

10. HOFFMAN ON KRIPKE'S WITTGENSTEIN

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ABSTRACT. Paul Hoffman (in "Kripke on Private Language", *Philosophical Studies* 47, 1985, 23-28) argues that Kripke's Wittgenstein fails in his solution to his own sceptical paradox. I argue that Hoffman fails to see the importance for Kripke's Wittgenstein of the distinction between agreement *in fact* and *judged* agreement. Hoffman is right that no solution to the sceptical paradox can be based on agreement *in fact*, but the solution of Kripke's Wittgenstein depends upon *judged* agreement. An interpretation is given: by 'judged agreement' Kripke's Wittgenstein does not mean *understanding* oneself to judge agreement but *having a feeling* of agreement. On this interpretation Hoffman's argument fails.

In his elegant essay, "Kripke on Private Language" (*Philosophical Studies* 47, 1985, 23-28), Paul Hoffman argues that Kripke's Wittgenstein fails in his solution to his own sceptical paradox. I shall argue that Hoffman fails to see the importance for Kripke's Wittgenstein of the distinction between agreement *in fact* and *judged* agreement. Hoffman is right that no solution to the sceptical paradox can be based on agreement *in fact*, but the solution of Kripke's Wittgenstein depends upon *judged* agreement and holds up against Hoffman's argument.¹

Hoffman points out that the sceptical paradox of Kripke's Wittgenstein is equivalent to the following paradox: for any finite number of tokens, there is no fact of the matter what type they are tokens of, so there is no fact of the matter whether another token is or is not of the same type. The sceptical solution which Kripke's Wittgenstein would offer to this sort of paradox concedes to the sceptic that we cannot as a matter of fact determine the type of a finite number of tokens, but finds another foundation for language.

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According to Hoffman:

The foundation for language proposed by Kripke's Wittgenstein is, in a nutshell, agreement in responses. Even though there is no fact of the matter which justifies one response over another, the mere fact that we agree in our responses is sufficient to make language possible. A wrong response is one that does not agree with those of the community, a correct response is one that does agree. If there were no common consensus, there could be no language. (25)

As Hoffman points out, this response assumes there is a fact as to whether or not we agree. But Hoffman's version of the sceptical paradox shows there is no such fact of agreement. Whereas Kripke's version of the paradox shows that there is no fact of the matter as to the *correctness* of one response over another to a problem such as '68 + 57', Hoffman's version shows that there is no fact of the matter as to the *difference or agreement* of one response and another:

This can be seen from the following considerations. That '125' and '5' as uttered or written on specific occasions are different responses cannot be a primitive fact about the token '125' and the token '5'. '5', 'five', 'H', and 'V' are different, but they are not different responses to '68 + 57'. What this example demonstrates is that we cannot differentiate token responses without reference to types of response. In order for two token utterances to be the same response to '68 + 57', it must be the case first, that there is a type of utterance such that every token of that type is the same response to '68 + 57', and second, that the two token utterances are tokens of that type. In order for two token utterances to be different responses to the problem '68 + 57', it must be the case first, that there are types of utterance such that each token of one type is a different response from each token of another type, and second, that one token is a token of one type and the other is a token of the other type. But the point of Wittgenstein's sceptical hypotheses is that the second condition cannot be met in either case. There is no fact of the matter which type a token is a token of. (25-26)

Hoffman concludes that the solution of Kripke's Wittgenstein is no solution at all, because "it is subject to the very sceptical hypotheses it is designed to circumvent". (26)

But the solution of Kripke's Wittgenstein does not depend on agreement in fact; it depends, ultimately, on what Kripke calls "introspectible, 'qualitative' states of the mind" (51).² His solution (like Berkeley's, to a related sceptical paradox) turns out to depend upon a Cartesian claim to certainty about inner mental states.

In his second Meditation, Descartes relieved his sceptical doubts with the claim that although *what* he doubts (e.g., his body's existence) is a matter for sceptical doubt, *that* he doubts is not. Although *what* he denies is a matter for sceptical doubt, *that* he denies this or that is not. And likewise with understanding, conceiving, affirming, willing, desiring, and rejecting:

Am I not that same person who now doubts almost everything, who nevertheless understands and conceives certain things, who is sure of and affirms the truth of this one thing alone, who denies all the others, who wills and desires to know more about them, who rejects error, who imagines many things, sometimes even against my will, and who also perceives many things, as through the medium of the senses or the organs of the body? Is there anything in all that which is not just as true as it is certain that I am and that I exist, even though I were always asleep and though the one who created me directed all his efforts to deluding me? . . . [O]nce more, even though it could happen that the things I imagine are not true, nevertheless this power of imagining cannot fail to be real. . . . Finally I am the same being which perceives--that is, which observes certain objects as though by means of the sense organs, because I do really see light, hear noises, feel heat. Will it be said that these appearances are false and that I am sleeping? Let it be so; yet at the very least it is certain that it seems to me that I see light, hear noises, and feel heat. This much cannot be false. [trans. Lafleur]

Descartes, then, holds up against the sceptic a list of indubitable psychological processes. Kripke's Wittgenstein, we shall see, strikes from this list of indubitables the processes of understanding speech and conceiving meanings. But Kripke's Wittgenstein retains as indubitable many of the other traditional Cartesian certainties.

This can be seen from the following consideration of Kripke's book. Kripke's Wittgenstein distinguishes as *genuinely introspectible* such states as "headaches, tickles, nausea" (41), "the experience of a blue after-image" (42), "feeling a pain, seeing red, and the like" (44), "a pain's growing more and less; the hearing of a tune or sentence" (49), and also--crucial to his sceptical solution--the feeling "Now I can go on!" (44), the "confident inclination that this way (say, responding '125') is the right way to respond, rather than another way (e.g., responding '5')" (87-88), the feeling which teachers have that the child has given the same answer as they themselves would give (90), the feeling that something must have happened to a man, that he is no longer following the rule he previously followed, that he has gone insane (90). By contrast, Kripke's Wittgenstein distinguishes *pseudo-introspectible* states such as "reading out loud what is printed or written and similar activities" (45), saying something learned by heart (47), adding (48), and--to be singled out by his sceptical paradox--meaning addition by 'plus' (44). It follows from the final example that speaking a language is a pseudo-introspectible state.

Notice that by this demonstration, the feeling 'Eureka!--I now grasp the rule!' is genuinely introspectible, but the actual understanding involved in grasping the rule is not. Moreover, Kripke's Wittgenstein must take it that this particular sort of introspectible 'Eureka-confidence', though easiest to indicate by using a sentence, does not require that the person feeling the confidence have understanding of any of the sentences 'Eureka', 'Now I can go on', or 'I now grasp this rule'. We use a similar device in specifying the feelings of animals: we can speak of a

cat's parched-throat feeling or wet-fur feeling without attributing to the cat the concepts of *parched throat* or *wet fur*.

Kripke's Wittgenstein does not claim that there is *no* introspectible 'feel' to the pseudo-introspectible states (n. 29, 46-48); what he claims is that with the pseudo-state my introspectible feeling is probably irrelevant and certainly no guarantee that I am in that state. Here the sceptic can ply his trade. By contrast, with genuinely introspectible states, my introspectible feeling is a guarantee that I am in that state. Here the sceptic cannot ply. Kripke claims:

Such phenomena, inasmuch as they are introspectible, 'qualitative' states of the mind, are not subject to immediate sceptical challenge of the present type. (50-51)

I claim that with this distinction "the decisive move in the conjuring trick" has been made. (The same distinction, though drawn in somewhat different places, is the decisive move in both Berkeley's and Descartes' conjury.) Kripke's Wittgenstein now can answer the sceptic. The states of understanding and speaking a language have fallen victim (alas!) to the sceptic; for there is no genuine introspection of the meaning of words. But there are states left which the sceptic cannot reasonably question, for they are genuinely introspectible. By referring to these states we can devise rules describing utterances; from these states we can devise the rules of language games. As Berkeley proclaimed the death of substance and replaced it with ideas, Kripke's Wittgenstein proclaims the death of understanding and speaking and replaces them with language games and allowable utterances.

The foundation for the language games are two sorts of states: feelings of confidence and brute urges to utter particular noises. Kripke lumps these two sorts of states together under the head of "inclinations":

These inclinations (both Jones's general inclination that he has 'got it' and his particular inclination to give particular answers in particular addition problems) are to be regarded as primitive. (90-91)

'Inclination' may be a misleading term. It must not be taken to refer to dispositions, which are non-introspectible. The urges and feelings which Kripke's Wittgenstein has in mind are certainly not dispositions.

To claim that these feelings are genuinely introspectible is *not* to claim that the feelings are justified nor to claim that the feelings can be or need be justified. Utterances based on such feelings are cases of "what Wittgenstein calls speaking without 'justification' (*Rechtfertigung*), but not 'wrongfully' (*zu Unrecht*)". (87)

Given these feelings and urges, Hoffman's version of the sceptical paradox is solved as easily as the original. Though I may not *understand* that '125' is a different type of response from '5', nonetheless I may *feel*, to quote Kripke, the "confident inclination that this way (say, responding '125') is the right way to respond, rather than another way (e.g. responding '5')" (87-88), and nonetheless I may feel the confident inclination that the response '125' differs from (or agrees with) the response '5', or the confident inclination that '125' and '5' are different

types as well as different tokens--these feelings are no more mysterious than the feeling a teacher has that the child has given the same answer as he himself would give. Such feelings must not be confused with what, on account of the sceptic, we have already conceded to be a mirage, namely understanding.

Hoffman does not appear to recognize that Kripke's Wittgenstein depends on judged agreement, not agreement in fact. But Hoffman does consider and reject attempts to make language depend on judged agreement. He says that such attempts must fail because "the sceptical hypotheses can be applied again to show that there is no differentiating between judgments of agreement and disagreement" (26).

Hoffman may be making either of two points here. First, he may be pointing out that, just as it is according to the sceptical paradox impossible for me to *understand* when others in fact agree with me, so too it is impossible for me to *understand* when others judge themselves to agree with me. This point is right; Kripke's Wittgenstein has shown it is true even when the other person is myself in the past. But this point does not affect the solution of Kripke's Wittgenstein. To see why, consider an over-simple case: suppose that I, a child, following a confident inclination, have answered an arithmetic problem. I will be justified in judging my answer wrong if I then judge (which requires inclinations, not understanding) the teacher to disagree with my answer. Any alleged fact of the matter as to whether the teacher does agree or judges himself to agree with me is irrelevant to this "game".

There is a second point Hoffman may have in mind, which is that there is no way for me to differentiate (not the teacher's judgments, as above, but) my own judgments. This point too is right: there is no way for me to *understand* my own judgments, whether they affirm or deny or even are judgments at all. Kripke's Wittgenstein has shown that understanding fails of myself in the present as well as in the past: "if there was no such thing as my meaning plus rather than quus in the past, neither can there be any such thing in the present" (21). Kripke's Wittgenstein will say there can be no such thing as my meaning (or understanding myself to mean) agreement or judged agreement in the present. But this point, like the first, does not affect his solution. Understanding plays no part in the case described above, only inclinations are needed. Thus Hoffman's criticism of the sceptical solution makes a correct claim but fails to disarm the solution.

I said earlier that the term 'inclination' may mislead. So may the term 'introspection', insofar as it implies that we privately can differentiate, i.e., *understand* the difference, between a headache and a tickle. But understanding can play no part in the introspection of Kripke's Wittgenstein. This is an immediate consequence of the sceptical paradox, which showed that there is no such thing as the meaning of 'plus'. The "sceptical problem applies to all meaningful uses of language" (7, cf. 19-20). Thus there is no such thing as the meaning of 'headache' or 'tickle'. As a consequence, understanding plays no role in the Cartesian certainty of Kripke's Wittgenstein. For appropriate psychological states (listed above, 179), not my understanding but my feeling such-and-such is the guarantee that I am in such states.

Hoffman has a second reason for saying judged agreement will not provide a satisfactory solution:

[O]nce we abandon the claim that there is a fact of the matter that our responses agree, then we abandon the distinction between public and private language. . . . [T]he mere fact that my present responses seem to be in accord with my past responses should be sufficient to insure the possibility of a private language. Thus the sceptical solution cannot do the philosophical work it is intended to do of distinguishing between a public and a private language. (26)

In my opinion, Hoffman is entirely right that, analogously to language games based upon judged agreement and disagreement in a community, I can construct or find a community of selves within myself (whether of past and present selves or even perhaps of separate selves existing at the same time). Kripke strikes me as wrong to try to deny this (n. 88, 112). No matter. So long as Hoffman leaves unquestioned the distinction between genuine and pseudo-introspectible states, so long as he allows that meaning and understanding and hence speaking a language are not genuinely introspectible while headaches and tickles are, his analogy only reinforces the claim of Kripke's Wittgenstein that there is no such thing as private language. For his analogy requires a community of "other" selves, whom I must judge sometimes to disagree with my own responses. His is the exception which proves the rule.³

ENDNOTES

¹ The second section of Warren Goldfarb's "Kripke on Wittgenstein on Rules", *Journal of Philosophy* 82 (1985), 471-88, suffers from this same failure.

² All page references to Kripke's Wittgenstein and Kripke are to his book, *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language: An Elementary Exposition* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982).

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