Philosophical Investigations
Kripkenstein

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11/2/19
Last lecture

- We concluded Wittgenstein’s discussion of reading: it cannot be distinguished either by causation or guidance.
- We introduced the recalcitrant learner whose use of ‘+2’ deviates when considering numbers above 1000.
- There seems to be no fact in virtue of which the recalcitrant learner meant ‘+2’ and not some deviant rule.
- Generalising, is there a fact in virtue of which we mean ‘+2’ and not some deviant rule?
- Generalising further, is there a fact in virtue of which we mean anything?
Talk outline

Kripke’s Wittgenstein

Dispositions

The sceptical solution
Saul Kripke’s *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language* (1982) is the single most important secondary literature on PI. The views expressed are not all Kripke’s: he is ‘like an attorney presenting a major philosophical argument’ (p. ix). Nor are the views necessarily Wittgenstein’s: they are the arguments Kripke has ‘personally gotten out of reading Wittgenstein’ (p. 5). Rather, they are the views of Kripke’s Wittgenstein, or Kripkenstein. The arguments are based on §§138–201 of PI.
Kripke introduces a sceptic, who provides a case much like the recalitratant learner.

Consider the mathematical function of *quaddition*, expressed by the functor ‘⊕’ (pronounced ‘quus’):

\[ x \oplus y = x + y, \text{ if } x, y < 57; \]
\[ x \oplus y = 5 \text{ otherwise.} \]

7 + 5 = 12; 7 ⊕ 5 = 12

57 + 68 = 125; 57 ⊕ 68 = 5
The sceptic’s challenge

- Let’s say you have never added numbers greater than 56.
- What is the fact in virtue of which you have meant addition by ‘+’ in the past?
- You may list all of the facts about your training and introspectable states.
- You may list all of the facts God is aware of.
- You won’t find anything.
- Of course, this generalises.
- The challenge is not **epistemological** or **arithmetical**.
- It is **metaphysical** and **semantic**: we want a meaning fact.
Kripke adds a *normativity constraint* to any potential answer. Whatever fact you offer must be one awareness of which *guides* behaviour. In particular, the fact must tell you how to answer novel problems. Suppose it is a fact that ‘cube’ means *cube*. It follows that there are rules for the correct application of ‘cube’. In particular, ‘cube’ applies correctly to cubes but not to spheres.
Having set up the sceptic’s challenge, Kripke considers potential responses.

The first is that

1. *Internalized word.* ‘I arrive at answers by *counting*!’ But you could have been *quounting* all along.
2. *Internalized mental state.* ‘I have a mental state encoding the rule!’ But this could still be misinterpreted.
4. *Introspection.* ‘I have a *feeling* associated with adding!’ We have seen extensive arguments from Wittgenstein against this.
5. *Sui generis facts.* ‘Meaning facts are of their own sort!’ But how could such a fact meet the normativity constraint?
6. *Sense.* ‘My word ‘plus’ has the *sense* of addition!’ But why does ‘+’ not have the sense of quaddition. Also normativity.
Talk outline

Kripke’s Wittgenstein

Dispositions

The sceptical solution
Dispositional facts

- Kripke spends most time on the *dispositional* response.
- This is something we found in PI, but Kripke goes further.
- The fact is a *dispositional* one: at any time in your past, *were* you to have been asked for the sum of 68 and 57, you *would* have replied ‘125’.
- To mean addition by ‘+’ is to be disposed, when asked for the sum of $x$ and $y$, to answer with the sum.
Response 1: Finitude

- The challenge gets started because I’ve only performed *finitely* many calculations.
- But there are also only finitely many *counterfactual* calculations I can perform.
- We could *idealise*.
- But we’d have to idealise in the right way: if I was disposed to respond with the quum for large numbers, the response fails.
- How do we know that some extension of me would *add*?
- We cannot say that I must be extended to carry on using the rule in the same way.
- That’s clearly circular.
Response 1: Finitude

▶ Is there a non-question-begging move in the vicinity?
▶ We could idealise by adding memory and time
▶ No question-begging there.
▶ It seems an article of faith that this would work.
▶ But the response could work in non-mathematical cases.
Response 2: Mistakes

- I could be disposed to make mistakes.
- Maybe the relevant dispositions are those I would have on reflection.
- But I could be disposed to make mistakes even on reflection.
- Response: bite the bullet.
- If someone did have the dispositions to reply with the quum, even on reflection, maybe they did mean quaddition.
Response 3: Justification

- Maybe I have been disposed to add, and not quadd.
- But how does this fact *justify* my present usage?
- Maybe because I am *correct*: I *should* use my words that way, so I am justified.
- But this is an *external* sense of justified.
- The sceptic wants an *internal* sense, of the sort that can guide usage.
Normativity

- The most important response, Kripke thinks, comes from normativity.
- Dispositions only ever dictate how I would answer, not how I should:

  Am I supposed to justify my present belief that I meant addition, not quaddition, and hence should answer ‘125’, in terms of a hypothesis about my past dispositions? (Do I record and investigate the past physiology of my brain?) Why am I so sure that one particular hypothesis of this kind is correct, when all my past thoughts can be construed so that I meant plus or so that I meant quus? (p. 23)
The conclusion

This was our paradox: no course of action could be determined by a rule, because every course of action can be brought into accord with the rule. The answer was: if every course of action can be brought into accord with the rule, then it can also be brought into conflict with it. And so there would be neither accord nor conflict there. (PI, 201)

There can be no such thing as meaning anything by any word. Each new application we make is a leap in the dark; any present intention could be interpreted so as to accord with anything we may choose to do. So there can be neither accord, nor conflict. (WRPL, p. 54)
Talk outline

Kripke’s Wittgenstein

Dispositions

The sceptical solution
The sceptical solution

- The sceptical paradox is that there is no such thing as meaning.
- But that seems self-defeating.
- Kripke needs to rehabilitate a notion of meaning and he does so by introducing the *sceptical solution*.
- It is sceptical because it *accepts* the paradox.
- It is a solution because it still finds a place for meaning.
- Kripke contrasts this with a *straight* solution, which points to a flaw in the sceptic’s reasoning.
Sceptical solutions

- Sceptical solutions must somehow justify existing practices.
- They can either point to the *causes* of those practices,
- or they can *analyse* those practices.
- E.g. according to Kripke, Hume offered a sceptical solution of the first sort to the problem of induction.
- Our inductive belief that the sun will rise tomorrow is a conditioned response caused by our previous experience.
- The belief doesn’t have a rational justification, and it doesn’t need one.
According to Kripke, Berkeley provided a sceptical solution of the second kind.

He argued for scepticism about matter.

But what about my beliefs about matter?

On analysis, those beliefs are not about matter.

They are about ideas:

I am justified in believing that my computer is in my office in my absence because I’m justified in thinking that, were I in my office, I would have an idea of a computer.

Or God still has the idea.
Assertability conditions

- Kripke’s sceptical solution is of the second kind.
- Meaning ascriptions like $\text{M} \ I \text{ mean addition by ‘+’}$ do not describe any facts.
- This shows they should be analysed as having not *truth* but assertability-conditions.
- $\text{M}$ is justified because it is assertable.
- And it’s assertable because it has agreed with the use in my speech community.
Assertability conditions

- I am licensed to say
  \[ S \text{ Smith means addition by } ' + ' \]
  if their use matches mine.
- Such ascriptions are comparative.
- It is not that Smith and I have attached the same meaning to
  ‘+’.
- Rather, we *use* it in the same way.
- If Smith’s us of ‘+’ comes to deviate from mine, my warrant
  for S goes away.