wright:

Within the putative observer's perspective, as opposed to the interpreter's, the fact is not in view as calling for a rational response. It is not in view as something to be taken into account in building a picture of the world. But that seems indistinguishable from saying it is not in view as the fact that it is…How could multiplying what are, *considered by themselves, blind responses*, to include blind responses to how the blind responses of one's fellows are related to the circumstances to which they are blind responses, somehow bring it about that the responses are after all not blind?[50]

McDowell's thought here is connected to his view about the other-mind problem. He argues that we can 'literally perceive, in another person's facial expression or his behaviour, that he is…in pain…'[51] We are mind-readers, but in knowing others' minds, we are not conducting interpretations in normal cases; rather, we just *see* that they are in pain or other mental states. A general tendency of analytic philosophy is to start with meaningless noises and behaviors, and try to regain meaningfulness from those dead building blocks. The gist of McDowell's interpretation of Wittgenstein is that we need to start in the midst of meaning, or what we get is only aggregate of individuals.[52] Those who read Wittgenstein as a reductionist ignore the following remark from him: '[h]earing a word in a particular sense. How queer that there should be such a thing!'[53]

I suppose that the cogency of McDowell case against the assimilation of understanding to interpretation has been generally established. But even my readers agree with this, one might still wonder what the relation between this reflection from rule-following considerations and the inner space model is. McDowell provides the connection in another work on Wittgenstein:

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[50] 'Reply to Commentators,' *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 58 (1998), pp.403-31, at pp.408-9, my italics.

[51] 'On "The Reality of the Past",' at p.305.

[52] McDowell says more in the following two articles. 'Anti-Realism and the Epistemology of Understanding,' in Herman Parret and Jacques Bouveresse (eds.) *Meaning and Understanding* (Walter de Gruyter, Berlin, 1981), pp.225-48; reprinted in his *Meaning, Knowledge, and Reality*, pp.314-43. And 'Criteria, Defeasibility, and Knowledge.' I would like to leave this related issue for my readers.

[53] *Philosophical Investigations*, §534.

The conception is one according to which such regions of reality are populated exclusively with items that, considered in themselves, do not sort things out side the mind, including specifically bits of behaviour, into those that are correct or incorrect in the light of those items. According to this conception, the contents of minds are items that, considered in themselves, just 'stand there like a sign-post,' as Wittgenstein puts it (*PI* §85). Consider in itself, a sign-post is just a board or something similar, perhaps bearing an inscription, on a post…What does sort behaviour into what counts as following the sign-post and what does not is not an inscribed board affixed to a post, considered in itself, but such an object *under a certain interpretation…*[54]

The first half of the passage is a characterization of the inner space, which is populated by inert, self-standing items that only extrinsically relate to external states of affairs. The second half is to connect the assimilation of understanding to interpretation (the 'master thesis'[55]) to the inner space model: *self-standing* items need to be *interpreted* to be about something else; considered in themselves, they are 'normatively inert.'[56] In constructing the skeptical paradox, Kripke seldom talks about the mind directly, but his assimilation of understanding to interpretation betrays that he implicitly commits the inner space model. But if we abandon that way of conceiving ourselves, the regress of interpretations cannot get off the ground, and we can thereby shrug our shoulders to the meaning skeptics.[57]

Kripke does talk about the mind at the early stage of his discussions. He says that a set of directions 'is engraved on my mind as on a slate.'[58] Not many people think there is anything crucial around, but I think Kripke's metaphor here is indeed disastrous: to conceive our minds as slates is to *distance* ourselves to our mental items, treat them as *objects*, so as to *make room for* deviant interpretations. The picture Kripke offers suggests that when someone entertains a thought, she need to *consult her own past intentions* in using that symbol. The falsity of this way of thinking is that this makes ownership (or 'first-person character') of thoughts a myth. If one needs to consult her mental history whenever she entertains relevant thoughts, the difference

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[54] 'Meaning and Intentionality in Wittgenstein's Later Philosophy,' Peter A. French, Theodore E. Uehling, Jr., and Howard K. Wettstein (eds.) *Midwest Studies in Philosophy, vol. 17: The Wittgenstein Legacy* (University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame, 1993), pp.40-52; reprinted in his *Mind, Value, and Reality*, pp.263-78, at pp.264-5. I encourage readers who are new to McDowell's philosophy to start with this later paper; it is much more user-friendly than the dense 'Wittgenstein on Following a Rule.' In what follows I won't say much about this later paper, for most of the contents relevant to my purpose have been discussed when I concentrated on the earlier, denser paper.

[55] Ibid., p.270.

[56] Ibid., p.265.

[57] In 'The Skeptical Paradox and the Nature of the Self,' I further connect the inner space model to the homunculus fallacy in philosophy of mind. This will burden Kripke's skeptic as well.

[58] *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*, p.15.

between spontaneously entertaining one's own thoughts and attributing thoughts to our fellow speakers vanishes. This doesn't seem right.[59] And again we can see the rebuttal of this in Wittgenstein:

> We are tempted to think that the action of language consists of two parts; an inorganic part, the handling of signs, and an organic part, which we may call understanding these signs, meaning them, *interpreting* them, thinking.[60]

It is helpful to think this in John Searle's terms. Sometimes interpretations do constitute meanings, but that kind of intentionality is merely 'derivative,' i.e. 'observer-relative.' I am not here defending Searle's distinction between original and derivative intentionality, but it is quite clear that to think that human intentionality is universally derivative is straightforwardly wrong.[61]

4.   I shall turn to some objections to McDowell's position.[62] Actually Kripke himself anticipates and comments on this kind of position:

> Perhaps we may try to recoup, by arguing that meaning addition by 'plus' is a state even more *sui generic* than we have argued before. Perhaps it is simply a primitive state, not to be assimilated to sensations or headaches or any 'qualitative' states, nor

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[59] Barry Stroud reminds me of this way of putting the matter. This paragraph is drawn from 'The Skeptical Paradox and the Nature of the Self.' I talk about 'ownership' here; what I mean is the asymmetry between first-person and third-person knowledge. To invoke the asymmetry is sometimes thought to be a Cartesian move, but I don't think there is anything Cartesian in the present case. See 'The Skeptical Paradox and the Nature of the Self,' where I evaluate the relevant debate between Colin McGinn and Crispin Wright.

[60] *The Blue and Brown Books*, p.3, my italics. Crispin Wright, in his 'Wittgenstein's Later Philosophy of Mind: Sensation, Privacy, and Intention' (presented at an American Philosophical Association symposium on Wittgenstein on December 30, 1989), also notices and criticizes the Cartesian 'walled garden.' Although this sounds congenial to McDowell's attack on the inner space, actually their views are quite different. Wright finds fault in the notion of 'inner observation,' but McDowell insists that what's at fault should be the 'sign-post' conception of mental items, not 'observation' *per se*. McDowell is 'not defending the model of inner observation,' but only 'insist[ing] that the observational model of self-knowledge is not in play here.' We should recognize that '[observational] model is merely a natural form for the epistemology of self-knowledge to take if the [inner space] framework is in place': if mental items are self-standing, normatively inert *objects before the mind*, we do need to observe and interpret them. See McDowell's 'Intentionality and Interiority in Wittgenstein,' Klaus Puhl (ed.) *Meaning Scepticism* (De Gruyter, Berlin and New York, 1991), pp.148-69; reprinted in his *Mind, Value, and Reality*, pp.297-321; at p.315, 319, 321, respectively. Also see his 'Response to Crispin Wright,' in Crispin Wright, Barry C. Smith, and Cynthia Macdonald (eds.) *Knowing Our Own Minds* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1998), pp. 47-62.

[61] *Intentionality: An Essay in the Philosophy of Mind* (Cambridge University Press, 1983). I do not refer to specific passages of it, for I do not want to get into the details of the distinction *per se*. McDowell offers an interesting example to illustrate the point; see 'Meaning and Intentionality in Wittgenstein's Later Philosophy,' pp.270-1. In my 'On Meaning Skeptics' Cartesian Model,' I compare Kripke's position with Quine's. Quine presses his indeterminacy of translation even to the first-person case, and I suspect that the inner space model is also in play in his thinking.

[62] Some of the following paragraphs are drawn from my 'An Initial Defense of Semantic Primitivism.'

to be assimilated to dispositions, but a state of a unique kind of its own.[63]

And he goes on to criticize this unclear approach right away:

> Such a move may in a sense be irrefutable, and if it is taken in an appropriate way Wittgenstein may even accept it. But it seems desperate: it leaves the nature of this postulated primitive state…completely mysterious. It is not supposed to be an introspectible state, yet we supposedly are aware of it with some fair degree of certainty whenever it occurs.[64]

Kripke does not spell out in what sense it is irrefutable, and the word 'irrefutable' is ambiguous. Sometimes it is taken to be a positive word, but in philosophy and science most of the time it is a dirty word. Since Kripke leaves the meaning of the word totally undetermined, I will simply bypass this remark. The same problem plagues the following sentence. What does he mean by 'appropriate'? This is especially important because if we spell it out, the opponent here may succeed in answering the paradox. Disappointedly enough, Kripke does not say anything specific here. I think we can think of McDowell's view as an attempt to find this appropriate way. Kripke then says that this approach is 'desperate,' for it leaves the nature of this kind of state 'mysterious.' Indeed, given the characterizations in the above quotation, the nature of the state is mysterious so the proponents of it do make a desperate move. But notice that Kripke does not even try to give a fair construal to this position, as I argued above. What is really mysterious is why Kripke picks an empty opponent to belabor. Thus there are some latitudes for anti-skeptics to freely envisage varieties of possibility here.

Kripke thinks this sort of state is not supposed to be introspectible, but this description is unmotivated. Maybe he thinks only experiential states which he previously considered are introspectible, but this is not true. I can introspect to my beliefs, though most of my beliefs do not give me any qualitative feels.

Kripke has another line of objection. He thinks there is a logical difficulty inherited in primitivism, and again he attributes this view to Wittgenstein:

> Even more important is the logical difficulty implicit in Wittgenstein's sceptical argument…Such a state would have to be a finite object, contains in our finite minds…Can we conceive of a finite state which could not be interpreted in a quus-like way?[65]

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[63] *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*, p.51.
[64] Ibid., p.51.
[65] Ibid., p.51-2.

The problem of infinite deviant interpretations strikes back, but since we have rejected the model generating the regress, it should be seen as an innocuous remark now. Another thing to be said is that the infinity can be explained by compositionality. The 'plus' sigh is a piece of language, so it can be used in infinite different way thanks to compositionality. I cannot see why there is any puzzle about it. Besides, the infinity objection is not particular for the present proposal anyway: anti-skeptics are finding certain fact to sustain meaning, and supposedly all most facts are finite – maybe dispositions are not, if they turn out to be relevant facts. So even if this is indeed a problem, this is not a particular problem for primitivism. The logical difficulty amounts to nothing.

Kripke's own objections to primitivism are not very impressive; in what follows I shall consider objections raised by one of his major followers, Martin Kusch, who recently published a systematic defense of Kripke's Wittgenstein.[66]

Kusch is skeptical about McDowell's starting point, that is, Kripke's skeptical case utterly relies on the infinite regress of interpretation. He argues:

> In all these cases, the meaning sceptic counters the proposal with the observation that the proposed items (past behaviours, formulae, qualia, intentions and Fregean ideas) can be interpreted in many different ways. In all these cases Kripke does indeed work with the regress of interpretations. Note, however, that the same is not true in the case of reductive dispositionalism. It seems as though the dispositionalist is, in a way, doing precisely what McDowell's Wittgenstein urges us to do: get rid of any mental items that just 'stand there like sign-post.' Moreover, the arguments that Kripke marshals against dispositionalism on Wittgenstein's behalf – the normativity considerations, the finitude objection, the mistake objection – do not make use of the regress of interpretations. Given the central place of dispositionalism in Episode 2 of *WRPL* this should make us cautious about McDowell's reading of the book.[67]

Kusch attempts to show that Kripke's objections to dispositionalism do not rely on the infinite regress of interpretation. However, McDowell's criticisms against Kripke presuppose that the regress is the backbone of Kripke's whole argumentations. It follows that McDowell's reading of Kripke is biased. Furthermore, this shows that McDowell's view is more like dispositionalism.

Even if Kusch is right about Kripke's objections against dispositionalism – which I will later show that it is not – it is not clear why this should be a reason for

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[66] *A Sceptical Guide to Meaning and Rules: Defending Kripke's Wittgenstein* (McGill-Queen's University Press, 2006).
[67] Ibid., p.225-6.

assimilating McDowell's position to dispositionalism. Given Kusch's interpretation, maybe they are coextensive – both of them have no regress problem – but that does not mean they are in any significant sense similar to each other. Whether dispositionalism succeeds in preserving normativity, it does not incorporate this property in its starting point; it starts rather with the finitude problem. McDowell, on the contrary, starts with normativity. We can see this in his insistence on membership. Dispositionalism and McDowell's position are just different.

And Kripke's objections to dispositionalism include the infinite regress of interpretation anyway.

The regress problem implicitly resides in the finitude objection. Kripke gives a rejoinder to dispositionalist's attempt to overcome the finitude problem:

> The dispositional theory attempts to avoid the problem of finiteness of my actual past performance by appealing to a disposition. But in doing so, it ignores an obvious fact: not only my actual performance, but also the totality of my dispositions, is finite…Let 'quaddition' be redefined so as to be a function which agrees with addition thereafter (say, it is 5). Then, just as the sceptic previously proposed the hypothesis that I meant quaddition in the old sense, now he proposes the hypothesis that I meant quaddition in the new sense. A dispositional account will be impotent to refute him. As before, there are infinitely many candidates the sceptic can propose for the role of quaddition.[68]

Now we should ask why finitude would be a problem at the very beginning. We non-skeptics want some way to get a determined rule from past behaviors, but we fail if we let the infinite regress of interpretation get going. No matter how many past intentions or behaviors we have, *since they are finite, the skeptic can always find some ways to give deviant interpretations*. Finitude is a problem precisely because it generates vicious infinite regress. The regress nightmare is with dispositionalism anyway, at least according to Kripke.

Kusch then says actually Kripke can accommodate McDowell's concern:

> [T]here is also reason to doubt McDowell's claim according to which Kripke's fails to recognize Wittgenstein's crucial third position: a primitivism about meaning and rules that is centred around the ideas of training, acting blindly, agreement, custom, practice and institution.[69]

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[68] *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*, p.26-7.
[69] *A Sceptical Guide to Meaning and Rules*, p.226.

He then goes on to give plenty of textual evidence from Kripke to support his complaint here. First thing to be noted is that Kusch seems to contradict himself here, for he formerly says that McDowell's position is rather like dispositionalism. Now he commits himself the thought that Kripke's skeptical solution is similar to dispositionalism. I don't think he will buy this, but let's turn to Kusch's concern here, that Kripke's solution can accommodate what McDowell is driving at.

We can resist this assimilation by the distinction between the 'insulated-individuals conception' and the 'intimate-individuals conception'; the former refers to the position shared by Kripke, Wright, and Brandom; the later refers to McDowell and McDowell's Wittgenstein. There is no denying that Kripke's solution does have some Wittgensteinian flavor. This is recognized by McDowell in the very paper Kusch is considering:

> Wittgenstein's point is that we have to situate our conception of meaning and understanding within a framework of communal practice. Kripke's reading credits Wittgenstein with the thesis that the notion of meaning something by one's word 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.[70]

Indeed, who can sensibly deny that Kripke's picture is in a sense social, and it incorporates Wittgenstein's insistence on the importance of practice and custom? The problem is, to repeat, his conception of a community is only an aggregation of individuals, regardless their memberships. The fact that Kripke also underscores the importance of practice and custom does not justify Kusch's attempted assimilation.

Another attempt to assimilate McDowell with Kripke can be found in another passage from Kusch:

> McDowell's Wittgenstein's opposition to 'constructive philosophical accounts' is really an opposition to, and 'diagnostic deconstruction' of, all forms of reductivism. Kripke's Wittgenstein would obviously sympathize. His only proviso would be that reductionism is not the only candidate for 'diagnostic deconstruction.' Semantic and intentional reductivism is a natural upshot of meaning determinism, and unless we cure ourselves of the latter, we can never be sure that we are free of the inclination to be tempted by the former.[71]

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[70] 'Wittgenstein on Following a Rule,' p.243.
[71] *A Sceptical Guide to Meaning and Rules*, p.227.

This passage is striking for me. I cannot see why Kripke's Wittgenstein would oppose to reductionism, let alone 'obviously' does so. Kusch does not give any justification as far as I can tell. Moreover, it is not true that there is a close relation between meaning determinism and reductionism. When Kripke demands us to find some fact to sustain meaning, he constrains us with a reductive requirement. Quine is another prominent example of reductionism about meaning, but he is the last one who will accept meaning determinism.[72] The above quotation is really confusing.

The last objection from Kusch is not very clear. He seems to say that McDowell's position is not a stable one:

> Can we read McDowell differently? Can we perhaps read him as proposing an improved version of meaning determinism: meaning determinism without the master thesis? I doubt that this reading can be squared with McDowell's commitments. McDowell's position questions or rejects almost all meaning-determinist assumptions...This rules out immediate knowledge, privacy, and the individualistic contractual of semantic normativity…As far as objectivity goes, McDowell seeks to find a middle way between 'platonistic autonomy' and 'ratification dependence'…This is weaker than the meaning determinist's objectivity, which seems to be precisely a form of the autonomy thesis. Finally, McDowell does not advocate full-blown classical realism with its inflationary factualism.[73]

McDowell is obviously not an indeterminist, and he rejects Kripke's master thesis, that understanding is a species of interpretation. Therefore, to read him as proposing a version of meaning determinism without the master thesis is definitely a natural reading. Kusch nevertheless thinks this is a 'different' reading of McDowell, which shows that he misunderstands McDowell from the very beginning, though I am not sure at what point. What's more, all the above descriptions of McDowell's position just show that his determinism is quite unique, without traditional determinisms' assumptions. McDowell's overall philosophical concern is to make meaning and understanding unproblematic, so he is no doubt a determinist, though with various delicate provisos.

5. Why do Kripke and Wright (probably not Brandom) want a picture that starts

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[72] Quine elaborates his indeterminacy thesis in various places, but see his *Word and Object* for a classic presentation. My supervisor Lin Chung I reminds me that there are issues about whether Quine is a reductionist, as opposed to an eliminativist. I understand this concern, but I need to bypass it in order to keep my main line.
[73] *A Sceptical Guide to Meaning and Rules*, p.227-8.

from meaningless noises and behaviors? To answer this diagnostic question, I shall turn to the well-known dichotomy between psychologism and behaviorism, between the Cartesian and the Rylean.[74] Kripke starts with a Cartesian model in formulating the paradox, and that makes mental states idle with respect to meaning. This leads him to end up with a Rylean conception of meaning and understanding. His solution is Rylean in the sense that he does not have a place for membership in his picture. The insulated-individuals conception of community does not allow people make contact with one another's meaning. The source of the paradox, then, is that he cannot get rid of the dichotomy between psychologism and behaviorism.

The dichotomy is deeply-rooted in the analytic tradition. Traditional empiricisms and rationalisms share the psychologistic conception of language, and from early 20th century the behavioristic atmosphere took over. Philosophers struggle between the two seemingly mutually exhaustive options.

Kripke is not alone in the framework between the Cartesian and the Rylean. In *Word and Object*, Quine notices this dichotomy and happily endorses behaviorism. Quine writes:

> One may accept the Brentano thesis either as showing the indispensability of intentional idioms and the importance of an autonomous science of intention, or as showing the baselessness of intentional idioms and the emptiness of a science of intention. My attitude, unlike Brentano's, is the second.[75]

I am not here attacking behaviorism; I just want to stress that the dichotomy is often seen in important philosophers' thinking. Many of them never question the dichotomy, however. Now Kripke's case is more complicated. On the one hand, one of his main points is to challenge a version of Cartesianism: he argues that one's confidence about one's own meaning – one's self-knowledge – is an illusion. On the other, he explicitly distances himself from behaviorism.[76] He seems to be aware of the predicament followed from the dichotomy, but nevertheless end up with a Rylean picture unintentionally. Now Michael Dummett also wants to find a middle course between the two extremes. McDowell argues that Dummett commits similar mistake in the sense that he is also too close to behaviorism. This debate between Dummett and McDowell is not in the context of rule-following, so I shall briefly describe it and relate it to the present discussion.[77]

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[74] As usual, I am not using these adjectives of philosophers' names in a very strict way.

[75] *Word and Object*, p.221. Daniel Dennett follows him in *The Intentional Stance* (MIT Press, 1987), p.175.

[76] See Kripke's attitude toward Quine in *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*, pp.14-5, 55-8.

[77] The reason I bring this debate in is that it is about what a theory of meaning should be like, e.g. should we accept reductionism? McDowell's thought is that the puzzle about meaning that makes

The locus of their disagreement is Davidson's truth-theoretic view of meaning. Details aside, the main question here is about what we should expect in our theory of meaning. Dummett thinks that our meaning theory should be 'full-blooded': intensional notions are 'of no use in giving an account of the language as from the outside.'[78] McDowell, by contrast, thinks that our theory of meaning should be modest. This is a debate between reductionism and non-reductionism, which is highly relevant to the main topic of the present episode. Kripke imposes reductionist's requirement when he demands anti-skeptics to cite facts that does not themselves involve meaning, and primitivism is a version of non-reductionism, for it insists on the *sui generis* character of meaning.

Dummett thinks, following Quine, that modesty is inevitably psychologistic.[79] McDowell summarizes this as follows:

Now one strand in Dummett's objection to modesty is the view that modesty necessarily involves this conception of language as a code [that is, psychologism.]… [A modest theory] is intelligible only on the supposition that adherents of modesty imagine the task…delegated to a prior and independent theory of *thought*.[80]

And Dummett thinks psychologism is objectionable:

[I]f communication is to be possible, that in which our understanding of the language we speak consists must 'lie open to view, as Frege maintained that it does, in our use of the language, in our participation in a common practice.'[81]

We should credit Dummett in insisting that meaning should not be considered as lying behind behaviors. But the question is how he can achieve this given his requirement of full-bloodedness. 'How, then can a description of the practice of speaking a language "as from outside" content succeed in registering the role of mind? How can it be more than a mere description of outward behaviour, with the mental (inner) aspect of language use left out of account?'[82]

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philosophers oscillate back and forth between psychologism and behaviorism, and Kripke does not succeed in developing a stable position. In his objections to Dummett, McDowell explicitly discusses this oscillation, so I think it is helpful to relate it to the rule-following issue. For this reason, I will only discuss Dummett's oscillation and McDowell's way out. Issues surrounded Davidson will be omitted.

[78] 'Frege and Wittgenstein,' in Irving Block (ed.) *Perspectives on the Philosophy of Wittgenstein* (Blackwell, Oxford, 1981), at p.40.

[79] See the quotation from *Word and Object* above.

[80] 'In Defense of Modesty,' in Barry Taylor (ed.) *Michael Dummett: Contributions to Philosophy* (Martinus Nijhoff, Dordrecht, 1987), pp.59-80; reprinted in his *Meaning, Knowledge, and Reality*, pp.87-107, at pp.93-4.

[81] Ibid., p.94.

[82] Ibid., p.94.

Now one particular objection from McDowell is especially relevant. It is about Dummett's example of attribution of the concept *square*. McDowell argues:

> Can implicit knowledge that that is how *square* things are to be treated be manifested in behaviour, characterized 'as from outside' content? It may seem that nothing could be simpler: the manifestation would be someone's treating a square thing in whatever way is in question. But any such performance would be an equally good manifestation of any of an indefinite number of different pieces of such implicit knowledge…If we assume a stable propensity, guided by an unchanging piece of implicit knowledge, we can use further behaviour to rule out some of these competing candidates. But no finite set of performances would eliminate them all; and finite sets of performances are all we get.[83]

Under this construal, Dummett's position is strikingly similar to Quine's.[84] Both of them think modesty – non-reductionism – goes hand in hand with psychologism. Both of them think somehow behaviors or dispositions of behavior can manifest meaning (if any.) Quine famously shows that meaning is underdetermined with respect to behaviors. If we combine this with reductive behaviorism, indeterminacy is home and dry. Now, Dummett rejects this and attempt to steer between psychologism and behaviorism. However, his insistence on full-bloodedness commits him the Quinean line of reasoning. It's not clear how he can block this route given the requirement of full-bloodedness.

Now how does McDowell steer the middle course? Since psychologism is not desirable, our mindedness must somehow manifest in our behaviors. But if we insist that the characterization must be 'as from outside,' we fall in the trap of behaviorism, and thereby commit Quinean indeterminacy. The solution is to insist that meaning does manifest in behaviors, *but* characterizations of them must be modest: we should not expect we can characterize behaviors in meaning-free terms. McDowell writes:

> Steering that middle course requires the difficult idea that competence in a language is an ability to embody one's mind – the cast of one's thoughts – in words that one speaks, and to hear others' thoughts in their words… [W]e have to entitle ourselves to the idea that acquiring a first language is, not learning a behavioural outlet for antecedent states of mind, but becoming *minded* in ways that the language is anyway able to express. We have to equip ourselves to see how our ability to have dealings with content can be, not a mere natural endowment (something we can take for

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[83] Ibid., p.96.

[84] I leave open whether McDowell's interpretation of Dummett is fair. This goes far beyond the purposes of mine.

granted), but an achievement, which an individual attains by acquiring membership in a linguistic community.[85]

The talk about 'membership' ensures that McDowell has the same thing in mind when he takes issue with Kripke and Dummett. To further confirm this, recall that in discussing rule-following, McDowell says that '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.*'[86] Thus, his debate with Dummett on modesty can be regarded as a suitable diagnosis of Kripke's skeptic.

We have seen that in the picture McDowell recommends, the notion of 'custom' plays an indispensably crucial role: to be a genuine thinker, one has to be initiated into relevant customs. And to be initiated into customs is to acquire a language:

Now it is not even clearly intelligible to suppose a creature might be born at home in the space of reasons. Human beings are not: they are born mere animals, and they are transformed into *thinkers* and intentional agents in the course of coming to maturity. This transformation risks looking mysterious. But we can take it in our stride if, in our conception of the *Bildung* that is a central element in the normal maturation of human beings, we give pride of place to the learning of *language*. In being initiated into a language, a human being is introduced into something that already embodies putatively rational linkages between concepts, putatively constitutive of the layout of *the space of reasons*, before she comes on the scene.[87]

So the notion of 'a language' is indeed vital for McDowell's overall picture. Given this, it is interested to learn that Donald Davidson famously remarks that 'there is no such thing as *a language*, not if a language is anything like what many philosophers and linguists have supposed.'[88] A more intimate relation can be found in Davidson's negative attitude towards Kripkenstein's ways of thinking:

What would matter [for communication]…is that we should each provide the other with something understandable as a language. This is an intention speakers must have; but carrying out this intention…does *not involve following shared rules* or

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[85] Ibid., pp.104-5.
[86] 'Wittgenstein on Following a Rule,' p.253.
[87] *Mind and World*, p.125, my italics.
[88] 'A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs,' in Richard E. Grandy and Richard Warner (eds.) *Philosophical Grounds of Rationality* (Oxford University Press, 1986); reprinted in his *Truth, Language, and History* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 2005), pp.89-107, at p.107, my italics.

conventions.[89]

If Davidson is right, then the whole discussion of rule-following is misguided. Is this also a knock-down objection to McDowell's proposal? I shall respond to this concern in my next section.

Bildung

1.   When he first tackles the relevant issues, Davidson formulates the question like this: 'could there be *communication* by language without convention?'[90] His main opponent Dummett also regards 'communication' as one of the principal functions of language.[91] Given this common ground, the debate is about the primary status of a shared language, as Davidson puts: '[w]hich is conceptually primary, the idiolect or the language?'[92] His opts for the former:

> in learning a language, a person acquires the ability to operate in accord with a precise and specifiable set of syntactic and semantic rules; verbal communication depends on speaker and hearer sharing such an ability, and it requires no more than this. I argued that sharing such a previously mastered ability was neither necessary nor sufficient for successful linguistic communication.[93]

On the face of it, Davidson's main argument for his case is based on counterexamples, notably malapropism.[94] A malapropism is a wrong use of one world instead of another because they sound similar to each other, and what's interesting is that the occurrences of malapropism often do not prevent successful communication. One of Davidson's examples is between 'a nice arrangement of epithets' and 'a nice derangement of

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[89] 'The Second Person,' in Peter A. French, Theodore E. Uehling, and Howard K. Wettstein (eds.) *Midwest Studies in Philosophy 17: The Wittgenstein Legacy* (Indianapolis: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992); reprinted in his *Subjective, Intersubjective, Objective* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 2001), pp.107-21, at p.114, my italics. In a footnote in the next page Davidson reminds his readers that his point there is related to the point he argues in 'A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs' that 'communication does not demand that language be shared.'

[90] 'Communication and Convention,' *Synthesis* 59 (1984), pp.3-17; reprinted in his *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1984), pp.265-80, at p.265, my italics. Here Davidson invokes the notion of 'convention,' but it is interchangeable with 'rule' and 'regularities' in his context.

[91] 'Language and Communication,' in Alexander George (ed.) *Reflections on Chomsky* (Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1989), pp.192-212. The other principal function is 'vehicle of thought.'

[92] 'The Social Aspect of Language,' in B. F. McGuinness and Gianluigi Oliveri (eds.) *The Philosophy of Michael Dummett* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1994), pp.1-16; reprinted in his *Truth, Language, and History* (Clarendon Press, Oxford,, 2005), pp.109-25, at p.109.

[93] Ibid., p.110.

[94] To be sure, Davidson's claim here is supported by his view about linguistic meaning as a whole. By 'the main argument' I mean the *most direct* argument. To investigate Davidson's entire argumentations will obviously take us too far.

epitaphs.'[95] Davidson's thinks that in this kind of case, speaker and hearer can understand each other without sharing any common understanding of the contingent usages of the words involved. If this is right, to approach the issues of linguistic meaning with the rule-following considerations is wrongheaded, for linguistic behaviors are not *essentially* rule-governed practices; 'shared linguistic practice' has merely practical utility.'[96]

McDowell does not dispute this; as he says, '[m]alapropisms provide *clear* counterexamples – cases where understanding is not disrupted by mismatches between speaker and hearer in respect of anything we might see as rules to which they conform their linguistic behavior.'[97] Where Davidson denies 'portable interpreting machine,'[98] Gadamer contemns 'method.' What McDowell objects to is the following inference:

Now to make a leap. There seems to me to be no reason, in theory at least, why speakers who understand each other *ever* need to speak, or to *have* spoken, as anyone else speaks, much less as each other speaks.[99]

This is indeed a 'leap,' for cases like malapropisms (or 'two monoglot survivors' scenario[100]) do not warrant a 'perfective' claim. Davidson of course knows this, so his ground for the further claim is not those examples, but the argument from 'absence of negative reason.' McDowell's response to this challenge is in effect providing a reason against that perfective claim. He writes,

Davidson's claims commit him to denying that one needs to learn to speak as others do, in the ordinary sense, in order to become a *human subject*, a potential party to an encounter with another that leads to mutual understanding, at all.[101]

McDowell doubts that 'Davidson ever considers the thought that shared languages might matter for the constitution of subjects of understanding,' for '[h]is target is always the conception of a sharing that would suffice of itself for *communication*,'[102] as we have seen at the beginning of this section. But if McDowell is right about the

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[95] 'A nice Derangement of Epitaphs,' p.103.

[96] 'Gadamer and Davidson on Understanding and Relativism,' in Jeff Malpas, Ulrich Arnswald, and Jens Kertscher (eds.) *Gadamer's Century: Essays in Honor of Hans-Georg Gadamer* (MIT Press, 2002), pp.173-93, at p182.

[97] 'Gadamer and Davidson on Understanding and Relativism,' pp.181-2, my italics.

[98] 'A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs,' p.107.

[99] 'The Social Aspect of Language,' p.115, my italics.

[100] 'Gadamer and Davidson on Understanding and Relativism,' p.183.

[101] Ibid., p.183, my italics.

[102] Ibid., p.184, my italics.

rule-following discussions, as discussed in my previous section, then to be a thinker is to be initiated into relevant customs, and to start the initiation is to be a speaker. A shared language is indispensable not because linguistic practices are *essentially* rule-following behaviors – they are not, as shown by malapropisms and the like – but because it is responsible for the constitution of a genuine thinker. Davidson makes the unfortunate leap, for he overlooks the possibility McDowell argues for in the context of the rule-following considerations.[103]

   McDowell agrees with Davidson that 'familiarity with a human way of life [is] surely not just aids to arriving at understanding,' but he adds that a form of life is 'conditions for being potential subjects of understanding at all.'[104] Relatedly, Davidson is hostile to the idea of 'non-linguistic institution,'[105] and to this McDowell replies:

   A 'language-game' cannot be confined to bursts of speech. It is a whole in which
   verbal behavior is integrated into a form of life, including practices that if considered
   on their own would have to be counted as nonlinguistic.[106]

2.   It is helpful to take stock before I close the present episode. The discussions of rule-following have been very heated for about twenty-five years, since the publication of Kripke's *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*. Most participants don't accept Kripke's interpretation of Wittgenstein, including the 'paradox' part and the 'solution' part. Nevertheless, most (if not all) of them assume with Kripke that linguistic behaviors are essentially rule-following practices. Now as we have seen, Davidson is skeptical about this idea; he attempts to *resolve* the debate by arguing against the essentialist claim. Now McDowell concurs with Davidson at this point, but he refuses to accept Davidson's further 'leap,' namely the 'perfective' claim. So we can say that Davidson gestures the right direction but unfortunately goes too far. Therefore it is potentially misleading to regard McDowell as a player in the rule-following battlefield: though he rejects Davidson's excessive move, he nonetheless sides with Davidson in thinking that the 'rule-following considerations' generated by Kripke's interpretation of Wittgenstein is misguided, philosophically speaking. Communication *per se* does not, *contra* many philosophers' convictions, involve shared rules essentially, but being able to understanding does, *pace* Davidson.

   In my introductory episode, I said something about how McDowell's Locke

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[103] McDowell invokes Brandom's distinction between '*I-thou* sociality' and '*I-we* sociality' to conduct further discussions. See *Making It Explicit*, p.659, for citing Davidson with approval. Through this, we can see that McDowell's requirement of publicity is more demanding than Davidson and Brandom.
[104] Ibid., p.184-5.
[105] 'The Social Aspect of Language,' p.119.
[106] 'Gadamer and Davidson on Understanding and Relativism,' p.185.

Lecture relies on Gadamer's thinking about *Bildung*. Now we see more intimate connections between this notion and a central issue in analytic philosophy. 'The idea of inheriting a *tradition* helps us to understand what is involved in possessing conceptual capacities…'[107] Through a careful reading of Wittgenstein's notions of 'custom' and 'form of life,' McDowell shows us how the resources from continental thinkers can after all shed light on central concerns in the analytic tradition. I shall finally conclude this episode with the following passage:

Human beings mature into being at home in the space of reasons or, what comes to the same thing, living their lives in the world; we can make sense of that by noticing that the *language* into which a human being is first initiated stands over against her as a prior embodiment of mindedness, of the possibility of an orientation to the world.[108]

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[107] Ibid., p.173, my italics.
[108] *Mind and World*, p.125, my italics.