



**WITTGENSTEIN'S "PRIVATE LANGUAGE
ARGUMENT" ACCORDING TO KRIPKE**

Bachelor Degree Project in Philosophy
15 ECTS
Spring Term 2012

Kenny Nilsson

Supervisor: Oskar Macgregor
Examiner: Paavo Pylkkänen

Title: Wittgenstein's "private language argument" according to Kripke

Submitted by Kenny Nilsson to the University of Skövde as a final year project towards the degree of B.Sc. in the School of Humanities and Informatics. The project has been supervised by Oskar Macgregor.

Date: 2012-06-18

I hereby certify that all material in this final year project which is not my own work has been identified and that no work is included for which a degree has already been conferred on me.

Signature: _____

Abstract

Wittgenstein was a very important philosopher of the early twentieth century. One of his most important points was that which has been known as the *Private Language Argument*. This argument was given a new interpretation by Saul Kripke in 1982, which stirred up much debate. This essay investigates Kripke's so called "skeptical challenge" and his "skeptical solution" to that challenge. To further enlighten the subject this essay also discusses a critique to Kripke's interpretation, provided by the main critics, Baker and Hacker (1984). The conclusion of the essay is that Kripke's theory takes up some interesting and important issues, although there are some serious flaws in Kripke's solution that needs to be addressed if the solution is to be taken seriously.

Keywords: Wittgenstein, private language, Kripke, language games

RUNNING HEAD: Wittgenstein according to Kripke

Table of contents

Abstract	3
1. Introduction	5
1.1 Wittgenstein's views on language	6
1.2 The private language argument	8
2. Kripke's interpretation of the private language argument	10
2.1 The skeptical challenge	10
2.2 The solution	18
3. Baker and Hacker's critique of Kripke's interpretation	22
3.1 Factual errors	24
3.2 Misinterpretations	30
3.3 Flaws in Kripke's logic	34
4. Conclusions	36
Endnotes	38
References	39

1. Introduction

Ludwig Wittgenstein was one of the twentieth century's most influential philosophers and one of the most discussed philosophers of all time. He is perhaps most famous for leaving the world of philosophy after the release of his first book, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1992/1921), in which he thought himself to have solved all of the philosophical problems, making philosophy redundant, or at least reducing it to a mere crossing of the t's and dotting of the i's (Biletzki & Matar, 2011; Fann, 1993).

He later returned, shunning most of his previous work, and set out to solve the philosophical problems once again. This time he worked with philosophy until he died and after his death his thoughts during this period were released in the book *Philosophical Investigations* (2009/1953). In this book he presented, among other things, that which has been known as *the private language argument* (Biletzki & Matar, 2011; Fann, 1993).

The aim of this essay will be to investigate the private language argument in the form of the interpretation of it presented by Kripke (1982) and evaluate that interpretation through the critique of it offered by Baker and Hacker (1984).

However, if one is to understand what Wittgenstein

means with his private language argument, one should first get acquainted with his thoughts on language in general.

1.1 Wittgenstein's views on language

As with much of Wittgenstein's work, when discussing his views on language one must first ask oneself if it is the early or late Wittgenstein that is in question, since there are some clear differences between the two.

The early Wittgenstein mainly promoted the *picture theory* as his theory of language. He was convinced that language was fully logical as it was, so he needed only to discover its logical form. He considered language to be the sum of all propositions, and proposed that every name corresponds to something. What that name corresponds to is a proposition explaining the name more closely, in simpler terms. Since Wittgenstein considered all names to be possible to explain further, his thoughts led to a series of even simpler explanations which he believed would end in an *elementary proposition* - the only kind of proposition that corresponds to an *atomic fact* of the real world (Biletzki & Matar, 2011; Fann, 1993).

Atomic facts were explained to be facts in the world which are either true or false and simple enough to not be any further analyzable. The truths of the propositions are therefore contingent on the underlying atomic facts (Biletzki & Matar, 2011; Fann, 1993).

He could never give an example of an elementary proposition, instead claiming that it was not the task of the logician, but rather that of the empiricist (Biletzki & Matar, 2011; Fann, 1993).

The later Wittgenstein is much less rigid in the formulation of his ideas. He describes language as consisting of what he calls *language games*. Wittgenstein himself never clearly defined what a language game is, however language games are interpreted to be the sets of rules that govern the way a certain language is used in a certain situation, in a similar fashion to how the rules of a game, such as chess, grant meaning to the involved parts, such as the chess pieces (Biletzki & Matar, 2011; Fann, 1993).

Contrary to his earlier self, the later Wittgenstein did not claim anything about the essence of language, instead theorizing that there is no one thing that all languages have in common, but rather that they resemble each other to some degree, overlapping in different areas. This he described to be the same way as members of a family resembles each other a little bit, even though there is no single feature that is shared by all members. The theory is known as *family resemblance* (Biletzki & Matar, 2011; Fann, 1993).

To follow the rules of a language game is to speak the language of that language game. Wittgenstein describes several rules on how to follow rules, such as; to follow a rule means to behave the same way in the same situation every

time it arises, to behave either correctly or incorrectly, that someone else could point out when a mistake is made and that other people are able to learn the rights and wrongs of the rule (Fann, 1993). As is clear by these rules of rules, the following of a rule is a social thing, or at least a possibly social thing. Wittgenstein did put forth the idea that there cannot be such a thing as a language that cannot be taught (Biletzki & Matar, 2011; Fann, 1993), a private language, which is what the next section, and the rest of the essay, will discuss.

1.2 The "private language argument"

What is known as Wittgenstein's private language argument is presented not as a concrete argument or a coherent critique of some specific idea of a private language, but rather as a collection of thoughts in *Philosophical Investigations* (2009/1953). Due to the somewhat vague way *Philosophical Investigations* is written there has been some debate as to which passages should be said to contain the argument, since Wittgenstein himself never used the term "private language argument". Some have even argued against there being enough of a structured argument in the passages in question (Candlish & Wrisley, 2010).

According to Candlish and Wrisley (2010), §244-§271 contain the main part of the argument and they summarize it as follows:

The conclusion is that a language in principle unintelligible to anyone but its originating user is impossible. The reason for this is that such a so-called language would, necessarily, be unintelligible to its supposed originator too, for he would be unable to establish meanings for its putative signs. (Candlish & Wrisley, 2010, section 1).

The interpretations as to what the argument is actually arguing against are as numerous as there are interpreters. Especially the early attempts at reading the argument gave widely different results. The disagreements between different interpretations make every interpretation controversial, although the details that the early interpretations share are enough to be claimed as the generally accepted view (Candlish & Wrisley, 2010).

The publication of Saul Kripke's book "*Wittgenstein on rules and private language: an elementary exposition*" in 1982 changed the discussion from how to interpret Wittgenstein to how to interpret, and sometimes refute, Kripke. Even though the discussion of how Wittgenstein should himself be understood is still ongoing, it has been somewhat overshadowed by the discussion of Kripke's interpretation, an interpretation that will be discussed in more detail later in this essay (Candlish & Wrisley, 2010).

2. Kripke's interpretation of the "private language argument"

An important thing to note when discussing Kripke's interpretation of Wittgenstein's arguments is that he in no way claims that what he states really are the views that Wittgenstein himself held. They are also not really the views of Kripke either. In Kripke's own words: "So the present paper should be thought of as expounding neither 'Wittgenstein's' argument nor 'Kripke's': rather Wittgenstein's argument as it struck Kripke, as it presented a problem for him" (Kripke, 1982, p. 5).

2.1 The skeptical challenge

Kripke's take on Wittgenstein is that the problems Wittgenstein presented are of a skeptical nature and that the solution is a skeptical one. The discussion begins both for Wittgenstein and Kripke with rules and the following of rules, as well as what such things mean both for private language and language in general. Since Kripke finds it most accessible, it is first, and primarily, discussed in the form of mathematics (Kripke, 1982).

Kripke's argumentation is in the form of a dialogue in which a skeptic questions the foundations of rule-following by questioning the existence of justifications for the supposed knowledge of the rule being followed and Kripke

attempts to reply to the skeptic. It is stated that when one is asked the question "what is $57+68$?", one simply answers "125" since the "+"-sign denotes addition and addition yields the answer 125. To this the skeptic wonders: How did you know that you intended to use addition when encountering the "+"-sign? If you use a rule which is the same every time you see "+", then how do you know that the rule you were supposed to use was actually addition and not something else, like *quaddition*? (Kripke, 1982).

Quaddition is explained to be the same as addition, with the exception that for numbers over 57 the answer to all calculations is 5 and therefore the answer that should have been given was 5, not 125. The skeptic claims that since a rule such as addition is applicable to an infinite amount of calculations, and humans are finite beings only ever capable of performing a finite number of calculations, one cannot examine the previous uses of the rule to determine which rule it was that was actually used. "Perhaps when I used the term 'plus' in the past, I always meant quus: by hypothesis I never gave myself any explicit directions that were incompatible with such a supposition." (Kripke, 1982, p. 13).¹

This skeptical dilemma is revealed to be the central question in Kripke's book, since it seems to be a very difficult question to answer (Kripke, 1982).

The problem has, according to Kripke, two parts; one is the challenge from the skeptic to prove that there is some

fact about the present use of the rule that can determine which rule that was meant to apply, the other whether one can be confident that addition is the actual rule that applies and not quaddition. The two parts are related in the sense that the confidence of which rule is used is largely dependent on addition actually being the rule which one meant to use (Kripke, 1982).

According to Kripke, this forces the answer to the skeptic's challenge to fulfill two conditions; it must state which fact of one's mental states that determines which rule is used and it must show how one's answer to the computation is justified by that fact (Kripke, 1982).

At this point Kripke specifies that the skeptic is only questioning whether the past uses of the rule connected to the "+"-sign were meant to be the same rule, that is addition, as it is assumed that one is using when asked to do the computation of $57+68$ now. The skeptic is not questioning the present use of the rule of addition or which rule one means to use now. This is important since if the present use was questioned, then all the present use of language would be under debate and since one must use language to try to answer the question, there could not have been a discussion if so were the case (Kripke, 1982).

Kripke also specifies that there is no fact in the external behavior which justifies the belief that the use of the "+"-sign denotes addition. The later conclusion is of

course also that there is no inner fact that justifies it, not even if some omnipotent god were to look into the mind and examine the case (Kripke, 1982).

Kripke makes an attempt to meet the skeptic's challenge by saying that of course there is only a finite amount of computations that one has done, but to learn the meaning of the "+"-sign is to learn the rule of addition, which is an algorithm that can perhaps most simply be described by stating that when adding two numbers one takes two heaps of marbles, the amount in the first is x and the amount in the second is y , put them together and count the result. That is what one does when calculating $x+y$. The skeptic answers this by asking "how do you know that as you previously used it counting was not actually quounting?" This way of arguing spawns an infinite regress, which does not solve the problem at hand (Kripke, 1982).

A different proposed solution to the problem is that of dispositions. It is brought up by Kripke since it is a possible way to interpret Wittgenstein, although not one that Kripke himself has much faith in. It states that justification for the answer one gives lies in the fact that for every question one can be asked, there is an answer which one has a disposition to give. The idea is that this disposition is in fact the rule which one intends to follow. This idea falls short due to it actually not justifying anything at all, since there is no way of determining whether or not a person is

following a rule correctly or not by only investigating their dispositions, since dispositions are not normative. Kripke describes it as: "The point is *not* that, if I meant addition by '+', I *will* answer '125', but that, if I intend to accord with my past meaning of '+', I *should* answer '125'." (Kripke, 1984, p. 37).

Another problem with dispositions is that they too are finite, since not every number no matter how large is calculable by a finite being, an example could be numbers spanning the individual's lifetime to pronounce. Also, since it is possible to make a mistake, to intend addition but be disposed to give a sum that is inaccurate compared to the expected sum in accordance with addition, one can conclude that dispositions are useless in determining rule-following (Kripke, 1982).

Another suggestion is the idea that addition as the meaning for the "+"-sign is to be accepted as the simplest possibility. Kripke does not really see this suggestion as much of a challenge and has a variety of counterarguments which he mentions but does not go into detail on, such as simplicity is relative and that some kind of alien might find quaddition simpler. However, the counterargument Kripke discusses is that on the more basic level, even though the argument of simplicity might help decide between two theories, it does not help distinguishing which those theories are, or what they state, out of the infinite possibility of theories.

Also the simplicity argument is irrelevant due to the fact that the skeptic's challenge is not in the form of an epistemological challenge. The question is not whether there is something which prevents us from knowing which function we mean when using the "+"-sign, rather the skeptic's hypothesis is that there is no such knowledge to be found in the first place (Kripke, 1982).

One can also claim that the direct subjective experience is what justifies meaning addition by the "+"-sign. This seems initially attractive, although it does have some issues, according to Kripke. The question posed by the skeptic was how one is justified in following one rule instead of another in a new case when the entire rule itself cannot be read from the previous instances it was used. Introducing a feeling which is present in the previous instances does not help in clarifying which rule is actually used. Even if one believes that the feeling suggests that addition is being used, not quaddition, the skeptic can still claim the opposite and say that one has simply mistaken which rule is attached to the feeling. Kripke states:

So: If there were a special experience of 'meaning' addition by 'plus', analogous to a headache, it would not have the properties that the state of meaning addition by 'plus' ought to have -

it would not tell me what to do in new cases.

(Kripke, 1982, p. 43).

So, to summarize: the skeptic states that when applying a rule, there is no fact in one's mind as to justify the use of one rule before another, essentially one has no justification to claim to mean something. This suggests that there is no such thing as meaning something with a word, but despite this language seems to be fully possible. This is what Kripke refers to as the "skeptical paradox" and it is mainly based on Wittgenstein's statement in the first sentence of §201 in *Philosophical Investigations*. I here quote the entire §201 and §202 for the importance they have in Kripke's theory, even being claimed to be the main point of *Philosophical investigations*.

§201: This was our paradox: no course of action could be determined by a rule, because every course of action can be made out to accord with the rule. The answer was: if 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 here.

That there is a misunderstanding here is shown by the mere fact that in this chain of reasoning we place one interpretation behind another, as if each one contented us, at least for a moment,

until we thought of yet another lying behind it. For what we thereby show is that there is a way of grasping a rule which is *not* an interpretation, but which, from case to case of application, is exhibited in what we call 'following a rule' and 'going against it'.

That's why there is an inclination to say: every action according to a rule is an interpretation. But one should speak of interpretation only when one expression of a rule is substituted for another. (Wittgenstein, 2009/1953, p.87).

§202: That's why 'following a rule' is a practice. And to *think* one is following a rule is not to follow a rule. And that's why it's not possible to follow a rule 'privately'; otherwise, thinking one was following a rule would be the same thing as following it. (Wittgenstein, 2009/1953, p.87-88).

In my opinion Kripke's skeptical challenge is a bit difficult to accept at first. It seems very counter-intuitive to have to justify that I know what I mean when I mean something, however this issue is addressed by Baker and Hacker (1984) in their critique, which is discussed in a later section. I do find Kripke's argumentation to be convincing. With such a detailed discussion, no immediate flaws stand out.

2.2 The solution

Wittgenstein, according to Kripke, has suggested his own solution to the skeptic's challenge. Kripke's Wittgenstein starts by accepting the skeptic's premise that there are no facts in the previous instances of the use of the rule which can help one know which rule one meant to follow. It works much in the same way as when presented with a series of numbers and asked which number follows, there is no way of determining a one correct answer, since a rule cannot be read from a finite number of examples (Kripke, 1982).

Noteworthy is Kripke's suggestion that most philosophers, and other people who come into contact with the private language argument, assume that Wittgenstein is disproving the validity of a private language. Kripke thinks this is the wrong perspective, with the correct one being that Wittgenstein, with his solution to the skeptic's problem, is actually, instead of condemning private language, trying to save language as a whole. In Kripke's own words:

It is not that calling a sensation 'pain' is easy and Wittgenstein must invent a difficulty. On the contrary, Wittgenstein's main problem is that it appears that he has shown *all* language, *all* conception, to be impossible, indeed unintelligible. (Kripke, 1982, p. 62)

The idea is that if meaning is impossible in the private sense, it should also be impossible for others to see meaning in one's words, making language as a whole impossible. In the end, Wittgenstein's solution, the language game, is simply not able to save private language (Kripke, 1982).

Wittgenstein's idea of language games, according to Kripke, is the practice of judging if a rule is being followed by comparing the answer a person gives to the questions related to a rule to the answers which have been decided by the community to be the correct ones in the situation where the question is given. It is important to note that these comparable answers do not need to be correct every time for someone to be said to follow a rule, they just need to be correct enough of the time for there to be a strong indication that the person has the dispositions to give the same answers as the community and/or is using the same procedure for arriving at the correct answer as the rest of the community. Kripke uses the example of when a child learns to add to illustrate this point:

Suppose, however, the child gets almost all 'small' addition problems right. For larger computations, the child can make more mistakes than for 'small' problems, but it must get a certain number right and, when it is wrong, it must

recognizably be 'trying to follow' the proper procedure... (Kripke, 1982, p. 90).

Following the explanation of language games given above, Kripke states and discusses three "key concepts" concerning the language games, which he ascribes to Wittgenstein (Kripke, 1982).

The first concept is *agreement*, which states that a rule can be followed only if there is an agreed use in the community. This agreed use does not need to be an exclusive use across the entire population of the community, for it is still possible there are individuals who are perhaps uneducated or insane. However, such differing versions must be considered false by a majority of the community (Kripke, 1982).

The second concept is *form of life*, described by Kripke as "The set of responses in which we agree, and the way they interweave with our activities" (Kripke, 1982, p. 96). The point of the concept is that different forms of life would be associated with communities which follow different rules and as such would be quite incomprehensible to one another. Kripke quotes an example of this used by Wittgenstein: "If a lion could talk, we could not understand him" (Kripke, 1982, p. 96).

The third concept is *criteria*. Kripke states that this concept has been under much debate, mainly due to it

being understood as a fundamental premise for Wittgenstein's private language argument. It states, perhaps somewhat simplified, that for someone to be taken to follow a rule, there need to be observable criteria for the correct application of the rule. This is fine when discussing objective things such as the use of the word "table", an example used by Kripke:

A child who says 'table' or 'that's a table' when adults see a table in the area (and does not do so otherwise) is said to have mastered the term 'table': he says 'that's a table', based on his observation, in agreement with the usage of adults, based on their observation (Kripke, 1982, p. 99).

It is less obvious when discussing the use of words describing sensations, such as pain, since there now is no direct way of investigating whether the child is actually feeling pain or not. Instead one is forced to consider whether the behavior of the child is similar to the behavior of someone in pain, at the time the child claims to be in pain. Kripke disagrees with such notions, stating that it is not a premise or assumption, but rather a deduced conclusion, following logically from the way rule-following functions in a language game:

'Outward criteria' for sensations such as pain are simply the way this general requirement [agreement] of our game of attributing concepts to

others works out in the special case of sensations
(Kripke, 1982, p. 102).

To summarize: Kripke's skeptical solution (skeptical since it accepts the premises of the skeptical challenge) states that language is possible between individuals since in such a situation there can be a comparison of answers and agreement. Also important is that there need to be criteria to determine the use of a concept, which need to be agreed upon as well.

My opinion on Kripke's skeptical solution is that it seems plausible to accept it, if the premise in the form of his skeptical challenge is accepted. The same feeling of counter-intuitiveness is there as in his skeptical challenge, but it is difficult to discern where the concerns might lie. Kripke's style of writing makes his thoughts easy to follow, but difficult to comment on, no immediate issues stand out to me when reading.

3. Baker and Hacker's critique of Kripke's interpretation

The views that Kripke suggested have, since the book came out, been the subject of quite a lot of debate. The main critics to Kripke's interpretations are Baker and Hacker (1984), although quite a few others have given their objections, even into modern times (Boghossian, 1989; Goldfarb, 1985; Hoffman, 1984; Knorpp, 2003; McDowell, 1984).

Since the critique is too vast for the scope of this essay, it will be limited to the critique presented by Baker and Hacker (1984), since they are considered the most important critics.

In the beginning of their article, Baker and Hacker (1984) explain their intention to show that Kripke's interpretation of Wittgenstein is off target, to the point that Wittgenstein's real arguments disprove the arguments Kripke lays forth:

In this paper we shall try to differentiate sharply between Wittgenstein's argument as it struck Kripke and Wittgenstein's argument, and to demonstrate that on some salient issues Wittgenstein's argument not only differs from, but actually confutes Kripke's picture. (Baker & Hacker, 1984, p. 408).

My opinion on this being the main focus of Baker and Hackers argumentation is that it seems to miss the point. To argue that Kripke is wrong about what Wittgenstein said is not really to argue against Kripke at all. As we shall see, Baker and Hacker do present some arguments against Kripke's reasoning and some of the factual errors Baker and Hacker point out create real problems in accepting Kripke's ideas, but the main emphasis is still on showing that Kripke's views are not the views of Wittgenstein. Since Kripke claims his

views to not be an actual representation of Wittgenstein's views, the argumentation by Baker and Hacker loses much of its power. More emphasis should have been made on arguing against the points Kripke makes, instead of the relationship these points have to their original inspiration.

3.1 Factual Errors

In their article Baker and Hacker (1984) point to a number of things in Kripke's reasoning and his interpretation of Wittgenstein that are plainly false. I will first present Baker and Hacker's critical points and then discuss my opinions on them at the end of this section.

The first thing noted as something Kripke got wrong is the notion that the paradox, and challenge, are of a skeptical nature. It is argued that a skeptic challenges the notion of knowledge of the inner workings of the world, beyond the input granted by the senses. This is not, however, what Kripke's skeptic does. Kripke's skeptic argues that there cannot be any meaning in words, making language impossible. This Baker and Hacker consider closer to nihilism than skepticism: "...he concludes with 'the paradox' that there is no such thing as meaning, so language cannot be possible. But *this* is not scepticism at all; it is conceptual nihilism..." (Baker & Hacker, 1984, p. 410).

The notion that Wittgenstein produced skeptical arguments at all is something Baker and Hacker disagree with, since he spoke several times of skepticism as nonsense.

Kripke's Wittgenstein is a 'common sense'-philosopher, according to Baker and Hacker, arguing that the things we are inclined to believe must in some way be true and the challenge is to find the way to prove it. Kripke compares this Wittgenstein to Hume and finds many similarities, claiming Hume to be a defender of common sense as well. Baker and Hacker doubt these similarities and claim the assumptions of Hume to be blatantly wrong:

Far from defending 'common sense', [Hume] insists that *all* the arguments are on the side of the skeptic. Rational investigation *proves* that the fundamental beliefs of 'common sense' are *fictions*, generated by the workings of the imagination according to natural laws of mental association. (Baker & Hacker, 1984, p. 412).

The same can be said about the notion that Wittgenstein was defending the opinions of common sense, partly since Wittgenstein himself states that he does not take his opinions into considerations when discussing philosophy:

On all questions we discuss I have no opinion; and if I had, and it disagreed with one of your opinions, I would at once give it up for the sake of argument, because it would be of no importance for our discussion. (Wittgenstein, as quoted in Baker & Hacker, 1984, p. 412).

Baker and Hacker instead express the opinion that Wittgenstein was concerned with the concepts surrounding common sense beliefs rather than the beliefs themselves and that his work for the most part was an attempt to clarify those concepts.

For the problems of philosophy arise through the distortion and misuse of ordinary concepts, and the way back to sanity consists in obtaining an *Übersicht* of the problematic expressions. (Backer & Hacker, 1984, p. 412).

Baker and Hacker claim Wittgenstein would not agree with Kripke's skeptic that there is no fact whether one means quaddition or addition. Instead Wittgenstein would, according to Baker and Hacker, consider "meaning something" a "fact of the mind". If one claims to "mean something", the fact that one has identified that one "means it" is the fact that the skeptic claims does not exist. This is something Wittgenstein would claim we all would agree on and he would also say that claiming anything else would be nonsense (Backer & Hacker, 1984).

Another thing Baker and Hacker express doubt about is whether §201 and §202, where Kripke claims Wittgenstein expresses the skeptical paradox and its conclusion, are the central paragraphs in the book, as Kripke suggests. Baker and Hacker describe the history of these paragraphs, such as that they are missing in early drafts of the book. This is strange, according to Baker and Hacker, if they are to be considered

the vital parts. Although the discussion on the origins of the paragraphs runs much deeper than described here, the ultimate conclusion Baker and Hacker draw from this discussion is that even though it is suggested that Kripke's interpretation is incorrect, one cannot know for certain.

Perhaps, after composing the Intermediate Version, Wittgenstein suddenly realized that these two MS [one of Wittgenstein's notebooks] remarks, embedded in a discussion of knowing that this is red, concerned with dissolving confusions about recognition, in fact contained in crystallized form the core of his book. (Baker & Hacker, 1984, p. 418).

When Kripke argues that one must be able to draw from earlier use which rule one follows for one to be justified in following it in the present, Baker and Hacker disagree with the notion that this is what is really in question. They claim that someone who states that "this color is red" does not see oneself as following instructions one gave oneself in the past, rather one thinks of oneself using the word "red" in accordance with its meaning (Baker & Hacker, 1984).

In his "skeptical solution", Kripke claims that one verifies the correctness of what one "means" by comparing the person's answer to one's own. However, this is not the case according to Baker and Hacker. They claim that the important part of how one is using a word is not whether one's inclination to use it is the same as another's, or that one

uses it in accordance with one's past uses of the word, but whether one uses it in accordance to its meaning. Using a word in accordance with its meaning is to be able to *explain* the meaning of the word, and for that *explanation* to be the community-wide agreed upon definition.

If he says 'By "bachelor" I mean an unmarried male', is that not *enough*? Must he answer the question of whether Genghis Khan at the age of 22 was a bachelor? And must he answer it the way I am inclined to? (Baker & Hacker, 1984, p. 431).

Also, they find it odd that one needs justification for stating such things as meaning 'W' by 'W'. It would be the same kind of statement as to say 'I want to eat a sandwich', which does not need and cannot be given any justification. In the third person perspective they find it equally strange: "We must imagine the following exchange: we ask Smith 'Does Jones mean addition by "plus"?' He replies, 'Yes, because whenever he is asked "What are a plus b " (for any a and b), he always gives the same answer as I give'. This is awry." (Baker & Hacker, 1984, p. 431).

One of the main points in Kripke's reasoning that Baker and Hacker disagree with is that Kripke's argumentation is about whether or not one uses an expression now in accordance with what one previously meant by it, instead of focusing on whether or not one uses an expression in accordance with its meaning, which is what Baker and Hacker

consider Wittgenstein to have done. The most important difference between the two focuses is that Wittgenstein is very careful to keep the notions of understanding an expression and what the expression mean separate. Kripke on the other hand almost treats them as the same thing, which Baker and Hacker disagree strongly with. "Kripke's strategy is misleading because it runs together the internally related, but distinct, notions of what an expression means and understanding an expression." (Baker and Hacker, 1984, p. 436).

My own thoughts on these points are few, since not much can be said when discussing facts. I do think Kripke should have known better in some cases, since he seems to have missed some rather big points when presenting his theory, although it is probably very hard to have enough knowledge when discussing the views of someone like Wittgenstein. One thing I find very interesting is when Baker and Hacker argue against Kripke's view of how one knows what they mean, almost by simply stating 'that is not how it works' and then explaining their own view, which seems to be based on some sort of common sense. It is really hard to argue back at such a view and almost as hard to accept it. How is one to accept an argumentation on a subject in which there is no way to check the facts? Perhaps one should simply arrive at the conclusion that in the worldview of Baker and Hacker, Kripke's

interpretation is wrong, but depending on what worldview some other person may have, Kripke might be right?

3.2 Misinterpretations

Baker and Hacker consider some of the things Kripke states about Wittgenstein's opinions to be false, although there is no solid foundation of evidence for what Wittgenstein's real view was. In these cases it is open to interpretation and Baker and Hacker strongly believe Kripke misinterprets some of Wittgenstein's statements.

When interpreting §201 and §202, Baker and Hacker claim Kripke simply arrives at the wrong conclusions. Kripke's claim that following a rule is an arbitrary choice without justification is, according to Baker and Hacker, a misunderstanding of the role of the interpretation of a rule. An action can be interpreted to follow any number of rules, and this Kripke thinks makes which rule one is claimed to follow arbitrary. Baker and Hacker, however, claim that an interpretation, although when discussed on its own lends no "meaning", can in a specific context grant "meaning" due to the conventions of rules in that specific context.

Only in a context in which there is an established technique of application of a rule, in which the rule is standardly involved in explanation and justification, in teaching and training, can questions of giving interpretations arise. (Baker & Hacker, 1984, p. 419).

Baker and Hacker also disagree with Kripke's notion that the "real private language argument" would consist of §138-242 instead of §244-271 (Baker & Hacker, 1984), which is more classically referred to as the private language argument (Candlish & Wrisley, 2010). Kripke considers §244-271 to be conclusions of inner experiences drawn from the private language argument, which he maintains has already been presented with mathematical examples. Baker and Hacker claim instead that the private language argument is not based on the notion of following rules, as Kripke describes it, but rather in showing that the mental should not be a primary focus, as it had been since Descartes.

The private language argument is not about 'the problem of sensations', which constitutes a prima facie counterexample to a thesis about rules. It is concerned with establishing the nonprimacy of the mental, the 'inner', the subjective. (Baker & Hacker, 1984, p. 422).

Kripke supposedly misunderstands this due to the premature mentioning of the private in §202. The focus of the private language argument, according to Baker and Hacker, is not with the objective, as Kripke thinks, but with the subjective. Compare sentences such as "How do I know this is the experience of 'seeing red'?", which focuses on the subjective ostensive definitions, with "how do I know this color is

'red'?", which focuses on the objective ostensive definitions (Baker & Hacker, 1984).

One major notion Baker and Hacker consider Kripke to have misinterpreted the use of is the notion of agreement. In Kripke's skeptical solution, agreement is the defining aspect of following a rule in a language game. To follow a rule is to have community-wide agreement. Baker and Hacker concede that the notion of agreement is crucial to Wittgenstein's language game, but they disagree with Kripke's way of using agreement. For Wittgenstein, according to Baker and Hacker, agreement between individual uses of an expression is not as important as agreement on the definition of what the expression means. The agreement is not with the use of other members, but in an objective description of the expression and criteria of how it is supposed to be used. "If the learner is to master shared concepts he must learn what *counts* as following the rule." (Baker and Hacker, 1984, p. 439).

Baker and Hacker present in their article a list of four things Kripke misunderstands about Wittgenstein's reasoning, the first being that he would claim the sentence "I know that I mean..." to either be an elaborate way of simply stating "I mean..." or a nonsense sentence. In this view, the skeptic's challenge of how one knows what one means is nonsensical and such statements need no justification (Baker & Hacker, 1984).

Secondly, Baker and Hacker claim that Wittgenstein did not view meaning and intending as experiences. Kripke uses the experience of "meaning something" as a counter-argument to his skeptic, but according to Baker and Hacker this has nothing to do with Wittgenstein (Baker & Hacker, 1984; Kripke, 1982).

Thirdly, regarding whether there is a mental "state" of "meaning something", Baker and Hacker claim Wittgenstein "does indeed argue that it is logically impossible for there to be a *state* of meaning W by 'W', but not in the manner Kripke suggests." (Baker & Hacker, 1984, p. 426). Instead Wittgenstein argues, according to Baker and Hacker, that meaning and intending are not states. A mental state, for Wittgenstein, is something which has different intensities, lengths and can be begun or ended. "Meaning something" does not have such properties (Baker & Hacker, 1984).

Finally, even if meanings and intentions were states, Baker and Hacker claim this would not solve Kripke's issues. They state: "The jump to its application would still have to be made" (Baker & Hacker, 1984, p. 426). By this they mean that a "state" does not have any properties which justifies "meaning" one thing or another in the way Kripke's skeptic demands (Baker & Hacker, 1984).

My opinion on the "misinterpretations" presented in this section is that they seem more critically relevant than the factual errors, since they more often assess the reasoning

leading from Wittgenstein's statements to Kripke's conclusions. I do, however, think that no final word can be said in such an argument, since Wittgenstein is a very interpretable philosopher. Which interpretation one chooses to believe can be more or less probable, but in the end it is difficult to outright claim any given interpretation is false. Baker and Hacker seem aware of this and sometimes state their conclusions a bit more carefully. The conclusions one can draw from this are just that Baker and Hacker's interpretation might be more probable, but one cannot decisively choose one or the other.

3.3 Flaws in Kripke's Logic

There are but a few points Baker and Hacker make in their article that directly argue against Kripke's way of reasoning.

One problem Baker and Hacker have with Kripke's solution is that they do not really think it solves the problem. The skeptical challenge stated that one cannot know that the present use of a word is the correct use according to one's previous uses of the word. Baker and Hacker argue that Kripke's solution that one's use must correspond to a community's use just moves the same problem from the individual to the community.

Another problem is that when discussing an isolated person, someone like Crusoe stranded on an island, Kripke states that we judge his behavior of rule-following by "taking

him into our community". Baker and Hacker consider this a very strange notion, wondering what it really means to "take someone into our community". If it means to compare his responses in given situations to our responses, Baker and Hacker claim it does not really tell us if he is following rules or not, especially if he follows a rule which he has not taught anyone other than himself. Baker and Hacker states that Crusoe could have rules that are not in the community which is trying to judge whether or not he follows rules, but this would mean that this community would judge him to not follow rules, since his inclinations differ from their own (Baker & Hacker, 1984).

These are in my opinion the most interesting comments Baker and Hacker put forth, simply since they argue directly against the statements of Kripke. Both arguments are very convincing and present real problems to Kripke's solution.

The first argument points to a serious flaw in Kripke's solution, namely that it could be considered to not actually solve the problem, and a solution that does not solve the problem is no real solution at all. Without some sort of defense against this argument, Kripke has not proven language to be possible.

The second argument points to a flaw in Kripke's notion of which criteria should be used when trying to figure out if a physically isolated person is following a rule or not. The idea of the argument is that if the isolated person

follows rules the members of the community do not recognize, they will not consider him to follow rules. This is another serious flaw in Kripke's solution that must be defended against, since it points to the fact that Kripke's solution is in a certain way biased towards one's own community when one considers what rule-following is.

4. Conclusions

As previously discussed in the appropriate sections, Baker and Hacker's main critique of Kripke's theory somewhat misses the mark. Despite this, some of the points made must be answered by Kripke if the theory is to be believed. It can be argued however that the merit of Kripke's theory does not end with its believability, but is strengthened by the fact that it draws attention to Wittgenstein's work and opens up discussion on subjects where there perhaps is some need to question the commonly held views. Even if the commonly held views prove to be correct, a discussion grants a useful foundation to argue from in the future, instead of appealing to some kind of common sense in the way Baker and Hacker do in some places.

The aim of this essay was to investigate and evaluate the private language argument according to Kripke. The conclusion is that Kripke's interpretation is probably not representative of Wittgenstein. This conclusion, however, must be understood in the light of the fact that according to Kripke himself it was not his goal to represent Wittgenstein.

A further conclusion is that as a theory of language Kripke's interpretation has some major flaws. Without some defending against Baker and Hacker's critique, it cannot be considered to provide a solution to how language is possible. However, it is worthy of discussion and brings up some valid concerns related to the following of rules.

5. Footnotes

1. The concept "grue", as proposed and discussed by Goodman (1955), is similar to Kripke's concept of quaddition. Grue is explained as a color that is green up until a certain point in time, after which it is blue. Like quaddition it poses a skeptical problem to any definition trying to base its argument on inductive experience.

6. References

- Baker, G.P., & Hacker, P.M.S (1984). Critical study: on misunderstanding Wittgenstein: Kripke's private language argument. *Synthese*, 58, 407-450.
- Biletzki, A., & Matar, A. (2011). Ludwig Wittgenstein. Retrieved June 17, 2012, from Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy:
<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/wittgenstein/>
- Boghossian, P. (1989). The rule-following considerations. *Mind*, 98(392), 507-549.
- Candlish, S., & Wrisley, G. (2010). Private language. Retrieved February 17, 2012, from Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy:
<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/private-language/>
- Fann, K.T. (1993). *Ludwig Wittgenstein - en introduktion*. Oxford: Blackwell
- Goldfarb, W. (1985). Kripke on Wittgenstein on rules. *The journal of philosophy*, 82(9), 471-488.
- Goodman, N. (1955). *Fact, Fiction, and Forecast*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard university press.
- Hoffman, P. (1984). Kripke on private language. *Philosophical studies*, 47, 23-28.

Knorpp, W. M. (2003). How to talk to yourself or Kripke's Wittgenstein's solitary language argument and why it fails. *Pacific philosophical quarterly*, 84, 215-248.

Kripke, S. (1982). *Wittgenstein on rules and private language: an elementary exposition*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard university press

Mcdowell, J. (1984). Wittgenstein on following a rule. *Synthese*, 58, 325-363.

Wittgenstein, L. (2009/1953). *Philosophical investigations*. Wiley-Blackwell

Wittgenstein, L. (1992/1921). *Tractatus logico-philosophicus*. Stockholm: Thales