24 Hence Mackie's error is not committed. (It is a fascinating question whether Plato himself was a moral platonist in the sense here envisaged: I am myself inclined to think he was not.)

25 On these lines: to "perceive" that a proposition is, say, a conclusion by *modus ponens* from premisses one has already accepted, since it constitutes having a reason to accept the proposition, is really an amalgam of a neutral perception and a desire (cf. non-cognitivism); or the perception constitutes having a reason only in conjunction with a desire (cf. descriptivism). I am indebted to Susan Hurley here.

26 For the suggestion that Wittgenstein's philosophy of mathematics yields a model for a satisfactory conception of the metaphysics of value, see Wiggins, *op. cit.*, pp. 369–71.

27 Simon Blackburn pressed this question, and what follows corresponds to nothing in the paper I read at the conference.

28 I mean those who are content with a view of values on the lines of, e.g., A. J. Ayer, *Language, Truth and Logic*, Gollancz, London, 1936, Chapter VI.

29 The pressure towards a conception of reality as objective, transcending how things appear to particular points of view, is not something to which it is clearly compulsory to succumb in all contexts, for all its necessity in the natural sciences. See Thomas Nagel, "Subjective and objective", in his *Mortal Questions*, Cambridge University Press, 1979.

3

WITTGENSTEIN ON RULES AND PLATONISM

David H. Finkelstein

A rule or an instruction provides a standard against which a person trying to follow it may be judged – as either behaving in accord with it or not. For example, my copy of the *Better Homes and Gardens New Cookbook* includes a recipe for chocolate soufflé that begins with the following instruction: "Beat 3 egg yolks till thick and lemon-colored; set aside." Imagine that you are helping me make a chocolate soufflé. I read this instruction aloud to you, and you proceed to engage in various activities around my kitchen. You locate a heavy porcelain bowl and place it on the counter; you find a wire whisk and set it next to the bowl; you open the refrigerator and pull out a carton of eggs. . . . Your activities may, in the end, satisfy – i.e., be in accord with – the instruction I've given you.

Here, a philosopher might ask: "How is it that, in a situation like this, you come to grasp which of your activities would accord, or fail to accord, with a sequence of noises that you've heard? How, for that matter, is it that a sequence of activities *can* accord, or fail to accord, with a sequence of noises or marks?" Especially since the publication of Saul Kripke's enormously influential book on Wittgenstein in 1982,[1] questions such as these have been taken to lie at the heart of Wittgenstein's concerns in his later writings. Nonetheless, confusion still surrounds what he has to say about them. In what follows I shall discuss Wittgenstein's dissatisfaction with one approach to answering these questions. The approach that I have in mind – a kind of platonism about meaning and understanding – is taken up by Wittgenstein's interlocutor in passages such as the following:

> How does it come about this arrow ›››——› *points*? Doesn't it seem to carry in it something besides itself? – "No, not the dead line on paper; only the psychical thing, the meaning, can do that."[2]

In this passage, Wittgenstein's interlocutor is struck by the thought that a written sign is just an ink mark, just a "dead line on paper." In order to explain how such a thing could have a kind of significance that random squiggles lack, he imagines something *behind* the line on paper – something hidden – which, as it were, infuses it with significance.

Let us say, provisionally, that a platonist about meaning is someone who, in an effort to explain how mere noises and marks can have semantic significance, is

driven to posit self-standing *sources* of significance – items which stand to the significance of our dead marks and noises as the sun stands to the light of the moon.[3] While Wittgenstein's commentators agree that some such view figures as an important target of criticism in his discussions of rule-following, I believe that most of them badly misunderstand the character – the depth, as it were – of this criticism: they read Wittgenstein as endorsing one or another position that participates in the very thing to which he objects in platonism. (In what follows, Crispin Wright will serve as an example of such a commentator.) The aim of this paper is to elucidate Wittgenstein's response to platonism. I believe that we can understand a good deal of what seems most opaque in his later writings by coming to appreciate just what it is that he does and does not find objectionable in platonism.

1 Rules and platonism: some preliminary remarks

In this section, I shall briefly describe the way in which platonism emerges as a temptation in Wittgenstein's discussions of rule-following. I'll go on to say a little bit about what's unsatisfactory in the platonist's understanding of rule-following. The deep problem that Wittgenstein sees in platonism – the one shared by platonists and anti-platonists alike – will come to light only later in the paper.

At *Investigations*, §185, Wittgenstein asks us to imagine a pupil who has been taught to write out various mathematical series when given instructions of the form "+n." His teacher says, "+2," and he writes, "2, 4, 6," etc. But when the pupil is asked to continue the +2 series beyond 1000, he writes, "1000, 1004, 1008." Two questions arise: first, how is the pupil supposed to know what the order calls for him to do after he's written "1000"? (He has not been *explicitly* trained to write "1002" immediately after "1000.") And second, what determines that "1002" is in fact what he's supposed to write at that point; what fixes it that writing "1002" after "1000" would be in accord with the teacher's instruction?

One kind of answer to these questions would appeal to the notion of interpretation. We might say that what determines that the teacher's utterance – "+2" – calls for the pupil to write "1002" immediately after "1000" is that the teacher attaches a particular interpretation to it. We might say, moreover, that the pupil's understanding the utterance requires that he attach the same, or a suitably similar, interpretation to it.

But here we run into a problem. For let us allow that the teacher and the pupil *do* attach an interpretation – the same interpretation – to what the teacher says. Let's say that they both take "+2" to mean: *write "2,4,6," and just continue to write the next but one number after every number that you've written*. How is the pupil to know that *this* sentence requires him to write "1002" after "1000"? And what determines that this sentence does indeed call for "1002" to be written at that point?

If we say that what a rule requires or means is determined by its interpretation, we are left wondering how the interpretation gets *its* meaning. If we say that the interpretation requires its *own* interpretation, an infinite regress threatens: each interpretation that we introduce requires the support of another. Thus at *Investigations*, §198, Wittgenstein writes: "[A]ny interpretation still hangs in the air along with what it interprets, and cannot give it any support. Interpretations by themselves do

not determine meaning." This conclusion gives rise to the famous "paradox" of *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.

Now, we can think of platonism as a desperate attempt to block the infinite regress of interpretations that gives rise to the paradox of §201. The platonist posits special items which – unlike noises, marks and gestures – are, as it were, intrinsically significant: they neither need nor brook interpretation. According to the platonist, what saves our words from emptiness is that such items stand behind them. The regress of interpretations doesn't arise as a problem because these intrinsically significant items neither need be, nor can be, interpreted. We should read Wittgenstein as describing the impulse toward such a position when he writes: "What one wishes to say is: 'Every sign is capable of interpretation; but the *meaning* mustn't be capable of interpretation. It is the last interpretation.'"[4]

* * *

I want to mention two reasons why we ought to be dissatisfied with a platonistic account of meaning and understanding. One is: if we say that all of our words and gestures derive their semantic significance from items that lie hidden behind them, communication comes to look deeply problematic. How is it that when I say something to you, you not only hear my words – you generally grasp my meaning? A platonist might say: "My words and gestures can be interpreted any which way, but the thing behind them – the meaning – needs no interpretation. Now, I can't convey this item directly to my interlocutor. All that I can do is talk to him, or gesture to him, and all my words and gestures can be interpreted in various ways. But if he's lucky, he'll guess what I have in mind and understand me."[5]

On this picture of things, if you and I are to successfully communicate, we must be fortunate enough to guess each other's meanings correctly. Not only must we correctly guess the meanings of each other's words; there is no way for us to determine that any of our guesses have been correct. You can't tell me whether I've guessed your meaning correctly because you can only guess at what I have guessed. Given this picture of communication, a *conversation* might be modeled by the following game. You draw a picture on a piece of paper that is blocked from my view. Although I can't see your drawing, I try to produce a copy of it on a piece of paper that *you* can't see. We go back and forth like this without ever showing each other our drawings.[6]

I said that I would mention two problems with platonism, with the picture of meaning as "the last interpretation." One of these is that platonism makes communication look miraculous. Another is that the platonist really has no idea how anything *could* block the regress of interpretations and so be "the last interpretation" – no idea how something could be a fount from which our dead noises and marks derive their significance, rather than just another intrinsically contentless item

awaiting interpretation. The platonist is driven in the course of his theorizing to say that there are – there *must* be – such items, but they seem mysterious even to him.

* * *

In summary, we can think of platonism as entering Wittgenstein's discussion of rule-following as a desperate and unsatisfactory attempt to avoid the regress of interpretations which gives rise to the paradox of *Investigations*, §201. In his efforts to explain how rule-following is possible at all, the platonist finds himself driven to posit mysterious, regress-stopping items – items from which significance flows into all our signs and gestures, but which themselves neither need nor brook interpretation. The platonist himself has no real idea of how there could be such items nor of how they might be communicated.

2 Wright's "flat-footed response" to Kripke's skeptic

According to Kripke, what's at issue in Wittgenstein's discussions of rule-following is a form of skepticism according to which there are no facts concerning what our words mean. Kripke tries to illustrate the line of thought that leads to this remarkable conclusion by asking us to imagine a skeptic who challenges his interlocutor to show that, given what he'd always meant by the term "plus" in the past, the correct answer to the question, "What is 68 plus 57?" is "125" rather than "5." In other words, the skeptic challenges his interlocutor to prove that in the past he'd meant *plus* by "plus" rather than some function (the "quus" function) whose value is 5 when its arguments are 68 and 57. The interlocutor is to meet this skeptical challenge by citing facts about his own past life that his meaning *plus* by "plus" had consisted in. A range of facts are adduced – facts not only about how the interlocutor has interpreted the word "plus," but also about the circumstances under which he's used it, about his dispositions to use it and about occurrent mental episodes he's undergone in connection with it. The skeptic argues persuasively that none of these could have determined, for an infinity of possible applications of "plus," which ones would accord with what the interlocutor had meant by the word. The skeptic concludes that there is no fact about what his interlocutor had meant by "plus." From here, he argues that there are, in general, no facts about what our signs mean.

The problem raised by Kripke's skeptic threatens more than the idea that there are facts about what we mean when we speak and write. It is as much a problem about how there could be contentful *mental* states. Kripke's skeptic might have challenged his interlocutor to show that he'd ever had an *intention* to add (rather than to "quadd") with similar results. (Indeed, Kripke sometimes puts the point this way.) Just as a person's having meant something determinate by "plus" requires that there be facts about whether an infinity of possible uses of the word would accord with what she meant, someone's having had a determinate intention (or desire or wish) requires that there be facts about whether an infinity of possible states of affairs would accord with what she'd intended (or desired or wished). The conclusion reached by Kripke's skeptic amounts to the claim that there are no content-facts at all, and so no facts about what someone intends or wishes, any more than facts about what she means when she speaks.

According to Kripke, Wittgenstein recommends a "skeptical solution" to the problem that is posed by the skeptic, i.e., a response to skepticism which concedes "that the skeptic's negative assertions are unanswerable."[7] Precisely *which* negative assertions does Kripke take Wittgenstein to concede to the skeptic? Because Kripke's text invites more than one answer to this question, I find it difficult to get into clear focus the skeptical solution that he means to attribute to Wittgenstein.[8] There is, however, a prevailing interpretation of Kripke's Wittgenstein, and, for present purposes, it will suffice for me to summarize it. According to this interpretation, Kripke's Wittgenstein concedes to the skeptic that a sentence like "Jones means *plus* by 'plus'" (or "Jones intends to add") cannot be used to state a fact because there is nothing about Jones's behavior or state of mind for such a fact to consist in. What saves assertions about meaning from being pointless is that such talk may be used for purposes other than that of stating facts.[9] While a sentence like "Jones means *plus*" cannot be true, it may yet have a kind of correctness: its utterance may be justified within a communal language-game. Such a sentence may be used to register our acceptance of Jones into the linguistic community. We, as it were, pin a membership badge on him when we say, "He means *plus* by 'plus'"; we accept him as one of us.

* * *

At least as he is widely understood, then, Kripke takes the central conclusion of Wittgenstein's *Investigations* to be that there can be no fact of the matter concerning what it is that someone means, intends, or wishes. In a pair of papers by Crispin Wright to which I'll refer in what follows, Wright rejects this conclusion; moreover, he rejects the reading of the *Investigations* according to which Wittgenstein endorses it. Wright follows a number of other commentators[10] in noting that Kripke's skeptic unjustifiably assumes that if there are facts about content, they must reduce to facts that can be characterized in terms of contentless states and events:

> [T]here is an explicit and unacceptable reductionism involved at the stage at which the Sceptic challenges his interlocutor to recall some aspect of his former mental life which might constitute his, for example, having meant addition by 'plus'. It is not acceptable, apparently, if the interlocutor claims to recall precisely that.[11]

Wright says that the correct answer to the challenge raised by Kripke's skeptic is what he calls a "flat-footed response"[12] along the following lines: "The fact about my past usage of 'plus' that fixes it that I am now acting in accord with what I then meant by 'plus' is just that I meant *plus* by 'plus'." Wright, moreover, thinks that Wittgenstein would have endorsed such a response. But, he says, this leaves us with a real problem – that "of seeing how and why the correct answer just given can *be* correct."[13]

Wright begins his explanation of how and why the flat-footed response to Kripke's skeptic can be correct by describing a temptation which, he points out, Wittgenstein is concerned to undermine – the temptation to think that when I give someone a rule to follow, e.g., a rule governing an arithmetical series, I must somehow bring him to guess what I have in mind. I might say, "Continue the series that begins 2, 4, 6, 8, 10." Or I might say, "Start with 2 and just keep adding 2." But I can't

name *all* the numbers in the series, and *whatever* words I say to my interlocutor, they will be amenable to various interpretations, e.g., interpretations under which the series that I have in mind includes a segment that goes: 1000, 1004. So we are tempted to think that my interlocutor's coming to understand me aright requires that he guess at the essential thing *behind* my words – my meaning or intention – where this is understood to transcend any description or explanation that I can give of it. We are tempted, Wright says, toward platonism.

What does Wright think we should say about rule-following if we are not satisfied with platonism? He puts what he takes to be one of the central lessons of Wittgenstein's discussions of rule-following as follows: "It might be preferable, in describing our most basic rule-governed responses, to think of them not as informed by an *intuition* (of the requirements of the rule) but as a kind of *decision*."[14] The platonist thinks that a rule (or anyway, the meaning that lies behind the statement of a rule) autonomously calls for a course of action, and that when we set out to follow a rule, we intuit or perceive what it requires us to do. According to Wright's Wittgenstein, this must be rejected: when we follow rules, we don't perceive their requirements; we *decide* them.

A problem with saying that we decide a rule's requirements is that this suggests a rule-follower is free to decide that anything she happens to do is what the rule calls for. Wright is aware of this problem, describing it as follows:

> The rule-following considerations attack the idea that judgments about the requirements of a rule on a particular occasion have a 'tracking' epistemology, answer to states of affairs constituted altogether independently of our inclination to make those judgments. How can judgments lack a substantial epistemology in this way, and yet still be *objective* – still have to answer to something distinct from our actual dispositions of judgment?[15]

Wright's answer to the question raised in this passage is to say that it is only our "best" judgments (i.e., our best decisions) about the statement of a rule that determine what it means or requires – where a judgment is a best judgment if it is arrived at under certain ideal conditions, which Wright calls "C-conditions." Judgments made about the requirements of rules have what Wright calls a "substantial epistemology" by virtue of the fact that when the C-conditions are *not* satisfied, such judgments are constrained by the characteristics of rules that are determined by judgments made under the C-conditions.[16]

On the view that Wright puts forward, when the C-conditions are satisfied, a person's judgments about a rule determine (rather than reflect) what it requires – determine, in other words, what the words that make up the statement of the rule *mean*. Now, what are these C-conditions? Although Wright is less forthcoming about this than we might have hoped, he does say that under most *ordinary* circumstances, if I form an opinion about what *I myself* mean or meant in saying something, such an opinion determines rather than reflects its subject matter. Typically, in judging that I meant X, I make it the case – I determine – that X was what I meant. (Wright notes that this determination is defeasible. What a subject says about his own meanings and intentional states is generally allowed to stand, but subsequent events occasionally overturn his judgment.) In other words, for judgments or opinions that

may be expressed in the form of avowals of meaning, the C-conditions are usually satisfied.[17]

Recall that in Kripke's discussion of Wittgenstein, a skeptic asks his interlocutor, "What is 68 plus 57?" The interlocutor answers, "125," whereupon the skeptic suggests that – given what the interlocutor had always meant by "plus" in the past – the correct answer is "5." The skeptic challenges his interlocutor to cite a fact or facts about his past in which his previously meaning *plus* by "plus" might have consisted. When the interlocutor fails to meet this challenge satisfactorily, the skeptic concludes that there is no fact of the matter concerning what his interlocutor meant. We saw that Wright endorses a flat-footed response to Kripke's skeptic – one that goes: "The fact about my past usage of 'plus' that fixes it that I am now acting in accord with what I then meant by the word is just that I meant *plus* by 'plus'." We also saw that Wright wants to provide an explanation of *how* such a response could be the correct one. We're now in a position to consider Wright's explanation:

> It will be ... a perfect answer to Kripke's Sceptic to explain how judgments concerning one's own meanings, both past and present, are ... provisionally extension-determining in the most ordinary circumstances. Challenged to justify the claim that I formerly meant addition by 'plus', it will not be necessary to locate some meaning-constitutive fact in my former behaviour or mental life. A sufficient answer need only advert to my present opinion, that addition is what I formerly meant, and still mean, and to the *a priori* reasonableness of the supposition, failing evidence to the contrary, that this opinion is best.[18]

Kripke's skeptic challenges his interlocutor to cite some fact or facts *about his former life* that his meaning *plus* by "plus" consisted in. The skeptic presupposes that if his interlocutor meant anything determinate in the past by "plus," there must be such facts. Wright rejects this presupposition. On his view, what someone meant in the past can be constituted by judgments he makes in the present.[19] According to Wright, when I answer the skeptic in the flat-footed fashion – when I issue the avowal, "I meant *plus* by 'plus'" – I express the sort of "best" opinion that determines rather than reflects what is true; I *make* it the case that, in the past, I meant *plus* by "plus." We could say that I now make it the case that the rule I always attached to the word "plus" calls for me to answer, "125" (rather than, say, "5") in response to the question, "What is 68 plus 57?"

What does it mean to say that I *make* it the case that a rule calls for a particular activity? Ordinarily, when someone makes it the case that a stated rule calls for one activity rather than another, we describe him as "stipulating" what the rule requires. Imagine, for example, that a pamphlet entitled *Rules for Students* is issued to seventh-graders on the first day of school. The pamphlet includes the following sentence: "While in class, students shall conduct themselves in an orderly fashion." A teacher might stipulate that following this rule requires that students in his classroom sit in alphabetical order. It seems a fair characterization of Wright's position to say that he thinks every rule gets its content by a kind of stipulation.

* * *

Kripke's skeptic demands a *constitutive* account of that by virtue of which his interlocutor could have meant anything determinate in his past usage of "plus": he asks in what his interlocutor's meaning *plus* might have *consisted*. Wright offers such an account, though not of a sort that Kripke's skeptic envisages. Kripke's skeptic assumes that if his interlocutor meant anything determinate in the past by "plus," his meaning what he did must be constituted by facts about his life *as it was in the past*. As we've seen, Wright claims that what a person meant in the past can be stipulated here and now, and so be constituted by facts about his *present* life. In §3, I'll argue that this sort of "stipulativism" about rules is neither a viable position nor one that Wittgenstein would have us accept, and I'll present what I take to be a better reading of Wittgenstein on rules. Before I come to that, I want to comment briefly on another approach to dealing with Kripke's skeptic – an approach that Wright calls "official" Wittgensteinianism.[20]

According to "official" Wittgensteinianism, we should accept that there are facts about what our words mean (what our rules call for, etc.), while rejecting the demand for a constitutive account of that by virtue of which they mean what they do: "Asked what constitutes the truth of rule-informed judgment of the kind we isolated, the official Wittgensteinian will reply: 'Bad question, leading to bad philosophy – platonism, for instance, or Kripkean scepticism.'"[21] The problem with taking up this stance, according to Wright, is that it requires us to turn our faces away from a question that might, after all, yield a philosophically illuminating answer. To Wright, "official" Wittgensteinianism seems to amount to a kind of *avoidance* of philosophy. According to the "official" readings of him, Wittgenstein refuses to answer constitutive questions about meaning. As Wright sees things, the "official" Wittgenstein thereby fails to rise to "the challenge posed by his own thought."[22] Thus, when Wright is introducing his own non-"official," stipulativist reading of Wittgenstein, he writes:

> I want to canvass a third possibility: an account of the central insight of Wittgenstein's discussion of rule-following which is neither Kripkean nor 'official'. It may be that the 'official' view is exegetically correct, and that I do here part company with the intentions of the actual, historical Wittgenstein. But it seems to me that it is an important methodological precept that we do not despair of giving answers to constitutive questions too soon; if the accomplishments of analysis in philosophy often seem meagre, that may be because it is difficult, not impossible.[23]

Soon, I shall claim that Wright does indeed "part company with the intentions of the actual, historical Wittgenstein." As the quoted passage makes clear, Wright recognizes this as a real possibility. But although he sees that the actual Wittgenstein might reject constitutive questions about meaning, Wright never gets in view the *kind* of rejection that is actually at issue in Wittgenstein's texts. To Wright, it appears that when we become dissatisfied with platonism, we have just two options: we must try to articulate that in which meaning one thing rather than another consists, or we must (with the "official" Wittgenstein) opt for "quietism"[24] and refuse to engage with what is, after all, a gripping question. By the end of this paper, I hope to have shown that to understand Wittgenstein's response to platonism is to see that we are not, after all, faced with this dilemma.

3 The gulf between an order and its execution

At *Investigations*, §431, Wittgenstein has an interlocutor say: "There is a gulf between an order and its execution. It has to be filled by the act of understanding. In saying that there's "a gulf between an order and its execution," Wittgenstein' interlocutor means that a sequence of written or spoken words cannot be under stood without some "act" to serve as a bridge between the words themselves an what they mean. What sort of act could perform this function? Imagine that a American who speaks little Italian is traveling in Rome. A local police office approaches her in the street and shouts something at her. The policeman's tone o voice and his facial expression suggest that he is issuing an order – as indeed, h is – but our traveler can't make out *what* he wants her to do. Here, it would b natural to say that there was a gulf between the policeman's saying what he di and the traveler's understanding him. It would be equally natural to say that if th traveler managed to interpret the policeman's order into English (perhaps wit the aid of a dictionary), the gulf would be bridged. So it seems that an act o *interpretation* can bridge the gulf between an order and its execution.

This conclusion, however, begins to wobble under the weight of the followin line of thought: "We need not imagine the meeting of different languages (e.g. English and Italian) if all that we want is an example of a case in which there's ; gulf between an order and its execution. There's a gulf between *any* order and it execution. Any order could, conceivably, be misunderstood. Imagine that someon approaches you and says, 'Hands up!' He wants you to put your hands above you head, but you *might* misunderstand him; you might think that he wants you to, e.g. turn your hands palms up directly in front of you. There's a gulf between even thi simple an order and its execution: unless you interpret it properly, you won' know how to execute it as it was intended." This line of thought may soun innocuous, but it leads to a problem. Once we have come to think that there's ; gulf between *any* order and its execution, interpretation no longer looks like a wa} to bridge such a gulf. Any interpretation that I attach to "Hands up!" will, itself be such that it *could* be misunderstood. *It* will seem to stand in as much need o interpretation as "Hands up!" It will, as it were, come with its *own* gulf.[25] Onc we take there to be a gulf between every order and its execution, we can't seen to find anything to bridge the gulfs.

The apparently innocuous thought – that there is a gulf between any order anc its execution – might be argued for in a slightly different way. Someone might say "An order, recipe, or instruction is, in itself, nothing but sounds or ink marks Interpretation, or something like interpretation – some 'act of understanding' – i needed if the sounds or ink-marks are to strike anyone as more than empty noise or squiggles. This goes for *any* order, recipe, or rule; there is a gap between any such item and what it requires." A thought like this is expressed in the second para graph of *Investigations*, §431. (I began this section by quoting its first paragraph.) Wittgenstein's interlocutor says: "Only in the act of understanding is it meant that we are to do THIS. The *order* – why, that is nothing but sounds, ink-marks. –" When we consider an order as mere ink-marks, it seems dead, inert. It seems to us that a bridge is needed to link it with any determinate set of requirements. Interpretation is an obvious candidate to play the role of bridge, but – under the

pressure of an insistence that there's a gulf between *any* string of words and what it calls for – every interpretation seems inert as well.

The paradox of *Investigations*, §201 has its roots in the thought that there is always a gulf between the statement of a rule – a string of words – and the rule's execution or application. Let's look again at the first paragraph of §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.

In what sense *can* every course of action be made out to accord with a rule? Imagine that a line in a recipe book reads, "Beat six egg whites until stiff peaks form." If, in trying to follow this instruction, I were to beat six egg *yolks*, how could my action be made out to accord with the recipe? The paradox comes into view only under the illumination of a thought like this: "The words 'Beat six egg whites' are just ink-marks in a book. They call for one activity rather than another only on a particular interpretation, and ink-marks can be interpreted *any* which way." Once we are in the grip of such a thought, we cannot escape the conclusion that "any interpretation still hangs in the air along with what it interprets, and cannot give it any support."[26]

Soon, I'm going to claim that Wittgenstein's response to the paradox of §201 is to question the thought that there is a gulf between every rule and what it requires. For now, notice that this is not the course Wright recommends. Wright suggests, in effect, that an appeal to stipulation can solve the problem that we had hoped to address by appealing to interpretation; he argues that even though interpretation cannot bridge the gulf between a rule and its application, stipulation can.

How might stipulation bridge the gulf between a rule and what it requires? Recall the example in which a pamphlet of rules for students has a line reading, "While in class, students shall conduct themselves in an orderly fashion." A teacher stipulates that this rule calls for his students to sit in alphabetical order. Here we could say that by stipulating what the rule requires, the teacher bridges a gulf between the rule as it appears in the pamphlet and its application in his classroom. As it appears in the pamphlet, the rule is imprecise. With his stipulation, the teacher clarifies what sort of behavior would accord with it – at least in his classroom. Now, does it make sense to suggest – as Wright, in effect, does – that this is how rules (and intentional states) quite generally acquire their content?

No. Once we are in the grip of the thought that there is a gulf between *any* rule and its application, stipulation looks as powerless as interpretation to bridge such a gulf. A stipulation, like an interpretation, is made up of *words* – sounds or ink-marks – and being so constituted, it will seem to us to "hang in the air" unless *it* is interpreted (or until a *further* stipulation is made). We've already seen where this goes: we wind up with an infinite regress of inert signs standing behind each other. Wright thinks that our best *opinions* about the requirements of a rule (rather than our interpretations of it) determine what would accord with it. The problem with this view is that any *expression* of such an opinion will seem to stand in need

of interpretation or stipulation, and any such interpretation or stipulation will seem to stand in need of a further interpretation or stipulation, *ad infinitum*. Wright's view is subject to the same objection as the view that interpretations determine the requirements of rules: it leads to an infinite regress of meaningless signs.

In order to accept a position like Wright's, we'd have to think that stipulations are regress-stoppers – that although rules and orders, in themselves, have no content, stipulations *do*. We'd have to think that while an order stands in need of a stipulation if it is to be contentful, a meaningful stipulation requires nothing outside itself. Such a view amounts to a (non-standard) form of platonism. According to this sort of platonism, content stipulations are able to do what mere words (that is, all words other than those that make up content-stipulations) cannot; although recipes, instructions, and orders are, in themselves, strings of empty noises, stipulations are (somehow) intrinsically meaningful.

Wright thinks that we can steer clear of both the regress of interpretations and platonism – and thus avoid the paradox of *Investigations*, §201 – by recourse to the idea that we *decide* the requirements of rules. I have argued that he is mistaken. Someone might reply to my argument as follows: "Wright says that our best judgments or opinions determine the requirements of rules. Now, if we think only of judgments rendered *in language*, there *is* a problem with this position – a problem about how the expression of such a judgment could be understood without interpretation or further stipulation. But I might express my best judgment about what, e.g., a particular soufflé recipe requires, by reading the recipe and – without uttering a word – preparing a soufflé. In such a case, I would not generate any sounds or ink-marks, so my decision about what the recipe requires would not stand in need of interpretation or further stipulation. Why not say that what determines the requirements of rules are such wordless expressions of opinion? This would allow us to preserve Wright's basic idea: that we don't intuit the requirements of rules; rather, we decide them."

This attempt to save something like Wright's position fails. The problem is that once we are insisting that words are nothing more than sounds or ink-marks, we'll view my activities, e.g., my examining a page in a book and preparing a soufflé, as meaningless *movements*. There will seem to be a gulf between these movements and any determinate judgment or opinion that they might express (just as – once one has reached this point in the dialectic – there seems to be a gulf between the movements made by a speaker's mouth and any determinate judgment). My movements around the kitchen will seem open to a variety of interpretations – interpretations according to which they express quite various opinions about what the recipe that I'm following requires (or about anything else). And any interpretation of them will stand in need of another. Wright's position cannot be saved. Stipulation – whether it is understood as linguistic or not – provides no better way to avoid the paradox of *Investigations*, §201 than interpretation.

* * *

What moral are we supposed to draw from the *Investigations'* discussion of rule-following? In response to Kripke's commentary – which has often been read as suggesting that the first paragraph of §201 summarizes the main conclusion of the

book – a number of writers[27] have pointed out that the *second* paragraph of §201 rejects the line of thought expressed in the first paragraph:

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

The second paragraph of §201 indicates that, according to Wittgenstein, the paradox mentioned in the first paragraph reflects a misunderstanding. The paradox depends upon our thinking that the grasping of *any* rule requires that it first be interpreted. On the reading of Wittgenstein that Wright recommends, one grasps a rule without interpreting it by stipulating what it requires. I take it that Wittgenstein would have us avoid the paradox of *Investigations*, §201 – not by finding a non-interpretative way to bridge a gulf between a rule and its meaning, but – by coming to question the idea that every rule comes with such a gulf. We are led to this idea by a pair of related arguments:

(1) Where it is possible to misapply a rule – and this is always possible – understanding requires that the rule be supplemented. An "act of understanding" is needed in order to insure that there will be no mistakes in the application of the rule. We see, e.g., that the teacher's order (in *Investigations*, §185) *might* be interpreted to mean that one should write "1004" after "1000," and we infer that the order can be grasped only by someone who gives it an adequate *interpretation*, or something like an interpretation – a *stipulation*, perhaps.

(2) In itself, any rule is just a sequence of meaningless noises or ink-marks (or bodily movements). Something must be added to such items if they are to *call for* one activity rather than another. So (once again), an act of understanding is needed in order to bridge the gulf between a rule – viewed as noises or ink-marks – and any determinate set of requirements.

As I read Wittgenstein, both of these arguments are under attack. Let's begin with (1). At *Investigations*, §85, Wittgenstein writes:

A rule stands there like a sign-post. – Does the sign post leave no doubt open about the way I have to go? . . . But where is it said which way I am to follow it; whether in the direction of its finger or (e.g.) in the opposite one?

It is *possible* that on seeing a sign-post in the road, someone with no experience of sign-posts would take it to be pointing in the direction opposite to its finger. But this doesn't mean that for most of us, such a sign-post needs to be supplemented by an interpretation or an explanation in order for it to be understood. For most of us, a sign-post is clear enough:

Suppose I give this explanation: "I take 'Moses' to mean the man, if there was such a man, who led the Israelites out of Egypt, whatever he was called

then and whatever he may or may not have done besides." – But similar doubts to those about "Moses" are possible about the words of this explanation (what are you calling "Egypt", whom the "Israelites" etc.?). Nor would these questions come to an end when we got down to words like "red", "dark", "sweet". – "But then how does an explanation help me to understand, if after all it is not the final one? In that case the explanation is never completed; so I still don't understand what he means, and never shall!" – As though an explanation as it were hung in the air unless supported by another one. Whereas an explanation may indeed rest on another one that has been given, but none stands in need of another – unless *we* require it to prevent a misunderstanding. One might say: an explanation serves to remove or to avert a misunderstanding — one, that is, that would occur but for the explanation; not every one that I can imagine.

It may easily look as if every doubt merely *revealed* an existing gap in the foundations; so that secure understanding is only possible if we first doubt everything that *can* be doubted, and then remove all these doubts.

The sign-post is in order – if, under normal circumstances, it fulfills its purpose.[28] An interpretation is a kind of explanation. It makes sense to provide an interpretation of a sentence (or a sign-post) when someone has misunderstood it or when there's a real danger that someone will misunderstand it. This is where interpretation has, as it were, its home. When doing philosophy, however, we find ourselves insisting that interpretation is called for wherever we can *imagine* a misunderstanding. An adequate interpretation, we think, is one that would eliminate all chance of anyone's misapplying a sentence or rule. This reflects a misunderstanding about the purpose of interpretation. Once we have succumbed to this misunderstanding, interpretation stops making sense to us. It looks pointless.

A child might misunderstand the instruction, "Beat six egg whites until stiff peaks form." (She might have no idea that eggs can be separated. She might think "stiff" means *stiff as a board*.) It doesn't follow that *I* need an interpretation in order to understand these words when I encounter them in a cookbook. For me, there is no gulf between such an instruction and what it requires; I see what it calls for – without the need for interpretation or explanation.

At this point, someone might introduce a version of argument (2) from above: "But isn't the instruction in your recipe book really just a series of dead ink-marks? Don't you need to interpret the marks in order to bring them to life? Or if it isn't interpretation that brings a sign to life, mustn't it then be an assignment of meaning – a stipulation?"

At *Investigations*, §432, Wittgenstein writes: "Every sign *by itself* seems dead. *What* gives it life? – In use it is *alive*." Wittgenstein does not agree that signs are dead until we interpret them or stipulate what they mean. A sign only *seems* dead if we consider it *by itself* – i.e., apart from the use that we make of it. In its use, a sign is *alive*. The following passage (part of which we've already seen) has a similar moral: "How does it come about this arrow ⟩⟩⟩——⟩ *points*? . . . The arrow points only in the application that a living being makes of it."[29] If we view the arrow as cut off from the activities of human beings, it *will* seem that only an interpretation or a stipulation could give it life – could make it point. (There's nothing

special about arrows; this is true of any sign.) As we've seen, we cannot provide a general account of how signs get their meaning by appealing to interpretation or stipulation. The conclusion that Wittgenstein draws from this is not that we must succumb to skepticism about meaning – succumb, that is, to the view that signs are in fact dead. Rather, Wittgenstein would have us realize that we need not view the arrow as cut off from the activities of living beings. "In use it is *alive*."

Are our signs – arrows, words, etc. – really just dead ink-marks, squiggles on the page? I've noticed that if I stare at written English words for a long time, they begin to *seem* like squiggles. (It helps to squint a little.) But it makes sense for me to say this only thanks to the *distinction* between squiggles and English words. My copy of *The Joy of Cooking* does contain ink-marks, but ink-marks of *that* sort figure in our lives in all sorts of ways that meaningless squiggles don't. If a book contained *mere* ink-marks – empty squiggles – it would be very odd to suggest that someone should try to *follow* some of them.

Wittgenstein is continually reminding us that the phenomena in which he is interested – e.g., providing interpretations, ostensively defining, reading, making a move in a game of chess, feeling pain – make sense only when "surrounded by certain normal manifestations of life."[30] As long as we try to mentally undress words – to strip away the context and understand them as squiggles – we will be unable to make sense of the suggestion that "there is a way of grasping a rule which is *not* an *interpretation*." How could someone understand a squiggle unless he first attached some interpretation to it? By stipulation? If someone merely *stipulates* that a squiggle means, e.g., *dice three medium onions*, he isn't *understanding* a recipe; he's making one up. (And if *these* words are just noises, he's not even managing that.) When I open a cookbook and see "Beat six egg whites," I don't encounter a squiggle; in the context of the way we live with words, recipes, food, kitchens and each other, that sentence calls for a quite specific activity.[31] Strip away the context, however, and you won't be able to make sense of the idea that the ink-marks that remain call for me to do anything.

The thought that, in reality, words are no more than squiggles has come to seem innocuous (and indeed goes unnoticed) by many contemporary philosophers.[32] But the thought is *not* innocuous; it causes us to lose our grip on important and obvious distinctions – such as that between vague, imperspicuous rules, like the one calling for "orderly" behavior from students, and clear, precise ones, such as are found in good cookbooks. While the former stand in need of supplementation – interpretation or stipulation – the latter generally do not. We might say that a cookbook's instructions autonomously call for quite specific activities in the kitchen.

4 Wittgenstein's response to platonism

Wright's Wittgenstein hears any talk of a rule autonomously calling for one activity rather than another as an expression of platonism:

> Platonism is, precisely, the view that the correctness of a rule-informed judgment is a matter quite independent of any opinion of ours, whether the states of affairs which confer correctness are thought of as man-made –

constituted by over-and-done-with episodes of explanation and linguistic behaviour – or truly platonic and constituted in heaven.[33]

> [W]e have no model of what constitutes the direction taken by a rule ... once the direction is conceived, after the fashion of platonism, as determined autonomously ... .[34]

These passages express a misunderstanding of the role that the platonist plays in Wittgenstein's dialectic. The 'platonist' – in so far as this term is supposed to name someone who figures as a target in the dialectic – is not merely someone who allows himself to say that a rule autonomously calls for this or that. Wittgenstein's platonist is someone who, first, unthinkingly agrees that there is a gulf between any rule and its application, and then imagines items that have a mysterious power to bridge the gulf. (Moreover the platonist imagines that he *explains* something by saying that certain items have this power. He claims to explain the connection between a rule and its application by saying, in effect: "Certain items have the power to reach out to all of their applications." The problem with saying this is *not* that there are no items which reach out to their applications (rules *are* such items!), but that the platonist has done nothing more than describe what he promised to explain – adding, misleadingly, that what's going on is mysterious.)

Let us consider again *Investigations*, §454 – the section about the arrow's pointing – this time looking at a bit more of it:

> How does it come about that this arrow ›››——› *points*? Doesn't it seem to carry in it something besides itself? – "No, not the dead line on paper; only the psychical thing, the meaning, can do that." – That is both true and false. The arrow points only in the application that a living being makes of it.
>
> This pointing is *not* a hocus-pocus which can be performed only by the soul.

As we saw above, the question about how the arrow manages to point arises only because we are inclined to view it as a dead mark on paper; we forget that such marks have a life in the activities of human beings. The platonist is someone who – seeing the arrow as dead – supposes that it manages to point thanks to some "psychical thing" associated with it. This account of how the arrow points looks spooky even to the platonist himself. In viewing our words as dead noises and marks, the platonist imagines them divorced from the practices in which they participate and the states of mind that they express. This leaves both words *and* states of mind seeming unconnected to anything. What Wittgenstein calls "the weave of our life"[35] comes to seem unraveled, and its strands – whether they be items encountered on the page or in the mind – seem incapable of meaning anything. The platonist maintains that even so, words and thoughts somehow manage to have content, but it seems mind-boggling to him that they should.

According to Wittgenstein, the platonist isn't wrong in thinking that our words and thoughts have content; he's wrong to find it mind-boggling that they should. Consider the following passage from *Investigations*, §195:

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

Typically, Wittgenstein's response to platonism is not, "What you're saying is *false*," but rather, "What you say is all right; only there's nothing queer or magical about it." Wittgenstein doesn't deny that when I grasp the sense of a rule, the steps that I'm supposed to take are, in some sense, already present to my mind. (He doesn't think – as Wright thinks – that the question of which steps I'm supposed to take awaits determination by decision.) The platonist's problem is not that he wants to say that the steps are present, but that he imagines that *in* saying this, he's remarking on a mind-boggling fact.

Most of the platonist's words can be uttered innocently by someone who doesn't try to view signs apart from the applications that living beings make of them – apart, that is, from "the weave of our life." At *Investigations*, §218, an interlocutor says, "The rule, once stamped with a particular meaning, traces the lines along which it is to be followed through the whole of space." An utterance of these words *might* be an expression of platonism, but it might be an innocent example of what Wittgenstein calls a "grammatical remark" about rules. Wittgenstein is not denying that rules reach out to their infinity of applications; he's urging us to free ourselves from a conception of what rules are in themselves according to which a rule's "reaching out to its applications" can be understood only as a sort of magical gulf-bridging.[36]

Wright's response to platonism fails to address it at the right depth. The platonist's crucial mistake is one that he shares with both Kripke's skeptic and with Wright, namely, imagining that there's a gulf between every rule and its application. We overcome the impulse toward platonism only by coming to recognize this mistake as a mistake.

According to Wright and Wright's Wittgenstein, to say that a rule autonomously calls for this or that activity is to commit oneself to platonism. I've been arguing that this is not Wittgenstein's view. The platonist who figures in Wittgenstein's texts is someone who first imagines that there's a gulf between every rule and its application, and only then thinks that somehow, mysteriously, the rule (or its meaning, or something) autonomously manages to call for one activity rather than another. Once we stop thinking of words in isolation from the human lives in which they are embedded – once we give up imagining that there's a gulf between every rule and its application – we can say, innocently, that a particular rule autonomously called for this or that.[37]

*   *   *

"So what you're saying is that, while Wright's Wittgenstein thinks stipulation is what connects a rule with its correct applications, your Wittgenstein thinks it's 'the weave of our life'?"

The point is *not* that "the weave of our life" (or customs or institutions[38]) – rather than stipulation or interpretation – is what bridges the gulf between the statement

of a rule and what would satisfy it. It would be better to say that when rules are seen as situated *within* our lives, such gulfs are exceptional. In general, *nothing* bridges a gulf between a rule and its application because no gulf opens up. It makes sense to speak of such a gulf only against a backdrop of cases in which there is no difficulty about what the statement of a rule means. *Sometimes*, I come upon an instruction that I don't understand. In such a situation, an interpretation might be what I need, but in general, I need *nothing* of the sort. A philosopher who asks, "How is it that the statement of a rule is connected to its meaning?" has – even before she's offered any answer to the question – already succumbed to the idea that some link is needed if our words are to have significance; she presupposes that there is always a gulf between words and their meanings. Wittgenstein is not offering another account of the connection between words and their meanings. He is urging us to question our inclination to search for any such account: "If it is asked: 'How do sentences manage to represent?', – the answer might be: 'Don't you know? You certainly see it, when you use them.' For nothing is concealed."[39]

Wright claims that the best answer to Kripke's skeptic is flat-footed (i.e., one that goes, "The fact about my past usage of 'plus' that fixes it that I am now acting in accord with what I then meant by 'plus' is just that I meant *plus* by 'plus'"). This is exactly right; the flat-footed response to Kripke's skeptic embodies a refusal to accept the skeptic's implicit insistence that *something* must link a person's words with what he means by them. Wright fails, however, to understand the significance of the flat-footed response. He *says* that it's the correct response, but in his attempt to justify it, he recommends a response that is anything but flat-footed – one that says, in effect: "What fixes it that in the past I meant *plus* by 'plus' is that I now judge that I meant *plus* by 'plus'." To Wright, the flat-footed response *by itself* appears to avoid a genuine question – a question that he formulates as follows: "[W]hat constitutes the truth of rule-informed judgment"?[40] But to understand Wittgenstein is to see that he thinks there is no real question here. The point is not that Wright's words express a question which Wittgenstein thinks we must "quietistically" avoid. According to Wittgenstein, it is only when we conceive of words as cut off from the applications that living beings make of them that there even appears to be a question concerning how, in general, rule-informed judgments – e.g., the judgment that a particular recipe calls for the beating of egg whites – can be true. Freed from such a picture of words, we can meet a query like: "What constitutes the truth of your judgment that the recipe calls for the beating of egg whites (rather than yolks or heavy cream)?" with a genuinely flat-footed response: "It *says* to beat egg whites. You can look for yourself."[41]

Notes

1 *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1982.
2 *Philosophical Investigations*, §454.
3 This characterization should be understood as provisional in that how *it* is to be understood – how, e.g., we should hear the term "self-standing" in this context – will be part of what's at issue in what follows.
4 *The Blue and Brown Books*, p. 34.

5 Wittgenstein depicts the platonist's sense that communication requires guessing in passages such as the following:

"But do you really explain to the other person what you yourself understand? Don't you get him to *guess* the essential thing? You give examples, – but he has to guess their drift . . . ."

(*Investigations*, §210)

"Once he has seen the right thing, seen the one of infinitely many references which I am trying to push him towards – once he has got hold of it, he will continue the series right without further ado. I grant that he can only guess (intuitively guess) the reference that I mean – but once he has managed that the game is won."

(*Zettel*, §304)

6 Compare the game just described with a well-known example that Wittgenstein presents in the context of a discussion of pain: "Suppose everyone had a box with something in it: we call it a 'beetle'. No one can look into anyone else's box, and everyone says he knows what a beetle is only by looking at *his* beetle" (*Investigations*, §293). Although I can't take up the issue in this paper, I'd argue that according to Wittgenstein, the same philosophical pressures that underlie platonism about meaning also underlie a picture of sensations as mind-bogglingly private.

7 Kripke, *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*, op. cit., p. 66.

8 On the one hand, Kripke says that although Wittgenstein might resist admitting it in so many words, he concedes to the skeptic that there are no facts of the matter concerning what we mean:

Wittgenstein, perhaps cagily, might well disapprove of the straightforward formulation [of his response to skepticism] given here. Nevertheless I choose to be so bold as to say: Wittgenstein holds, with the sceptic, that there is no fact as to whether I mean plus or quus.

(ibid., pp. 70–71)

On the other hand, Kripke ascribes a deflationist view of facts to Wittgenstein:

Like many others, Wittgenstein accepts the 'redundancy' theory of truth: to affirm that a statement is true (or presumably, to precede it with 'It is a fact that . . .') is simply to affirm the statement itself, and to say it is not true is to deny it: ('*p*' is true = *p*).

(ibid., p. 86)

Moreover, he suggests that Wittgenstein would not "wish to deny the propriety of an ordinary use of the phrase 'the fact that Jones meant addition by such-and-such symbol'" (ibid., p. 69). There is a tension between these two strands in Kripke's reading of Wittgenstein – a tension that makes it hard to see just what the "skeptical solution" is supposed to come to.

9 See, e.g., C. Wright, "Wittgenstein's rule-following considerations and the central project of theoretical linguistics," in *Reflections on Chomsky*, A. George (ed.), Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1989, pp. 233–264:

According to Kripke's Wittgenstein, all our discourse concerning meaning, understanding, content, and cognate notions, fails of strict factuality – says nothing literally true or false – and is saved from vacuity only by a 'Sceptical Solution', a set of proposals for rehabilitating meaning-talk in ways that prescind from the assignment to it of any fact-stating role.

(p. 234)

For other readings of Kripke that more or less agree with this characterization of the skeptical solution, see, e.g., G. Baker and P. Hacker, *Scepticism, Rules and Language*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1984, p. 4; P. A. Boghossian, "The rule-following considerations," *Mind*, vol. 98, 1989, pp. 508–549 (see p. 518); and J. McDowell, "Meaning and intentionality in Wittgenstein's later philosophy," *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*, vol. 17, 1992, pp. 40–52 (see p. 43). I'm familiar with two commentators who argue that, contrary to the received reading of Kripke, Kripke's Wittgenstein does *not* concede that attributions of meaning must be non-factual. See A. Byrne, "On misinterpreting Kripke's Wittgenstein," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, vol. 56 (2). June 1996, and G. M. Wilson, "Semantic realism and Kripke's Wittgenstein," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, vol. 58 (1), March 1998, pp. 99–122.

10 E.g., J. McDowell, "Wittgenstein on following a rule," *Synthese*, vol. 58 (3), 1984, pp. 325–363; C. McGinn, *Wittgenstein on Meaning*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1984; and W. Goldfarb, "Kripke on Wittgenstein and rules," *Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 82, 1985, pp. 471–488.

11 Wright, "Wittgenstein's rule-following considerations," op. cit., p. 236; cf. C. Wright, "Critical notice," *Mind*, vol. 98, 1989, pp. 289–305, especially p. 292.

12 Wright, "Wittgenstein's rule-following considerations," op. cit., p. 236.

13 Ibid., p. 237.

14 Ibid., p. 240; Wright, "Critical notice," op. cit., p. 300.

15 Wright, "Wittgenstein's rule-following considerations," op. cit., p. 246.

16 See ibid., p. 262, fn. 28.

17 Wright recommends the same sort of story in connection with intentional states. He suggests that "subjects' best opinions determine, rather than reflect what it is true to say about their intentional states" (ibid., p. 250); moreover, he takes it that intentional state *avowals* are, generally, expressions of a subject's best opinions. Typically, according to this view, when I say that I, e.g., intend to bake a cake, I make it the case that baking a cake is what I intend to do:

[W]hy is it *a priori* reasonable to believe that, provided Jones has the relevant concepts and is attentive to the matter, he will believe that he intends to phi if and only if he does? . . . [T]he matter will be nicely explained if the concept of intention works in such a way that Jones's opinions, formed under the restricted set of C-conditions, play [an] extension-determining role . . . .

(ibid., p. 252)

18 Ibid., p. 254.

19 He suggests that "subjects' best opinions about their intentions, *both past and present*, are properly conceived as provisionally extension-determining" (ibid., p. 254, Wright's emphasis).

20 In a footnote to his "Wittgenstein's rule-following considerations," op. cit., Wright identifies G. Baker and P. Hacker, *Wittgenstein: Understanding and Meaning*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1980 as a paradigmatic expression of "official" Wittgensteinianism, noting that McDowell's "Wittgenstein on following a rule," op. cit., might be one as well.

21 Wright, "Wittgenstein's rule-following considerations," op. cit., p. 257.

22 Wright, "Critical notice," op. cit., p. 305.

23 Wright, "Wittgenstein's rule-following considerations," op. cit., p. 246.

24 See Wright, "Critical notice," op. cit., p. 305.

25 Compare *Investigations*, §433:

When we give an order, it can look as if the ultimate thing sought by the order had to remain unexpressed, as there is always a gulf between an order and its execution. Say I want someone to make a particular movement, say to raise his arm. To make it quite clear, I do the movement. This picture seems unambiguous till we ask: how does he know that *he is to make that movement?* – How does he know at all what use he is to make of the signs I give him, whatever they are? – Perhaps I shall

now try to supplement the order by means of further signs, by pointing from myself to him, making encouraging gestures, etc. Here it looks as if the order were beginning to stammer.

26 *Investigations*, §198.
27 E.g., McDowell, "Wittgenstein on following a rule," op. cit., and McGinn, *Wittgenstein on Meaning*, op. cit.
28 *Investigations*, §87.
29 *Investigations*, §454.
30 *Zettel*, §534.
31 This is not to deny that there is a *subpersonal* story to be told by cognitive psychology about how my visual system processes patterns of light and dark when I read a book. But when I peruse *The Joy of Cooking*, *I* don't interpret patterns of light and dark. *I* see instructions. (My seeing instructions is made possible by – among other things – my visual system's processing patterns of light and dark.)
32 *Why* such a thought has come to seem innocuous – what additional assumptions contribute to making it seem irresistible – is a topic that would take us beyond the scope of this paper. In order to address it, we would have to explore the way in which modern science has left us with what John McDowell calls a "disenchanted" conception of nature (in his *Mind and World*, Cambridge, MA., Harvard University Press, 1994).
33 Wright, "Wittgenstein's rule-following considerations," op. cit., p. 257.
34 Wright, "Critical notice," op. cit., p. 301.
35 The phrase is from *Investigations*, p. 174:

"Grief" describes a pattern which recurs, with different variations, in the weave of our life. If a man's bodily expression of sorrow and of joy alternated, say with the ticking of a clock, here we should not have the characteristic formation of the pattern of sorrow or of the pattern of joy.

36 John McDowell suggests that "we can *always* frame threats of platonistic mythology, as they figure in Wittgenstein's landscape, on the pattern of *Investigations* §195." He continues:

The following is not a Wittgensteinian exchange, though on Wright's reading it ought to be: 'An intention determines what counts as conformity to it autonomously and independently of any subsequent judgements of its author' – 'Platonism! Anathema!' The following is: 'An intention in some sense determines, in a *queer* way, what counts as conformity to it autonomously and independently of any subsequent judgements of its author.' – 'But of course it does, "in *some* sense"! Really the only thing wrong with what you say is the expression "in a queer way".'
(p. 54 of "Response to Wright," in *Knowing Our Own Minds*, C. Wright, B.C. Smith, and C. Macdonald (eds.), Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1998, pp. 47-62)

37 We should not let the various ways in which the term "platonism" may be deployed obscure the crucial point here – that, according to Wittgenstein, someone might utter most of the platonist's words without falling into a conception of rules as mind-boggling. Indeed, although I won't speak this way, I would not object much to saying that what Wittgenstein is recommending is an innocent *kind* of platonism. In other words, we might grant Wright that *anyone* who affirms that a rule can autonomously call for one thing rather than another is to be called a "platonist," and then say that according to Wittgenstein there is a truistic, unmetaphysical kind of platonism which does not commit one to seeing rules (or their meanings) as mind-boggling. McDowell speaks this way about Wittgenstein and platonism in his *Mind and World*, op. cit. McDowell distinguishes what he calls "naturalized platonism" – a position he endorses and that he reads Wittgenstein as recommending – from a problematic kind of platonism that he calls "rampant platonism":

[N]aturalized platonism is quite distinct from rampant platonism. In rampant platonism, the rational structure within which meaning comes into view is independent of anything merely human, so that the capacity of our minds to resonate to it looks occult or magical. Naturalized platonism is platonistic in that the structure of the space of reasons has a sort of autonomy; it is not derivative from, or reflective of, truths about human beings that are capturable independently of having that structure in view. But this platonism is not rampant: the structure of the space of reasons is not constituted in splendid isolation from anything merely human.
(p. 92)

If I understand McDowell, his "rampant platonism" is what I have been referring to as "platonism," and what he calls "naturalized platonism" is close to the approach to these issues that I've been attributing to Wittgenstein.

McDowell is not the only commentator who characterizes Wittgenstein as an innocent sort of platonist. Writing about platonism in the philosophy of mathematics, W.W. Tait distinguishes between an "unintelligible" kind of platonism according to which there is a mathematical reality that is wholly "independent of our practice and which adjudicates its correctness" (p. 361 of "Truth and proof: the Platonism of mathematics," *Synthese*, vol. 69, 1986, pp. 341–370), and an innocent sort of platonism which appears "not as a substantive philosophy or foundation of mathematics, but as a *truism*" (p. 342). According to Tait, what Wittgenstein attacks is "a particular picture of Platonism" (p. 348) and what he defends is a "version of Platonism" (p. 348) – where this latter version of platonism is to be equated with "our ordinary conception of mathematics" (p. 353).

My reason for not wanting to say that Wittgenstein endorses an innocent kind of platonism is that this way of describing what he's up to is liable to give the impression that he is playing the same game as his interlocutors – that he is trying to explain what it is that links a rule with its applications. As will become clear in the remainder of this paper, I take this to be a serious misreading of Wittgenstein's intentions.

38 At *Investigations*, §198, Wittgenstein writes, "To obey a rule, to make a report, to give an order, to play a game of chess, are *customs* (uses, institutions)." One will misunderstand Wittgenstein if one takes passages such as this one to be offering an answer to a question like, "What bridges the gulf between a rule and what it requires?" (For a reading along these lines, see D. Bloor, *Wittgenstein: A Social Theory of Knowledge*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1983.) Wittgenstein speaks of the customs and institutions in which our words have a life for the same reason that he speaks of the weave of our life – not to answer such questions, but to bring out what is wrong with them.
39 *Investigations*, §435.
40 Wright, "Wittgenstein's rule-following considerations," op. cit., p. 257.
41 This paper owes obvious debts to writings on Wittgenstein by Cora Diamond and John McDowell. In addition, I'm grateful to Annette Baier, Alice Crary, Cora Diamond, Samantha Fenno, Kimberly Keller, Michael Morgan, and Rupert Read for helpful comments on earlier drafts. Finally, I am especially indebted to James Conant and John McDowell for many illuminating conversations about this material.