

Pictures of Rule Following

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1. Introduction

In Kripke's *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*, there are two strands of rule-following skepticism. They are intertwined but can be disentangled. This paper first clarifies how these strands differ and then answers one of the strands. I think Kripke fails to heed Wittgenstein's admonishment to "look and see" (Wittgenstein, 2001, 36e).¹ He tacitly conjectures things must be some particular way, and this conjecture prevents him from focusing on the more important task of seeing whether things actually *are* that way. By holding the unexamined roots of Kripke's rule-following skepticism to the light, his reading of the paradox of §201 of *Philosophical Investigations* dissolves and it becomes clear that his skeptical claims are unfounded. Kripke's skeptical claims turn out to be either (1) unwarranted because they are the result of a misguided picture of rule-following (a picture that is initially tempting but ultimately one

¹ In this paper, I saddle Kripke himself with all the positions his imagined skeptic takes despite the fact that Kripke suggests such positions are not necessarily his own.

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that can and should be discarded without trouble) or (2) limited to the ‘Cartesian’ register, failing to break into the ‘Kantian’ side of skepticism.²

This essay has five sections (of which this is the first, an introduction and roadmap of the other sections). §2 is a clarification of the aforementioned strands of rule-following skepticism found in *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*. In §3, I identify a picture of rule-following with which Kripke seems to be tacitly operating. This picture might be called an *essence picture*, and I argue one can see Kripke to be leaning on this picture by paying attention to the form of his arguments. In §4, I present a different picture of rule-following via an interpretation of how I think Wittgenstein thinks rule-following should and should not be characterized. Ultimately cases of rule-following are better captured by Wittgenstein’s ‘family resemblance picture’ than Kripke’s essence picture. §5 is an elucidation of how the rule-following paradox should be understood in light of the re-characterization of rule-following in §4. I argue that, after dropping Kripke’s *a priori* picture of rule-following and replacing it with a picture Wittgenstein recommends, Kripke’s rule-following paradox is avoided. I also argue that we have good reason to replace Kripke’s picture, i.e. that this is not something we must simply choose to do.

2. Two Strands of Rule-following Skepticism

In *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*, one finds a Cartesian strand and a Kantian strand of skepticism; or equally, an epistemological and a metaphysical strand of skepticism. Kripke raises skeptical worries about *how* we know things about rule-following (e.g. about how we know *this* to be an application of a rule and how we know it to be an application of *this* rule but not *that* one); this is the epistemological/Cartesian thread. It is concerned with how we access, or ascertain, facts about rule-following, but it does not (yet) doubt the nature of such facts. The Cartesian skeptic accepts (at

²§2 of this essay discusses the Cartesian-Kantian distinction at length. See also Conant’s *Varieties of Scepticism* (from which I have taken these terms) for more on the distinction.

least at first) that we know what a claim about rule-following means; he simply wonders whether we can ever be certain when making such a claim or are ever warranted in claiming ourselves to know such facts. The metaphysical/Kantian skeptic, however, is beset by a deeper anxiety. We can think of the Kantian skeptic as sidelining the epistemological/Cartesian question of how we know facts about rule-following and asking what constitutes such facts. In other words, Kantian skepticism is concerned with what claims of rule-following *even mean* (a meaning left implicitly undoubted by the Cartesian skeptic). The onset of Kantian skepticism in Kripke's work is marked by the worry that there is nothing we actually mean when we speak of rule-following, that there is nothing there to be a Cartesian skeptic about, that discourse on rule-following is not *difficult* but simply *nonsense*.

What are my grounds for claiming that Kripke himself makes this distinction? After all, maybe this is interesting philosophical taxonomy but not a way of thinking that can be assigned to Kripke. To the text, then. Early in *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*, Kripke writes:

In the discussion below the challenge posed by the sceptic takes two forms. First, he questions whether there is any fact that I meant *plus*, not *quus*, that will answer his sceptical challenge. Second, he questions whether I have any reason to be so confident that now I should answer '125' rather than '5' (Kripke 11).

This quotation supports at least the conclusion that Kripke has in mind two strands of skepticism, the skeptic's challenge taking "two forms". And looking at these strands, it appears the first can be identified as a Kantian strand, the skeptic wondering whether there is any fact at all that distinguishes between meaning *plus* and *quus*, and that the second can be identified as Cartesian, the skeptic wondering whether I can know—and thus "be so confident"—that this is an application of the rule in question.

We can see further evidence of Kripke's awareness of this distinction in some of his descriptions of the shape of the skeptical dialectic. At one point Kripke writes, "the problem may appear to be epistemological... however... it is clear that the sceptical challenge

is not really an epistemological one” (21). The real challenge to rule-following is the Kantian one, not a question of epistemology but a question of how there could even be such a thing as rule-following.

Of course, ultimately, if the sceptic is right, the concepts of meaning and of intending one function rather than another will make no sense... But before we pull the rug out from under our own feet, we begin by speaking as if the notion that at present we mean a certain function by *plus* is unquestioned and unquestionable. Only past usages are to be questioned. Otherwise, we will be unable to formulate the problem (13–14).

Kripke consciously uses Cartesian skepticism as a way into the Kantian paradox, knowingly bringing the problem out through epistemological worries that are ultimately meant to give way to metaphysical/Kantian skepticism. In other words, Kripke poses the problem first as an epistemological *how-do-you-know* question, but it quickly becomes apparent that this is the less pressing expression of skeptical anxiety. Kripke recognizes that it is not *whether or not* and *how* I know; the real question is *what would I have to know in order to count as knowing the thing I purport to know?* For Kripke, Cartesian skepticism is merely a vehicle for arriving at Kantian skepticism.

In this paper, I mean to address the slide from Cartesian skepticism into Kantian skepticism. I argue against the latter form of skepticism but leave the former basically untouched. Perhaps this will seem a cop-out to some readers. Am I conceding skepticism? And if so, is this not a reprehensible feature of this essay? There are a couple of things to say in response to these charges. First, it seems to me that when it comes to rule-following Kantian skepticism should be addressed prior to Cartesian skepticism (unless there is a way to address both simultaneously, but no such possibility occurs to me). Before we entertain epistemological concerns (before we argue over whether we ever actually know claims of rule-following to obtain), we should determine what we are taking about, or that we are actually talking about something intelligible and not merely

spouting nonsense. And this essay would be too long if I were to address Cartesian as well as Kantian skepticism.³

The second reason I leave Cartesian skepticism untouched: it seems the sorts of answers given in response to Cartesian skepticism elsewhere should, if they are good ones, be applicable here as well. ‘Cartesian rule-following skepticism’ does not strike me as a unique form of Cartesian skepticism (one posing its own special problems) but rather a particular application of its generic form, the problems it poses for rule-following being basically the same as those it poses elsewhere. And if we concede Cartesian skepticism, we at least understand what we are conceding, whereas concession to the Kantian skeptic seems intolerable in that concession erases the possibility of understanding that concession and so we are left with a paradox.

3. Kripke’s Picture of Rule-following

Kripke asks a question that might be stated thus: what makes it the case that *this*—some action or event—is in accordance with this particular rule and not another one (or not in accordance with any rule at all)? More simply, what is it to follow a rule? Ultimately, for Kripke, this is not a Cartesian question, one about how we access or ascertain facts of rule-following, but a Kantian question about the constitution of following a rule. How is it so much as possible that an action be in accordance with a rule? How is it different from an action that is not in accordance with a rule, and what makes it so? And if it is impossible to distinguish between following a rule and not following one, the whole concept of rule-following (its very intelligibility) must be lost to us and not just our (mere epistemological) ability to determine whether or not a particular case is one of rule-following.

No candidate answer to the question of rule-following is to be rejected solely because it references facts that it is epistemologically difficult, even impossible, to attain knowledge of. Kripke asks whether there is any fact at all that determines whether or not a

³Moreover, this response to someone who objects to my silence on Cartesian skepticism is predicated on the assumption that I think Cartesian skepticism wrong, and frankly I am not sure it is.

rule is being followed regardless of whether there exists any hope of accessing such a fact. Kripke ultimately concludes that there is no such fact, i.e. that there is nothing that distinguishes between following a rule and not following one, and thus is issued a skeptical paradox in which we are apparently forced to conclude (however impossibly) that there is no such thing as being in accordance with a rule.

As an illustration of his broader claims, Kripke challenges our grasp of the plus function, arguing that one's use of the plus sign does not prescribe anything as a right or wrong application of it (8). He claims anything we do or think might be brought, on the strength of some interpretation, into accordance with multiple (and conflicting) rules governing our actions. For Kripke, this means there is no possibility of distinguishing between something's being in accordance with this rule and being in accordance with that one. In other words, all the facts to be found in a putative case of rule-following (e.g., one's actions, his 'mental contents', etc.) do not add up to following any particular rule since these same facts would also be consistent with *not* following the same rule. In the face of the conclusion that there is nothing that is different between cases of following a rule and cases of following a different rule or no rule, Kripke concludes that the whole (traditional) concept of following a rule must be abandoned. For following a rule is only conceivable if it may be meaningfully contrasted with not following a rule, a contrast that he purports to have shown illusory.

In ordinary cases, particular criteria are taken to warrant ascriptions of rule-following, and some explanations, interpretations, justifications, et cetera, do the necessary clarifying work in cases of confusion or misinterpretation. Sometimes we are certain that a rule is being followed or certain of how to follow it ourselves, and we do not consider the logically possible ambiguity of our criteria or any potential misunderstandings to unsettle our certainty. However, a particular clarification, interpretation, or criterion that works in some cases is no proof against every possible misinterpretation, and in this way our position as knowledgeable rule-followers may appear unstable. If the context shifts, if something new about the present circumstances comes to light or another viable interpretation is presented, we may be shaken in our conviction (and no longer

warranted in saying) that this is a case of rule-following or that this is how to apply a particular rule.

Kripke's skeptical argument works by showing that in no case is misinterpretation inconceivable, and it is this 'lack of assurance' against possible misinterpretations that motivates the beginning of the skeptical dialectic. He challenges our grip of the plus function by suggesting a 'quus' function (9), and though the argument is ultimately supposed to lead to a place where both plus and 'quus' are unintelligible, it is motivated first by the skeptic raising the possibility of misinterpretation, showing that the criteria we had taken to determine the rule seem to permit possible mistakes. Thus the question is first the epistemological/Cartesian one: how do I know this to be a case of rule-following? How can I rule out possible misinterpretations? When it comes to look like I cannot really know whether this is a case of rule-following (since I cannot rule out every possible misinterpretation), Kripke begins shifting registers and asks *what would I have to know in order to know this to be a case of rule-following?* So the dialectic evolves, moving its challenge from one of how you know (what you say you know) to a challenge of what you know (you say you know).

Our temptation towards claims about the general unintelligibility of rule-following is supposed to grow from our recognition of an ever-present potential for misinterpretation. It strikes us that nothing could close the gap between our *criteria for* and the correct *interpretation of* the rule, and on this way of thinking, we end up losing rule-following altogether. In this way, what seemed to be the harmless observation that any set of criteria could be misinterpreted deepens and eventually collapses the difference we had thought to exist between following and not following a rule. Thus the original Cartesian skepticism devolves into Kantian skepticism, and Kripke's epistemological challenge comes to reveal a deeper problematic. No longer is it incumbent on the anti-skeptic to show (merely) how we could know a case to be one of rule-following; what a claim of rule-following even means has come under skeptical attack.

Kripke disregards all ordinary answers to the question of rule-following, citing possible misinterpretations as proof of their inadequacy. But how does Kripke imagine a satisfactory answer would appear? What kind of answer would he accept? For surely there must

be some kind of answer that Kripke thinks would suffice, certain criteria that he thinks if met would constitute a good answer to his skepticism. Otherwise he presupposes his conclusion of the impossibility of rule-following. Kripke has reasons for disregarding our ordinary answers to questions of rule-following, saying this answer is no good because it does not fit these criteria, and this means Kripke has in mind a template of how a good answer would look, i.e. certain criteria that a good answer would meet.

In considering the reasons he cites for disregarding our ordinary answers and asking what an answer that would not be excluded would have to look like, I think it becomes apparent: Kripke is after an 'essential' answer to the question of rule-following, i.e. an answer that would serve as an unassailable criterion of rule-following under any circumstances whatsoever. When he asks how this can be an application of a rule while that is not (and how anything could possibly accord with a rule), Kripke is not satisfied by any answer that falls short of being ultimate, enquiry-ending, fool-proof; he seeks something that is unimpeachable in every case. Such a criterion would have to ensure by its mere presence in a case (whatever such a presence would amount to) whether it were one of rule-following. In principle, it could not be 'unsettled' by a shifting context, permitting of no doubt whatsoever. Kripke wants a fact that, should it obtain, implies rule-following with bilateral necessity; and we can see this is true by noticing that he rejects all answers that do not satisfy this condition.

To elaborate on the point: though we ordinarily identify certain criteria as constitutive of following a particular rule, these criteria might be of no consideration in other cases or under different circumstances. Merely adding certain choice details to the case under consideration might cause us to take the same criteria to have a different sort of relevance (moving a pawn does not count as following the rules of chess for one who has no understanding of the game, but in another context, moving a pawn certainly does count as following the rules of chess). Kripke seeks, not a criterion for rule-following that settles the matter only for a particular context, but an answer that settles the matter in every conceivable eventuality, one that wards off every possible misinterpretation and that would tell

us whether a case was one of rule-following whatever other circumstantial details obtain.

It is a noteworthy feature of Kripke's picture of rule-following that, if a fact that thus constituted rule-following existed, it would only be necessary to look at a single moment, a 'snapshot', in order to determine whether or not a particular case were one of rule-following. Not only would other contemporaneous details be unimportant to this ultimate criterion, but also what preceded and followed would be unimportant.⁴

This absolute criterion that Kripke is apparently after begins to look like an 'essence' of rule-following. It could not be a mere concomitant feature of rule-following, something that as such could conceivably accompany a case that was not one of rule-following, for then such a fact would offer no infallible assurance that the case in which it obtained were one of rule-following. Philosophical clarity on the matter of rule-following, Kripke appears to think, would consist in isolating whatever it is that lies at the heart of rule-following—whatever it is that undergirds cases of rule-following—and bringing that to light. The general thrust of Kripke's skeptical argument lies in showing that there is no such ultimate criterion, no essence lying beneath cases of rule-following, and it is this realization that moves him to his skeptical (non)conclusion of the fictive nature of the concept of rule-following.

In this section, I have paid special attention to how Kripke makes his skeptical argument, i.e. how he motivates the slide into paradox. I have asked what it is he is seeking, what he thinks would be necessary in order to render rule-following intelligible, for it is apparently in not finding this that one is brought to paradox. In answering these questions, it has become apparent that Kripke seeks the essence of rule-following. In this section, my aim has been purely descriptive, an attempt to clarify the framework of the Kripke's thinking, and I have not attempted to say whether Kripke's position is defensible.

⁴In *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein writes in the voice of an interlocutor, "we grasp the meaning at a stroke, and what we grasp in this way is surely something different from the 'use' which is extended in time!" (59e, §138).

4. Rule-following: A Family Portrait

Looking at actual cases of rule-following, it is apparent that there are a variety of different things that are ordinarily considered serviceable criteria of rule-following. Sometimes it is said that one is following a rule when he writes “ $2 + 2 = 4$ ”, or perhaps when he moves a chess piece, or sometimes it is said one is following a rule when he consults an instruction manual and then proceeds to unscrew a lug nut. These are all possible cases of rule-following, and we are (ordinarily) warranted in claiming them to be so though we might hesitate to say we have identified an essential criterion in any of them. We identify rule-following with competency and assurance in a variety of cases and are bothered neither by the diversity of our criteria nor by any perceived lack of ‘essentiality’ in them.

One way in which Wittgenstein attempts to make rule-following’s lack of an essence apparent is by asking questions like *could this be an instance of rule-following; could someone follow a rule in this way?* What one should see in considering these cases is that it is necessary to fill out a context, however roughly, to get a handle on what it would be for such things to be cases of rule-following or not (something which we may often do unconsciously). What sorts of practices, institutions, customs, and so on, must we imagine in order for this to be a case of rule-following? In what surroundings would these criteria warrant a claim of rule-following (and in what contexts would these ‘same’ criteria be unrecognizable as such)? Since Kripke is after the essence of rule-following, asking if certain criteria are ipso facto constitutive of rule-following, he thinks there would have to be some final criterion that holds regardless of whatever further circumstances obtain. Wittgenstein’s examples, however, make it apparent that, deprived of a context, the answers that can be given to questions about whether certain criteria constitute rule-following drift into indeterminacy. It is only when deployed in some context that our criteria have any life. Wittgenstein writes:

It is only in normal cases that the use of a word is clearly laid out in advance for us; we know, are in no doubt, what we have to say in this or that case. The more abnormal the case, the

more doubtful it becomes what we are to say
(Wittgenstein, 2001, 61e-62e).

It is only under certain circumstances that anything might constitute rule-following. Any criterion of rule-following “presupposes a surrounding particular circumstances, particular forms of life and speech [just as] there is no such thing as a facial expression without a face” (Wittgenstein, 1978, 414). Bereft of the circumstances in which they occur, our criteria for rule-following lose their significance, ultimately becoming unrecognizable as such.

Contrary to the picture of rule-following with which Kripke is working, rule-following is not something that can always be ‘pinned down’ to a single moment or to a definite—i.e. sharply bounded—period of time (though it may sometimes be). On some occasions, when did he really follow the rule is a bad question. Asking (and insisting on) such a question can lead to confusion when in fact all is known and in the open. Wittgenstein demonstrates how this takes place with questions we might try to ask about chess; he writes, “What if one asked: When can you play chess? All the time? Or just while you are making a move? - And how odd that being able to play chess should take such a short time, and a game so much longer!” (Wittgenstein, 2001, 65e). Thus a game of chess, something which may unexceptionally last several hours, now may (on this way of thinking) appear as though it lasted so much longer than the actual playing of the game (a bizarre conclusion).

When it comes to playing chess, I want to say nothing is hidden. In ordinary circumstances, an exact description of what is going on (strategy excluded) is easily achieved and not perplexing (i.e. there is ordinarily no confusion over when the participants are really playing chess; such questions either do not occur to us or, if they do, do not bother us for they are easily answered). If someone should pose this question and, moreover, appear to be confused by it, we should echo Wittgenstein and say that his question contains a mistake (Wittgenstein, 2001, 82e): the mistake of assuming we must be able to name a span of time—with sharp boundaries—that one can actually play chess. The language-game that revolves around chess (and more broadly rule-following in general) does not (always) speak of rule-following in this way and simply has no answer to the question of when one can really play chess. As a result, when asking such

questions of rule-following, we become confused by the grammar, and we suppose there must be definite temporal boundaries to be set around games of chess (and cases of rule-following). However, this supposition arises, not from observation of our practices, but because of the influence of a particular picture of rule-following. We assume something like Kripke's essence picture, and this gives rise to the idea that we must be able to give a definite answer to these sorts of questions. Observation of the actual language-game, though, makes it apparent that the question is an unnatural one.

There is no essence lying under cases of rule-following, an essence that may be brought into focus by excluding our 'non-essential' criteria. In §3, I argued that the skeptic is functioning with an 'essence picture' of rule-following. I hope it is now evident, though, that this is not a characterization of rule-following that is true to our actual practices and language-game(s) surrounding rule-following. Observation of our every-day lives, of what we do and how we speak, suggests that there is no unassailable criterion in cases of rule-following. Rather, to borrow a term Wittgenstein uses elsewhere in *Philosophical Investigations*, cases of rule-following share *family resemblances* and can be recognized and understood as such without the existence of any essential feature undergirding them.⁵

I do not mean to suggest that there are a number of disjunctive, interwoven properties that hold together all cases of rule-following (or in other words that rule-following has a complex essence, one comprised of a series of disjunctions). In saying that cases of rule-following can be thought of as sharing family resemblances, I am suggesting a picture that is in opposition to the supposition that rule-following—either in general or in particular cases—has an essence, or something lying below the surface in virtue of which it is what it is (as perhaps one is a man in virtue of being a rational animal). The term "family resemblance" may be misleading if one takes it to mean the point is mainly one about relationships between cases of rule-following. The focus is better understood as being on individual cases. Holding only one case to be in question, we do not (take ourselves to) need an essential feature, an indefeasible warrant, in

⁵ See, for example, Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 36e, §67.

order to recognize it as a case of rule-following (which we can see by observing the language-games that surround cases of rule-following).

I have offered an alternative picture of rule-following, one that holds knowledge of rule-following involves no unassailable criterial knowledge. Thus it is a picture that palpably differs from Kripke's essence picture. This sort of knowledge may be compared to an ability—a case of *know-how*—as opposed to knowledge that can be made exhaustively discursively explicit. If rule-following had an essence, then one would be obliged to know that essence in order to know a case to be one of rule-following. However, if there is no essence of rule-following, then I am not obliged to demonstrate knowledge of any such thing in order to vindicate the claim that I understand rule-following (what it is or how to do it). If rule-following is a family resemblance matter, then my knowledge of it will show itself as an ability, and this reflects no lack on my part but rather is indicative of what rule-following itself is: something essentially essence-less. However, this alternative picture of rule-following is not yet a solution to rule-following skepticism. That is the issue of the next section.

5. Reassessing Rule-following Skepticism

Kripke is after an answer that is ultimate, a criterion whose fulfillment absolutely settles the question of whether a rule is being followed and of its application, but it begins to look as if this search were always bound to fail. Taking the essence picture in conjunction with a form of Cartesian skepticism leads Kripke to Kantian skepticism since, in any case (described as one) of rule-following, it seems possible to conceive of further (as of yet unknown or unspecified) details that may obtain and thus change (our assessment of) the case from 'rule-following' to 'not rule-following'. In other words, doubt can be perpetually imagined, misinterpretations consistent with our criteria always conceived. This is so far a Cartesian skepticism, a comment on the nature of our ability to ascertain certain facts about the world, but Kripke, working implicitly with his essence picture of rule-following, thinks there must be an unimpeachable criterion of rule-following, one that is not susceptible to being unsettled by the revelation of further imaginable circumstances, and rejects every

answer that fails to meet this standard. Upon rightly concluding that there is no such thing, he arrives at his (non)conclusion of the incoherence of the concept of rule-following. Kripke, finding no essence of rule-following, is unable to contrast following a rule with not following one—for it was cases with this essence that he meant to contrast to cases without this essence—and so is altogether unable to make sense of rule-following. It is, in other words, his failure to successfully construe rule-following on the essence picture that leads Kripke to declare rule-following impossible. Wittgenstein describes an impulse to say something like, *But this isn't how it is—yet this is how it has to be* (Wittgenstein, 2001, 53); and this is an accurate characterization of where Kripke finds himself—surprised by the dissonance between his model and reality—and this leads him to paradox.

Since there is an alternative to the essence picture of rule-following, it does not seem necessary to give up rule-following altogether due to its failure to be rendered comprehensible within the framework of the essence picture. Before attempting to espouse such an unstable position, one should ask whether the family resemblance picture might better serve as a model for rule-following, and if so, whether we should replace the essence picture with it.⁶ After all, the use of the model or picture is to help us understand reality; it is not to dictate to reality how it must really be. Wittgenstein writes: “we can avoid unfairness or vacuity in our assertions only by presenting the model as what it is, as an object of comparison—as a sort of yardstick; not as a preconception to which reality must correspond” (56e).

So when it becomes apparent that the essence picture is not a good fit for rule-following (when we see that knowledge of rule-following does not involve unassailable criteria), it then becomes an important task to search for a new model (insofar as finding a new one might prove helpful), one that serves as a better object of comparison for our actual practices, helping us understand them as they really are.

⁶In fact, it is not obvious whether a picture of rule-following is necessary at all. Do we need to replace the essence picture with another, or can we do away with pictures altogether? I am not sure how to answer this question, but no matter the answer, jettisoning the essence picture is both viable and necessary

The failure to make sense of rule-following when it is construed on the essence picture shows, not the failure of rule-following, but the failure of rule-following to be construed on such a picture. Wittgenstein writes, “The more closely we examine actual language, the greater the conflict between it and our requirement... The conflict becomes intolerable; the requirement is now in danger of becoming vacuous” (51e), and this is an apt description of Kripke’s rule-following dialectic. Kripke has certain requirements for rule-following that, upon investigation, go unmet, and the failure to meet these requirements renders unintelligible the very thing we were trying to understand. Once, however, it has been made explicit that it is only a certain picture that is untenable, new paths open, and we can go on.

In fact, once it is made clear that the skeptic shows the failure, not of the concept of rule-following tout court, but rather of rule-following to fit the essence picture, Kripke’s argument can be regarded as a *reductio ad absurdum* of this picture, a clever way of showing that the premise that rule-following has an essence—and thus that knowledge of it requires an unassailable criterion—is a bad one. But in order to claim that the Kripke’s skeptical arguments are a *reductio* of his position, it is necessary to make explicit the premise that is under attack and that can be done away with (namely that rule-following is to be construed on the essence picture). Without this, we lack a vantage point from which to observe the destruction and call the argument a *reductio*; we realize we are sawing off the branch upon which we are sitting but see no other way to saw at all and so are paralyzed—any movement threatens to send us crashing to paradox. Thus one is premature in calling Kripke’s skeptical paradox a *reductio* before his implicit picture of rule-following is made explicit.

But after replacing the essence picture with the family resemblance picture, are Kripke’s skeptical concerns not still applicable? Do not the exact same problems arise no matter the ‘picture’ with which we function? The answer to such questions is no.

In an ordinary case of rule-following, it is easy to say what counts as following a rule, which rule is being followed, how we know one is following it, and so on. Kripke introduces what I call an ‘unsettling element’ into ordinary cases of rule-following, one that shows that a doubt is conceivable by introducing either a possible

misinterpretation or certain other facts about the case that suggest a reassessment of whether the case is one of rule-following. He suggests a bizarre quus-like function (Kripke 9) and similar things (we can, for example, also imagine him suggesting a Martian's finding it natural to interpret a drawing different than do we (Wittgenstein, 2001, 60e), or a pupil's finding it natural to taking the direction count by twos differently than do we (81e), and so on).

These are presented as possibilities, conceivable interpretations that one must be able to head-off if one is not to fall into skepticism. In this way, Kripke purports to show that the criteria named as constitutive of rule-following were inadequate. However, when Kripke adds 'unsettling elements' to the case in question, answering him is still a possibility. One can still say what constitutes rule-following under these new circumstances, in light of these new facts (and I suppose that if I were to discover a Martian's tendency to misinterpret a drawing I might try to correct this too). I say these are new facts and, therefore, circumstances because they must be contrary to what was assumed of the case; otherwise they would have no power to 'unsettle' our previous assessment. We should say, "Now that the circumstances have changed, this is how I know this to be a case of rule-following (or to not be a case of rule-following, or to be a case that is indeterminate)", and this should no longer appear problematic once we have shifted pictures of rule-following.

In a shifting context, the criteria that constitute rule-following change too. This is no challenge to our practices or to the concept of rule-following, and it appears so only if rule-following is thought of as requiring an essence, i.e. an ultimate criterion, something not susceptible to skeptical 'unsettling elements'. Once rule-following comes to be thought of on the family resemblance picture—once the notion of an essence of rule-following is abandoned—the facts that different circumstances give rise to different criteria and that there are no ultimate criteria of rule-following become mere commonplaces. Since there is nothing that must 'lie below' every case of rule-following, nothing that must settle the matter for every possible eventuality, the observation that all our criteria may be unsettled no longer appears puzzling—this is simply a feature of (knowledge of) rule-following.

In other words, we should exhort Kripke to take notice of the ease with which we say what counts as rule-following (and why it does) in ordinary cases but to not expect any final answer on the matter. To expect such is to be misled about the nature of (knowledge of) rule-following, and thus our lack of ability to give an ultimate answer does not signify a lack of understanding of what it is that distinguishes between one's following a rule and one's not following a rule. If the nature of the case changes, we may change our assessment entirely or adjust our answer, but Kripke is unable to raise a worry about the general intelligibility of rule-following since this possibility hinges on viewing rule-following as necessarily having an essence. Thus Kripke's 'deep' skeptical questions about rule-following can be given ordinary answers. In one deflationary passage, Wittgenstein writes:

Where is the connection effected between the sense of the words "Let's play a game of chess" and all the rules of the game?—Well, in the list of rules of the game, in the teaching of it, in the everyday practice of playing" (Wittgenstein, 2001, 86e).

Whereas the interlocutor here takes himself to be asking a 'deep' question, Wittgenstein responds as though it were quite an ordinary one, requiring an ordinary answer—for given the right picture of rule-following this is the only kind of question we should feel compelled to answer.

The logical possibility of doubt that Kripke demonstrates can be raised in, perhaps, any case at all only shows there to be a question of Cartesian skepticism at hand. That differing circumstances give rise to different criteria of rule-following and that no criterion is unassailable reveals only that rule-following lacks essential criteria. Taking Cartesian skepticism in conjunction with the picture he assumes for rule-following, Kripke finds himself (making an attempt at) articulating Kantian skepticism, claiming the general unintelligibility of the concept of rule-following. But in jettisoning his a priori picture of rule-following (and, if it helps as a model of comparison, substituting for it the family resemblance picture), it can be seen that such skepticism is unwarranted. Kripke's 'arguments from possible misinterpretation' lead to Kantian skepticism when combined with the essence picture of rule-following, but upon reflection, this

picture of rule-following should hold no temptation and can simply be let go. When Kripke's arguments from possible misinterpretation are applied to the family resemblance picture of rule-following, there arises no Kantian problem about the intelligibility of rule-following. We stop the slide into the general unintelligibility of rule-following—a muddle that cannot be sensibly stated—before the skeptical dialectic gains momentum. Thus when it comes to rule-following, Cartesian skepticism does not give way to Kantian skepticism. If the skeptic raises a concern that purports to be general, it is in the search of the essence of rule-following—something we should not expect to exist and whose non-existence should leave us nonplussed.

Kripke thinks of rule-following on the essence picture, and while this model may have its home in certain parts in language, here it misleads, something which is shown by the fact that down that road lies paradox. Seeing this, we must walk back and seek a more tractable picture of rule-following, and the family resemblance picture has proved such a one. As long as we try to cram rule-following into the mold of the essence picture, we shall fail to perspicuously describe our practices, but once that mold is swapped for the family resemblance picture, all falls back into place and our concept of rule-following makes sense again.

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