"This is Simply What I Do"

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Wittgenstein's discussion of rule-following is widely regarded to have identified what Kripke called "the most radical and original sceptical problem that philosophy has seen to date". But does it? This paper examines the problem in the light of Charles Peirce's distinctive *scientific hierarchy*. Peirce identifies a phenomenological inquiry which is prior to both logic and metaphysics, whose role is to identify the most fundamental philosophical categories. His third category, particularly salient in this context, pertains to *general predication*.

Rule-following scepticism, the paper suggests, results from running together two questions: "How is it that I can project rules?", and, "What is it for a given usage of a rule to be *right*?". In Peircean terms the former question, concerning the irreducibility of general predication (to singular reference), must be answered in phenomenology, while the latter, concerning the difference between true and false predication, is answered in logic. A failure to appreciate this distinction, it is argued, has led philosophers to focus exclusively on Wittgenstein's famous public account of rule-following *rightness*, thus overlooking a private, phenomenological dimension to Wittgenstein's remarks on following a rule which gives the lie to Kripke's reading of him as a sceptic.

Introduction

Wittgenstein noted that when we grasp a rule we grasp an idea that in principle outruns any set of particular applications of the rule. Consider counting, for example:

> ...let us suppose that...[someone who is being taught to count] continues the series correctly, that is, as we do it. So now we can say he has mastered the system.–But how far need he continue the series for us to have the right to say this? Clearly you cannot state a limit here.[1]

In a similar vein, Peirce wrote:

> Every cook has in her recipe-book a collection of rules, which she is accustomed to follow. An apple pie is desired. Now, observe that we seldom, probably never, desire a single individual thing. What we want is something which shall produce a

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[1] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (henceforth: *'Investigations'*), trs. G.E.M. Anscombe (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1953), §145.

certain pleasure of a certain kind...An apple pie, then, is desired...But it is not any particular apple pie; for it is to be made for the occasion; and the only particularity about it is that it is to be made and eaten today. For that, apples are wanted; and remembering that there is a barrel of apples in the cellar, the cook goes to the cellar and takes the apples that are uppermost and handiest. That is an example of following a general rule. (1.341)[2]

What is common to both these remarks is the idea that we have understandings which reach beyond any set of particular cases.[3]

There is thus an essential *normativity* involved in rule-following, and this claim may usefully be divided into two parts. The first is that understanding a rule requires one in principle always to be able to *project* that rule. For this reason, no finite number of applications can exhaust the rule. Secondly, a norm is essentially something which *discriminates between alternatives* whether it is, for example, an ethical norm which says that one course of action is more good than other possible actions, an aesthetic norm which says that certain types of thing are more beautiful or otherwise intrinsically attractive than others, or (at the more general level) a 'meaning-norm' which dictates that the extension of a certain predicate should embrace certain individuals and not others. We can give no meaning to the notion of a norm which does not so discriminate, or 'carve logical space'.

Aren't these understandings which reach beyond any set of particular cases rather mysterious? Indeed, philosophers have puzzled over how rules and/or rule-followers manage to perform their characteristic feats of (what may be termed) 'semantic reaching' – feats which, when one thinks about them in the right way, are liable to seem 'superphysicalistic'. For no physical process seems infinitely inexhaustible in the way that rules or meanings apparently are. Once we grasp the rule for addition we know that, to the heat death of the Universe and beyond, adding two things to two other things will produce four things. How do we, whose minds are finite and demonstrably fallible, manage to know such a thing?

Thus, Wittgenstein's discussion of rule-following is widely perceived to have identified a distinctive and challenging philosophical *problem*, "the rule-following

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[2] All Peirce quotes in this paper are taken from the *Collected Papers* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1933, 1935 & 1958), unless otherwise indicated.

[3] The congruence is not entirely coincidental as Wittgenstein received an indirect influence from Peirce both through Ramsey, who read the first edition of Peirce's *Collected Papers* in the '30s, and also through William James' writings on religion and psychology, which were read by Wittgenstein with interest. See Jaime Nubiola, "Scholarship on the Relations Between Ludwig Wittgenstein and Charles S. Peirce", in Angelelli & M. Cerezo, eds., *Proceedings of the III Symposium on History of Logic* (Berlin: Gruyter, 1996).

problem", which has been influentially presented by Saul Kripke in particular as "the most radical and original sceptical problem that philosophy has seen to date".[4]

1.2. The "Problem"

Kripke notes that it is not logically impossible, supposing for simplicity's sake that I have never added numbers larger than 56, for what he calls a "bizarre sceptic" to declare that he believes my answer to the sum "68 plus 57" should be 5! When I express incredulity he explains that what I mean by addition is in fact the 'quus' function:

   x quus **y**   = **x** + **y,** if **x** and **y** are less than 57

                = 5 otherwise.

As I have never added a number higher than 56 before, this function does not directly contradict my past instances of adding. So how can I prove to the sceptic that that is not in fact what I meant by "the sum of 68 and 57"?

It would seem that the answer lies in the fact that adding is a specifiable algorithm. One takes two piles of, say, apples, of the two quantities that are to be added. One pools the apples and counts the total. One can then claim that this algorithm is of course to be used to evaluate *all* cases of addition, not just those below 57. However, as Kripke points out, the sceptic can reply that by *counting* (the apple total) I really mean "quounting", a procedure which yields the answer 5 when one of the quantities is greater than 56. Thus, following my algorithm will yield the answer "5" just as surely as direct addition. In fact, as Kripke points out, the sceptic can likewise counter any attempt I might make to explain adding in terms of a more basic procedure or recipe:

> It is tempting to answer the sceptic by appealing from one rule to another more "basic" rule. But the sceptical move can be repeated at the more "basic" level also. Eventually...I am left with a rule which is completely unreduced to any other. How can I justify my present application of such a rule, when a sceptic could easily interpret it so as to yield any of an indefinite number of other results?[5]

Kripke argues that the paradox is not just the epistemological one that in following a rule "I can have no justification for one response rather than another".[6] There is no *fact* about me, no set of unambiguous instructions encoded in my brain which determines whether I mean 'plus' or 'quus'.

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[4]   Saul Kripke, *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*, henceforth *'Wittgenstein on Rules'* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 60.

[5]   Kripke, *Wittgenstein on Rules,* p. 17.

[6]   Kripke, *Wittgenstein on Rules,* p. 21.

At this point many philosophers wish to respond that the challenge is quite ridiculous. The world contains natural kinds and regularities, it will be claimed, and so surely we can identify our rules with these on some level.[7] Answers to the sceptic of this form usually claim that our rule-following behaviour is a *disposition* we possess. Just as delicate crystal has the disposition to shatter if knocked, we have the disposition to produce "125" as the answer to "68 + 57".

Kripke replies that our dispositions are finite, in the sense that the number of adding operations a person can perform before they physically expire is finite; yet the adding rule is infinite, and must cover the infinite number of addings that no human is physically capable of performing. Once we extend the plus-function beyond all such finite dispositions, an opportunity arises for the rule-following sceptic to claim that the rule should be extended in apparently bizarre ways.[8]

Moreover, he writes, "a dispositional account misconceives the sceptic's problem – to find a past fact that *justifies* my present response"[9], and claims that the anti-sceptic cannot claim to locate a source for 'rule-making' normativity in anything dispositional or otherwise naturalistic without begging the question. Kripke considers as an example the claim that if our brains were technologically enhanced then of course we would perform *addition* on numbers out of our present range of mental arithmetic. If the rule-following sceptic replies, "No, I believe we would perform 'quaddition'", then the anti-sceptic can only claim to *know* that we would perform addition by implicitly drawing on the rule.[10]

Thus, although it was just noted that the metaphysical dimension of the rule-following problem as presented by Kripke is not to be overlooked, the problem seems to be a challenging synthesis of epistemological and metaphysical demands. It cannot be solved by pure ontological postulation (for example, of brute dispositions to "go on"), without an epistemological story which somehow explains our grasp and straightforward application of whatever is being postulated to solve the problem – or so Kripke claims.

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[7]   See, for instance, J.J.C. Smart, "Wittgenstein, Following a Rule, and Scientific Psychology", in E. Ullman-Margalit (ed.) *The Scientific Enterprise* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1992), pp. 123-137.

[8]   Kripke writes:

> The dispositional theory attempts to avoid the problem of the finiteness of my actual past performance by appealing to a disposition. But in doing so, it ignores an obvious fact: not only my actual performance, but also the totality of my dispositions, is finite. It is not true, for example, that if queried about the sum of any two numbers, no matter how large, I will reply with their actual sum, for some pairs of numbers are simply too large for my mind...to grasp (*Wittgenstein on Rules,* pp. 26-7).

[9]   Kripke, *Wittgenstein on Rules,* p. 24.

[10]   Kripke, *Wittgenstein on Rules,* p. 27.

Kripke considers a further counter-argument which suggests that what distinguishes the 'plus' from the 'quus' rule is a certain *special feeling* which 'plus' has and 'quus' does not:

> Why not argue that "meaning addition by 'plus'" denotes an irreducible experience, with its own special *quale*, known directly to each of us by introspection?[11]

Kripke argues that this solution (which he claims derives from "classical empiricism") will not work, however. It does not answer the epistemological demand made by the sceptic that the proffered solution to the rule-following problem should somehow *justify* the way in which I go on. How can a *feeling* deliver the result that, say, 68 plus 57 is 125, not 5?

> If there were a special experience of 'meaning' addition by 'plus', analogous to a headache, it would not have the properties that a state of meaning addition by 'plus' ought to have – it would not tell me what to do in new cases.[12]

Moreover, Kripke argues that the idea of meaning as "an introspectible experience" is precisely what Wittgenstein was concerned to argue against in the *Philosophical Investigations*, most notably in the famous private language argument.

Kripke concludes that, incredible as it may seem, we really have no justification for extending our meanings in the way that we do, if we consider ourselves in isolation.[13] There is no fact about *me* that determines that I mean 'plus' rather than 'quus'. Having been highlighted so vividly by Kripke, the problem has been much discussed by other philosophers.[14]

1.3. The "Sceptical Solution"

Kripke described the rule-following problem as the most "radical" form of scepticism philosophy has seen to date, and it seems that it would indeed be devastating if it succeeded. If every general predicate could be extended in any bizarre way with equal justification, what would be left of language? What would be left of thought? Note that

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[11]   Kripke, *Wittgenstein on Rules,* p. 41.
[12]   Kripke, *Wittgenstein on Rules,* p. 43.
[13]   Kripke, *Wittgenstein on Rules,* pp. 21, 24.
[14]   See, for instance, Colin McGinn, *Wittgenstein on Meaning : an Interpretation and Evaluation* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1984), Warren Goldfarb, "Kripke on Wittgenstein on Rules", *Journal of Philosophy* (1985) pp. 471-488, Donna M. Sutherfield, "On Taking the Rabbit of Rule-Following out of the Hat of Representation: A Response to Pettit's 'The Reality of Rule-following'. *Mind*, vol. 99, **395** (July 1990), pp. 425-432, and Paul Boghossian, "The Rule-Following Considerations", *Mind* vol. 98, **392** (October 1989), pp. 507-549.

the sceptical problem transfers naturally from a problem about *meaning* (which is how Kripke describes it) to a problem about *truth* (or, as it is often put, about 'truth-conditions'). If we cannot refute the sceptic's claim that "57 + 68 = 5" is a legitimate extension of the plus-function, this seems to undermine our own claim that "57 + 68 = 125" is *true*. However, Kripke offers a response to the rule-following sceptic.

When it comes to sceptical problems, Kripke writes, one must distinguish between a "straight solution" to the problem concerned, which answers the problem on the sceptic's own terms, and a "sceptical solution", which concedes that the problem is unanswerable but argues that, for some reason, the fact that the problem is unanswerable does not matter.[15] In the case of rule-following scepticism, then, a straight solution would locate some fact about *me* which determines that I mean 'plus' rather than 'quus'. Kripke therefore argues that only a sceptical solution is possible, which "...does not allow us to speak of a single individual, considered by himself and in isolation, as ever meaning anything."[16] To this end, he replaces what he calls "truth conditions" for what someone means with what he calls "justification conditions" or "assertability conditions". These latter concern the role which saying that someone means something might play in a community:

> All that is needed to legitimize assertions that someone means something is that there be roughly specifiable circumstances under which they are legitimately assertible, and that the game of asserting them under such conditions has a role in our lives. No supposition that 'facts correspond' to those assertions is needed.[17]

So, if we look at one person in isolation, all we can say is that he applies rules unhesitatingly according to his own inclinations. However, where he departs from the accepted usage of the rule (for instance by failing to carry a number while adding) the community corrects him, and it is this rather than his own certainty that establishes the proper extension of the rule. Kripke is careful to say that the rule cannot be *reduced* to facts about community usage,[18] stressing that rather than *truth-conditions* for the proper extension of 'plus', his sceptical solution offers only "assertability" conditions. Still,

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[15]   Kripke, *Wittgenstein on Rules,* p. 66.
[16]   Kripke, *Wittgenstein on Rules,* pp. 68-9.
[17]   Kripke, *Wittgenstein on Rules,* pp. 77-8.
[18]   Kripke writes:
     Wittgenstein's theory should not be confused with a theory that, for any *m* and *n*, the value of the function we mean by 'plus' *is* (by definition) the value that (nearly) all the linguistic community would give as the answer. Such a theory would be a theory of the *truth* conditions of such assertions as "By 'plus' we mean such-and-such a function." (*Wittgenstein on Rules,* p. 111).

according to Kripke there is no *further* fact about what the rule means than what the community does.

2. Peirce

2.1. The Role of Phenomenology in Peirce's Hierarchy of the Sciences

Phenomenology has been an influential strand in twentieth century philosophy. Peirce's excursion into it is little known and (as was unfortunately common with Peirce) isolated from the main current of development in the discipline. According to Peirce, phenomenology studies the properties of our experiences without caring whether those experiences are veridical or illusory. What is curious about the methodology of phenomenology is that one does not offer any sort of *proof* (either *a priori* or *a posteriori*) of the results one is presenting. One merely reports what one experiences, believing that if one's interlocutors are candid about their own experience, they will observe similar results. If philosophers aren't willing to be candid with one another about their experiences, phenomenology will not work. It is important to note, however, that the most important role phenomenology has to play for Peirce is in deriving new and useful *ideas* (rather than making any *truth-claims*). This arises from the place of phenomenology in his distinctive hierarchy of the sciences.

Peirce engaged in the project, popular in the nineteenth century, of drawing up a classification of the sciences according to which each branch of science draws laws and principles from the science(s) above it, and observational data from the science(s) below.[19] Peirce put mathematics (defined very broadly as "the science that draws necessary conclusions") at the top of his scientific hierarchy. After mathematics he placed phenomenology which, as noted, studies that which is immediately present to consciousness without making reference to questions of truth or falsity. Some phenomenologists might wish to object that phenomenology is not without a conception of truth, for one may give an accurate or inaccurate report of one's own experiences. However Peirce *did* wish to define phenomenology this way; it was important to him that truth be 'public' in a way that is not possible for reports of one's own experiences. After phenomenology, Peirce envisaged a progression of three "normative sciences" culminating in logic. Only after logic had established the concept of truth and the norms which govern its most efficient discovery could the special sciences (including metaphysics) emerge and make their particular truth-claims, he thought.

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[19]   See for instance, Peirce, 6.1.

2.2. Peirce's Categories.

Peirce conceives phenomenology's main role to be the identification of the most basic philosophical *categories*. Categories have traditionally been understood as the most fundamental types into which can be sorted the things in Heaven and Earth which are dreamt of by one's philosophy. Peirce believed there were three different fundamental "modes of being": "Firstness", "Secondness" and "Thirdness".[20] In his 1903 Harvard lectures Peirce presents these categories by presenting certain unmistakable and characteristic experiences, and then treating what those experiences have in common as ideas in their own right – though it is important to note that the categories are not to be *identified with* any particular experiences but *prescinded from* them.

The first category Peirce refers to as "feeling":

> Imagine, if you please, a consciousness in which there is no comparison, no relation, no recognized multiplicity– nothing but a simple positive character. Such a consciousness might be just an odour, say a smell of attar...(5.44).

Firstness thus has a lot in common with what is nowadays referred to as *qualia*. Consider, for example, the concept of the taste of pineapple. This concept is irreducible to any other concept(s): as Bertrand Russell might have put it, the taste of pineapple must be known by acquaintance, not description. Integrating qualia into epistemologies which do not allow them to be irreducible has been found to be a difficult problem.[21] Firstness refers not just to the pureness or conceptual simplicity of the taste of pineapple, however, but also to its radical newness. When someone first encounters the taste, their sensorium may be said to 'grow'. New possible experiences have been added to their understanding.

The second category Peirce refers to as "struggle":

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[20]   In the 1903 Harvard lectures, Peirce actually claimed that Firstness, Secondness and Thirdness are only his "Short List" of "universal" categories, and that he also had derived a "Long List" of "particular" categories. The difference between the two lists is as follows:
> The particular categories form a series, or set of series, only one of each series being present, or at least predominant, in any one phenomenon. The universal categories, on the other hand, belong to every phenomenon, one being perhaps more prominent in one aspect of that phenomenon than another but all of them belonging to every phenomenon (5.43).

However, he treats this long list of categories as greatly inferior in importance to the short list, and I will therefore ignore it henceforth.

[21]   A recent very influential presentation of this problem may be found in Frank Jackson's thought-experiment which centers on an unfortunate colour-deprived natural scientist named "Black and White Mary". (See Frank Jackson, "Epiphenomenal Qualia," *Philosophical Quarterly* **32** (1982), pp. 127-136.) However, the problem goes back at least as far as Hume's discussion of "the missing shade of blue", (David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. L.A. Selby-Bigge and P.H. Niddich (Clarendon Press, 1978), I. 1. i, p. 6), which has also been much discussed in recent times.

> Imagine yourself making a strong muscular effort, say that of pressing with all your might against a half-open door. Obviously, there is a sense of resistance (5.45).

This second category also presents itself as "surprise":

> Experience is our only teacher...But precisely how does this action of experience take place? It takes place by a series of surprises. There is no need of going into details. At one time a ship is sailing along in the trades over a smooth sea, the navigator having no more positive expectation than that of the usual monotony of such a voyage, when suddenly she strikes upon a rock (5.50-51).

The jarring contact between ship and rock in this example highlights an important aspect of Secondness: the kind of direct contact between particular existent objects which characterises *efficient causation*. Note that, unlike Firstness, which might take the form of a single quality alone in its own possible world, at least two things are required to create a struggle or surprise.

Peirce introduces his third category as follows:

> We open our eyes and look at something. Now if we are not in a sleepwalking state we immediately form a *judgement* as to what sort of thing it is that we are looking at; and that judgement predicates some general quality of the object of perception...As I am looking out the window in writing these words my eye lights on something and before I know what I am about, I have told myself that it is a *chimney*,... a *chimney of red brick*, with a *drab* piece at the top. I could not think all that without thinking of something in my mind equivalent to those words.[22]

Thus, a fundamental idea that conveys the concept of Thirdness is *predication* – the attributing of a property or properties to something. Note that Peirce is not making any claim about the *truth* of such predications. He is merely claiming that we do so predicate. Indeed it seems that we cannot avoid doing so – for note the way Peirce puts it. He says, "*before I know what I am about*, I have told myself that it is a chimney...".[23] Therefore, my experience does not just include immediate feelings and the shock of reaction with objects. I also represent the world to myself *as* having certain (projectible, general) properties.

It might be protested that this description does not differentiate Thirdness from Firstness, which is also *some* form of representation. However the pure feelings which characterise Firstness have no implications beyond the present moment or beyond the

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[22]   Charles Peirce, *Pragmatism as a Principle and Method of Right Thinking*, ed. Patricia Ann Turrisi (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), p. 149.

[23]   [my emphasis]

entirely degenerate feeling-subject (who consists in nothing but the feeling itself). In order to truly *represent* something, by contrast, one requires at least three separate entities: a represener of some kind, a thing represented, and a predicate (or 'way' in which that thing is represented as being). A further dimension of Thirdness worth noting is *prediction* (which may usefully be understood as a species of predication – predication of properties to future events):

> Now for Thirdness. Five minutes of our waking life will hardly pass without our making some kind of prediction; and in the majority of cases these predictions are fulfilled in the event. Yet a prediction is essentially of a general nature, and cannot ever be completely fulfilled...(1.26)

Peirce believed that these three categories were not only irreducible one to another but also exhaustive, for any putative 'Fourthness' relation may be reduced to a structured set of 'Thirdnesses'. This claim is somewhat controversial,[24] but if one takes seriously the role of phenomenology envisaged by Peirce in his most mature work on his categories, this renders it incumbent on those who would argue for further categories to breathe phenomenological life into them.[25]

2.3. Realism and Rule-following

It is no secret that realism was extremely important to Peirce. He may be understood as affirming the reality of all three of his categories.[26] However when arguing for realism he focussed particularly on establishing the reality of Thirdness. He believed that much realism in his day could be understood as motivated by an appreciation of real Secondness alone. One manifestation of this is the table-thumping (or, in the case of Dr Johnston *contra* Berkeley, 'stone-kicking') realism according to which the real is the causally efficacious. This approach to realism arguably continues to dominate today.[27] By contrast, Peirce thought that Thirdness is a category people tend to deny, and he identified the denial of Thirdness with nominalism, medievally construed. In the last section we saw Thirdness identified with predication and prediction. The key to demonstrating the *reality*

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[24]   See, for instance, Hookway, *Peirce*, pp. 97-101.

[25]   Examples of this seem so far absent from the literature on Peirce.

[26]   For an interesting discussion of this issue see Max Fisch, "Peirce's Progress from Nominalism toward Realism", in *Peirce, Semeiotic, and Pragmatism: Essays by Max H. Fisch*, ed. K.L. Ketner & J.W. Kloesel (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), pp. 193-5.

[27]   A general convergence between twentieth century realism and empiricism has produced a widespread adherence to what may be referred to as a 'causal epistemology' (David Armstrong, and Michael Devitt being recent examples of this), though more recently there has been a tendency amongst realists to neglect epistemology altogether, and to express realism purely in terms of a somewhat mysterious two-place relation of 'direct reference' between our terms and particular existent things in the world.

of Thirdness (or scholastic realism) for Peirce is therefore the fact that we make predictions which happen to *come true* .[28]

The rule-following problem was introduced by noting that we have understandings that reach beyond particular cases, which allow us to *project* our concepts beyond the finite number of applications which we have encountered in the past. This very idea was then found to be problematic, productive of scepticism. Kripke argues that we have realism if the justification the rule provides for going on in a certain way can be shown to be somehow reducible to particular existent things (which Kripke calls "facts"). In the face of the sceptic's demonstration that rules are not so reducible we need to give up a realist "picture of language". This can be seen as understanding realism in terms of Secondness. Peirce on the other hand argues that we have Thirdness *precisely if rules are not reducible to particular things* (or – to put it another way – if general predicates are not reducible to their instantiations). And yet we have an understanding of general predicates just as we have an understanding of particular things. Yet, Kripke's sceptic will ask, what metaphysics might ground such an understanding?

2.4. The Phenomenology of Projectibility

I will now explore the possibility that there is no metaphysics to 'ground' our ability to project general concepts, because no metaphysics is required. If we take seriously Peirce's hierarchy of the sciences, perhaps we cannot proceed to metaphysics without certain fundamental conceptions first having been established. We would not search amongst the observations which constitute physics experimentation for the derivative (that is, dy/dx), despite the fact that the differential calculus is *used* in physics with great frequency, and to powerful effect. This would be a hopeless mistake, because the concept of the derivative belongs to mathematics, and physics presupposes mathematics. Likewise, an entomologist would not search in the field amongst ants and butterflies for the gene, despite the fact that his entire taxonomic work is premised on the fact of genetic variation. So why, then, should we search in metaphysics for normativity?[29]

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[28] This point is perhaps most succinctly expressed in Peirce's famous "Harvard stone experiment", on which, see in particular Manley Thompson, "Peirce's Experimental Proof of Scholastic Realism", in *Studies in the Philosophy of C.S. Peirce*, ed. Moore and Robin (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1964), and a reply to Thompson's paper by Peter Skagestad, "Pragmatic Realism: The Peircean Argument Reexamined", *Review of Metaphysics*, **33**, no. 3 (1980), pp. 527-540.

[29] These considerations may equally be raised against a burgeoning sub-field in contemporary metaphysics, which might be termed the 'ontology of mathematics'. (Major figures include John Bigelow, Penelope Maddy, Hartry Field and Ed Zalta.) This particular corner of inquiry addresses itself to questions such as whether numbers *exist*. If Peirce is right about the proper hierarchy of the sciences, however, it follows that neither taking up a position for or against this question has any

We saw that Peirce's *phenomenological* derivation of Thirdness stated:

> We open our eyes and look at something. Now if we are not in a sleepwalking state we immediately form a *judgement* as to what sort of thing it is that we are looking at; and that judgement predicates some general quality of the object of perception.[30]

We project our ideas into new situations as those situations present themselves to us perceptually, and thereby represent the world as conforming to certain predicates. Peirce points out that this happens every time we open our eyes. If this basic and utterly irrepressible fact conflicts with a particular metaphysical theory framed by philosophers for philosophers (a theory according to which some particular fact must exist for every descriptive predicate in our language, to 'ground' its meaning), which should give way?

2.5. General Predication Distinguished from True General Predication

To claim that Thirdness is an irreducible mode of being, which surrounds us on all sides, is not to say that every general predication we make is *true*, and therefore that there is no distinction between 'subjective' and 'objective' generality.[31] To put the point another way, Peirce's phenomenology of Thirdness highlights both our awareness of law-governed patterns in the objects of our experience and our awareness of our own general predications concerning those objects. Of course, if law-governed patterns did not obtain in the world, we would not perform general predications, but the two aspects of Thirdness may be prescinded from one another. The issue, then, of how to distinguish real from unreal Thirdness (which presupposes Peirce's claim that at least some Thirdness *is* real, that is, his scholastic realism) is separate from the issue of the irreducibility of Thirdness (both real and unreal) to other modes of being.

These two questions with respect to Thirdness are run together (and both dismissed) by Kripke precisely because he assumes that there is only one mode of being – particular things. Peirce's scientific hierarchy, on the other hand, allows him to give separate accounts of the irreducibility and the reality of Thirdness – the former in phenomenology and the latter in logic. A great deal has been said about the logical issue in the Peirce literature. Very roughly, real Thirdness is sorted from unreal by a community of inquiry

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point. Metaphysics, being several layers down from mathematics in the scientific hierarchy, has nothing to offer it in the way of 'grounding'. (Similar morals are also suggested with respect to recent attempts to ground *ethics* metaphysically.)

[30]   Peirce, *Pragmatism as a Principle and Method of Right Thinking*, p. 149.

[31]   Scare-quotes have been inserted as Peirce did not like this usage of the terms 'subjective' and 'objective', nascent in his day and deriving from Germany. He preferred a more medieval usage of the term 'objective' according to which it meant something akin to intentional. However the German usage has now become orthodoxy.

who generate general hypotheses with predictive consequences, then test those consequences thereby winnowing true from false hypotheses. The rest of this paper will therefore focus on the former issue as relatively underdiscussed and, it will be argued, as the key to fully unravelling the rule-following problem.

Some hint of the separateness of these two questions was already present when it was noted that the claim that rules are essentially *normative* may be divided into two parts – the claim that understanding a rule requires one to be able always to *project* the rule, and the claim that a rule is something which discriminates between alternatives – that is, with respect to which there is an essential possibility of *error*. These two criteria for normativity come apart insofar as one can have projectibility without the possibility of error – for instance with respect to what Wittgenstein called a "private language", though as Wittgenstein suggested, such a thing is of questionable value and really does not deserve to be described as a language. Conversely (though, it must be admitted, more contentiously in Peirce's pragmatist framework) it seems that one can have the possibility of error without projectibility, to the extent that one can be in error about particular facts located at particular times and places. More will be said about the distinction between these two questions in the next section.

Thus, our ability to project general predicates is a Moorean fact.

2.6. What to Say to the "Bizarre Sceptic"

So what exactly is the Peircean to say to Kripke's sceptic? First of all it must be reemphasised that what Kripke calls "the most radical and original sceptical problem that philosophy has seen to date", is a tightly woven mixture of what are in fact two separate questions. In Kripke's terms, the first is the question of what makes us *able to project* rules such as the plus-function onto new cases, and the second is the question of the proper "assertability conditions" for rules such as the plus-function. Among the various "straight" solutions to the sceptic, which Kripke considered and rejected, was the suggestion that the difference between 'plus' and 'quus' might consist in some sort of *quale*, "as unique and irreducible as that of seeing yellow or feeling a headache".[32]

Kripke treated this response with a certain levity:

> suppose I do in fact feel a certain headache with a very special quality whenever I think of the '+' sign. How on earth would this headache help me figure out whether I ought to answer '125' or '5' when asked about '68 + 57'?[33]

[32] Kripke, *Wittgenstein on Rules,* p. 41.
[33] Kripke, *Wittgenstein on Rules,* pp. 41-2.

However here he is running together two questions. The sceptic was meant to be asking how it is that I can *project* the plus-function. In his objection to this solution, however, Kripke is complaining that a person's grasp of the concept of plus does not deliver true propositions containing plus in all possible situations. For the sceptic claims to grasp the function perfectly and yet claims that "68 + 57 = 5". But why *should* a person's grasp of a concept deliver infallible insight into the truth or otherwise of all sentences containing it? It is no wonder the rule-following problem seems insuperable. The fact that Kripke has chosen a mathematical example to present his rule-following scepticism is perhaps significant in disguising this slide from projectibility to truth, given the overwhelmingly *a priori* character of mathematics.

Thus, at least part of the solution to the rule-following problem was lurking where Kripke least expected. Concepts, insofar as they are distinct for us, each have a special irreducible quality that allows us to reidentify them in applications beyond the finite set of instances with which we have been acquainted. Looked at one way, this capacity can seem almost miraculous. Yet *we just do have this capacity*. Consider, for example, the phenomenology of reidentifying concepts in philosophy. A concept such as, say, *noumenal* can be recognised across an enormous variety of philosophical discussions where it is never mentioned explicitly. It would be foolish (not to mention intellectually debilitating) to deny that we can do this. Of course, this is not offered as a *proof* that we have the capacity to reidentify concepts, but as a candid report of cognitive experience. This experience however is so fundamental that to deny it is arguably even worse than denying that I have two hands.

Interestingly, Peirce's category of Firstness is salient here. It was noted that Firstness pertained to irreducible qualities such as the taste of pineapple. Insofar as this irreducible qualitative character can be ascribed to concepts as well as to human sensations, then, there is a certain "Firstness of Thirdness".[34] In short, I cannot reduce the way in which the general concepts 'plus' and 'quus' differ to some "fact", but neither can I reduce the way in which the general concepts 'red' and 'yellow' differ to some "fact". This does not mean, however, that the concepts do not differ.

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[34]   Christopher Hookway has made this point with respect to the concept 'chair':

> Associated with a notion like chair is a body of laws and generalizations....With this is associated a distinctive firstness,...we can experience something as an aesthetic unity without intellectually grasping how its elements are mediated in the whole; but, an intellectual understanding of the whole will require a grasp of these mediating relations. It is suggestive, if obscure, to describe the felt quality as the 'firstness of a thirdness' (Hookway, p. 174).

Peirce also talks about Firstness of Thirdness, but in the sense of the qualitative character of Thirdness *per se* (which would be a pure abstract idea of representation itself), not of individual Thirdnesses. See, for example, 1.530-3.

Is this a "straight" or a "sceptical" solution to the rule-following problem? In one sense it is perfectly straight, for Kripke claimed that to answer the sceptic there only needs to be a "*fact* that I meant plus, not quus".[35] This is true insofar as plus and quus *just do* feel different to me, and I believe that if I were to project them myself I would end up with differing results. But what Kripke really meant was that there needs to be some *particular existent fact* to which my 'meaning plus' might be *reduced*. This is really – in Peircean terms – the demand that Thirdness (and Firstness) be reducible to Secondness. What the Wittgensteinian discussion of rule-following does show is that this is not possible.[36]

Paul Boghossian has noted that such a view, which he calls "robust realism", is wrongly overlooked as a possible response to Kripke:

> Let robust realism designate the view that judgements about meaning are factual, irreducible, and judgement-independent. Then...the major alternatives to robust realism are beset by very serious difficulties...Meaning properties appear to be neither eliminable, nor reducible. Perhaps it is time that we learned to live with that fact.[37]

If Peirce is right about the role of phenomenology in philosophy, then one only needs to examine one's experience in order to roundly endorse this statement. Moreover, I shall now argue that, ironically, Wittgenstein was never far from such a "robust realism".

3. Wittgenstein

Wittgenstein is notorious for the gnomic nature of his philosophical writings, and for the many conflicting interpretations to which they have given rise. Nevertheless, one may search the *Philosophical Investigations* in vain for a passage where Wittgenstein openly makes the sceptical claim he is so widely credited with. Consider for example the passage at §201, which is often cited to establish Wittgenstein's rule-following scepticism:

> 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...

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[35]   Kripke, *Wittgenstein on Rules,* p. 11.
[36]   In an original and little-discussed paper, Richard Rorty has argued that realism may be understood precisely as antireductionism *via* a comparison between Peirce and Wittgenstein. See Rorty, "Pragmatism, Categories, and Language", Philosophical Review **70** (1961), especially p. 204.
[37]   Boghossian, "The Rule-Following Considerations", pp. 547-8.

What follows this is usually ignored, but is in fact crucial:

> 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.

What kind of a sceptical claim is this?

3.1. No Rule-Following Intermediary

What Wittgenstein *is* concerned to emphasise is that in particular cases we "know how to go on" in applying a given rule, *without certain conditions being satisfied that philosophers take for granted*.[38] For instance, as §201 points out, we know how to go on without having to *interpret* the rule. We also know how to go on without in any sense 'being told what to do' by the rule:

> One does not feel that one has always got to wait upon the nod (the whisper) of the rule. On the contrary, we are not on tenterhooks about what it will tell us next...[39]

In fact, much of Wittgenstein's discussion of rule-following is concerned with drawing out the fact – surprising when looked at under certain philosophical lights – that we "know how to go on" without any intermediary between us and the rule at all. At various points in his discussion of rule-following he considers a number of possible candidates for such an intermediary, and rejects them for diverse reasons. For instance, in §186, he considers "a new insight" in this light:

> "What you are saying, then, comes to this: a new insight–intuition–is needed at every step to carry out the order '+n' correctly."

This however, he argues, begs the question of what the 'correct' answer is. This passage seems to be the source of Kripke's demand that, if an ontological ground for rule-following be proffered in response to the rule-following sceptic, this ground must somehow *justify* our going on in the way we do. However, Kripke does not consider the possibility that the lack of justification which Wittgenstein is pointing out is not in fact a condition on successful rule-following that we should be satisfying but are not, and which therefore triggers radical rule-following scepticism, but rather a description of rule-following *fact*.

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[38]   Rorty also makes this point. See Rorty, "Pragmatism, Categories, and Language", p. 213.
[39]   Wittgenstein, *Investigations*, §223.

3.2. The Rule and the Machine

Wittgenstein is also keen to highlight the open-ended nature of rules, in that there is no "totality of conditions" that determines the application of any given rule in any given case. In §193, he explicitly points out that following a rule is not like the causal working of a machine, in that "the movement of the machine-as-symbol is predetermined in a different sense from that in which the movement of any given machine is predetermined". This use of the phrase "machine-as-symbol" is interesting in the present context. Wittgenstein seems to be suggesting that rules consist in something over and above brute efficient causal reaction. The "machine-as-symbol" is irreducible to the finite, fallible instances of its operation (which is illustrated, Wittgenstein suggests, by such facts as that the machine-as-symbol "never breaks down"). Rather, the machine-as-symbol appears to be an *idealisation* of finite actual machines.

Again, this passage is read by Kripke as Wittgenstein blocking a possible exit from rule-following scepticism,[40] and yet it may equally be read as Wittgenstein blocking another mistaken way of understanding rule-following. Wittgenstein further characterises the contrast between rules and causal reactions by saying that with the machine-as-symbol, its future movement seems to be somehow already 'in' the machine:

> "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."....Really the only thing wrong with what you say is, 'in some sense'![41]

Why does Wittgenstein say that the only thing wrong is the "in some sense"? His point seems to be that this would indicate that it is not something perfectly ordinary for the future use to be already present. It is also characteristic of Peirce's view of predication that the future use of a concept is already in some sense present. For instance, he writes:

> Not only will meaning always, more or less, in the long run, mould reactions to itself, but it is only in doing so that its own being consists. For this reason I call this element of the phenomenon or object of thought the element of Thirdness. It is that which is what it is by virtue of imparting a quality to reactions in the future (1.343).

The idealisation which Wittgenstein speaks of with respect to the "machine-as-symbol" is nothing but generality as understood by Peirce. Thus, Wittgenstein's

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40   Kripke, *Wittgenstein on Rules,* p. 34.

41   Wittgenstein, *Investigations*, §195.

discussion of rule-following is best read *not* as saying that we have no principled way of saying that our terms mean anything at all, as Kripke has suggested, but as saying, like Peirce, that we have understandings which are irreducible to particular present facts, and which just do project beyond them.

3.3. Phenomenology, Scepticism and Common-sense

There is a sense in which Wittgenstein does raise sceptical worries in his discussion of rule-following. Throughout the *Investigations* he makes dramatic use of dialogue with a questioning interlocutor who frequently expresses incredulity. However Wittgenstein almost always seeks to lay this incredulity to rest.[42] His famous remark that philosophy "leaves everything as it is"[43] may be interpreted as meaning that his scepticism is intended to neatly target erroneous philosophical pictures, while leaving no 'collateral damage' in our non-philosophical lives.

Whether Wittgenstein actually succeeds in this regard has been a matter of some controversy. However, to call Wittgenstein a *rule-following* sceptic is grievously to distort the relevant passages of the *Investigations*. Kripke does acknowledge that Wittgenstein would not wish to call himself a sceptic.[44] However he then likens Wittgenstein to Berkeley, whose claim to be defending "common-sense" when he categorically denied the existence of all material objects cannot but appear disingenuous, he claims.[45]

Consider, however, Wittgenstein's philosophical methodology in his extended discussion of rule-following. Note the careful, detailed introspection with respect to what one would or would not wish to say in different contexts, and the close attention to our actual practices. Somewhat notoriously, he does not make any truth-claims. ("If one tried to advance theses in philosophy, it would never be possible to debate them, because everyone would agree to them."[46]) For this reason, Wittgenstein's discussion of rule-following has been widely interpreted as a form of quietistic metaphysical antirealism, according to which all of our current "ways of going on" are necessarily descriptive of some fact about the world. But the lack of truth-claims could equally mean that Wittgenstein is *not doing metaphysics at all*. Rather, he is engaged in some other, more fundamental, philosophical project. Alternatively, Wittgenstein's discussion has often

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[42]   For, as he puts it, "Philosophy is a battle against the bewitchment of our intelligence by means of language". (Wittgenstein, *Investigations*, §109).

[43]   Wittgenstein, *Investigations*, §124.

[44]   Kripke, *Wittgenstein on Rules,* p. 83.

[45]   Kripke, *Wittgenstein on Rules,* p. 64.

[46]   Wittgenstein, *Investigations*, §128.

been interpreted as a form of quietistic *logic*, whereby all community-sanctioned use of general predicates is automatically *true*. Wittgenstein's inquiry goes deeper even than this, however.

I will now suggest that what Wittgenstein is offering the philosophical world in the *Investigations* is not a new and highly original form of *scepticism*, but what may be referred to as *the phenomenology of Thirdness*.[47] Like Peirce, he is exploring the way in which this category manifests itself in our thought and lives. Wittgenstein never prescinds this concept in the strong, general form in which Peirce does. (Wittgenstein's relentless drive towards theoretical heterogeneity would most probably have prevented that.) Nevertheless, the outlines of Peirce's Thirdness (and also Firstness, in the form of conceptual qualia or – in Peircean terms – 'the Firstness of Thirdness') are recognisable within Wittgenstein's philosophical landscape. We have seen that according to Peirce the proper role of phenomenology is to produce not truth-claims but *useful concepts*. It is arguable that what has been most powerful about the later Wittgenstein's philosophy has been the novel and suggestive concepts (such as 'form of life', 'language-game' and 'family-resemblance concept') which he presented to the world. These concepts have resonated through philosophy, and are what Wittgenstein is most remembered for.

Again it's worth noting that this discussion leaves to one side a whole dimension of Wittgenstein's discussion of rule-following: the public character of rule-following *rightness*. This very striking aspect of Wittgenstein's account of meaning – according to which I am hostage to my community to some degree with respect to whether I follow a rule rightly or wrongly – has received a great deal of attention; so much so that the possibility that there might also be a 'private' dimension to Wittgenstein's discussion of meaning has been neglected. This situation is possibly created in part by an ambiguity in the term 'meaning', between the initial (private) projectibility of a sign and its long-term (public) use and development. Both are forms of generality, insofar as they are irreducible to particular existent facts, and thus both are vulnerable to Kripkean 'rule-following' scepticism – but they are not the same. The view that Secondness is the only mode of being (which Peirce saw as a form of nominalism) has arguably been so monolithic within philosophy that those who have opposed it have found it hard to gain a clear sense of what they were arguing *for*. In this regard, Peirce's distinction between Firstness and

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[47]   In a complex and interesting paper which examines unpublished manuscripts from Wittgenstein's middle period, Robert Alva Noë has also urged that Wittgenstein be considered as engaged in phenomenology. Noë concentrates on Wittgenstein's discussions of *colour*, rebutting a claim by Arthur Danto that in discussing colour Wittgenstein was "doing anticipatory science badly". Robert Alva Noë, "Wittgenstein, Phenomenology and What It Makes Sense to Say", *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* **54** (March, 1994), p. 3n.

Thirdness *within* a commitment to "real generality" may be one of his most profound philosophical legacies, and more work could be done on this fascinating topic.

3.4. Peirce, Wittgenstein, and "Critical Common-sensism"

Wittgenstein thought (and again this is very ironic considering the use he is put to by Kripke) that it was very important to limit the use of scepticism within philosophy. He believed that meaningful doubt occurs only in certain well-defined contexts – for instance, meaningful doubt is not necessarily possible just because we can *imagine* that the belief in question might be false.[48] Hence Wittgenstein's famous remark:

> "How am I able to obey a rule?"–if this is not a question about causes, then it is about the justification for my following the rule in the way I do.
> If I have exhausted the justifications I have reached bedrock, and my spade is turned. Then I am inclined to say: "This is simply what I do."[49]

In fact this remark encapsulates Wittgenstein's approach to rule-following in a nutshell. Note the phenomenological character of Wittgenstein's statement that, when challenged over the proper application of a given rule, his claim that "This is simply what I do" is not 'the right answer', but simply *what he is inclined to say*. Not only did Wittgenstein believe that there is only so much that one *can* meaningfully doubt, however, he believed that the attempt to doubt too much can be intellectually (and ethically) corrosive.

Peirce took a position on the relationship between philosophical scepticism and common-sense that was similar to Wittgenstein's in many ways. Later in life he liked to describe himself as a "Critical Common-sensist". Critical Common-sensism holds that inquiry grows out of and is continuous with ordinary language and common-sense and because of this there will always be "indubitable propositions (5.440)" (and also indubitable inferences). Not only can we not doubt these propositions, Peirce thought, it is harmful to try. There is no set list of indubitables, however. As inquiry develops, certain propositions move from the indubitable to the dubitable (and *vice versa*). Peirce also believed, like Wittgenstein, that meaningful doubt only occurs against a background of belief, specifically targeting Descartes' recommendation to begin inquiry by systematically doubting all one's beliefs.[50]

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[48] Wittgenstein, *Investigations*, §84:
> But that is not to say that we are in doubt because it is possible for us to imagine a doubt. I can easily imagine someone always doubting before he opened his front door whether an abyss did not yawn behind it, and making sure before he went through the door (and he might on some occasion prove to be right)–but that does not make me doubt in the same case.

[49] Wittgenstein, *Investigations*, §217.
[50] See 2.192, 5.265, 5.498 and 5.524.

Thus, the great irony of this discussion is that Wittgenstein, far from being the arch-sceptic Kripke imagines, in fact displays a candid and trusting acceptance of an entire mode of being (Thirdness) which prevailing realisms doubt so unconsciously that the scepticism in question is difficult even to discuss. Were the consequences of this doubt in philosophical areas such as logic, epistemology and philosophy of mind drawn out as carefully and systematically as Kripke (stung by the strangeness of Wittgenstein's presentation of rule-following) has done, this 'Thirdness-scepticism' would be seen to be quite intellectually debilitating. Unfortunately, such a careful sounding of these philosophical issues as Kripke's is all too rare.

Peirce and Wittgenstein are not in harmony on all issues, however. At times Wittgenstein feels the need to define himself against realism *per se*, rather than the reductionist metaphysical version of it which he rightly queries. This eschewal leads Wittgenstein to exhibit a harsh antinaturalism about the mind in passages such as the following:

> The confusion and barrenness of psychology is not to be explained by calling it a "young science"; its stage is not comparable with that of physics, for instance, in its beginnings...
>   The existence of the experimental method makes us think we have the means of solving the problems which trouble us; though problem and method pass one another by.[51]

This has led to the setting up (by Wittgenstein's disciples in particular) of "reasons" and "causes" as the theoretical equivalent of oil and water, which need to be quarantined from each other in entirely different discourses. On the other hand, Secondness and Thirdness (the Peircean categories which possess a telling isomorphism with Wittgenstein's "causes" and "reasons" respectively) are equally important, irreducible to one another, and compresent in everything conceivable insofar as it is conceivable. Though, as we have seen, for Peirce there is a further, equally important category – the Firstness that (among other things) qualitatively characterises each concept in a unique way.

Wittgenstein and Peirce also differ, as noted earlier, over the desirousness of theoretical heterogeneity. Wittgenstein, in countering totalising *metaphysical* explanations of phenomena such as rule-following, has been moved to give up the idea that large-scale explanations may be found in philosophy. Rather, he holds that, "if the words "language", "experience", "world", have a use, it must be as humble a one as that

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[51]   Wittgenstein, *Investigations*, p. 232.

of the words "table", "lamp", "door".[52] Realism in its deepest sense may, however, be understood as *explanatory ambition* (which ambition, this paper has suggested, need not be restricted to *metaphysical* explanations). If we understand realism this way, then insofar as the category of Thirdness *can* play the large-scale theoretical role which Peirce claims it does, Peirce's realistic explanatory optimism seems vindicated over Wittgenstein's nominalistic explanatory pessimism.[53] (Though from the perspective of Peirce's fallibilism it is important to note that the question remains open.)

3.6. Conclusion

At the first presentation of the rule-following problem, it was remarked that the infinite 'semantic reaching' which characterises our grasp of general predicates is liable to seem 'superphysicalistic', which leads to a scepticism about how such a feat might be achieved. However this paper has shown that rules are not superphysicalistic. It is just that particular, existent (causally efficacious) fact is not the only mode of being. Secondness must be supplemented by Thirdness (and Firstness) to even begin to do justice to basic, undeniable facts about perception and the use of language. No proof is offered for this insight, but none is required. Rather, the fact is made plain by simple acknowledgement of the way in which we think and live. With respect to untangling the notoriously knotty rule-following problem, then, Peirce's decision to separate phenomenology from both logic and metaphysics – and to give a founding philosophical role to those things which I do "before I know what I am about" – seems vindicated. As Wittgenstein once remarked: "God grant the philosopher insight into what lies in front of everyone's eyes."[54]

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[52]   Wittgenstein, *Investigations*, §97.
[53]   Again, see Rorty, "Pragmatism, Categories, and Language", especially p. 223.
[54]   Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, ed. by G.H. von Wright, in collaboration with H. Nyman, trs. Peter Winch (Oxford: Blackwell, 1980), p. 63e.

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