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Book Review Essay: Shuffling with Wittgenstein, on “Wittgenstein’s Liberatory Philosophy – Thinking Through His Philosophical Investigations” by Rupert Read

Review of *Wittgenstein’s Liberatory Philosophy – Thinking Through His Philosophical Investigations* by Rupert Read, Routledge, 2020 404 pp.

Professor Rupert Read’s book on Wittgenstein’s philosophy – mainly as it comes into expression in *Philosophical Investigations* – has the title *Wittgenstein’s Liberatory Philosophy*.^[1] Read sets out to show that Wittgenstein’s thought comes to its own if seen as a kind of liberation from “compulsive (and destructive) thoughts” (p. 1). Read thinks that the concept of liberation better captures Wittgenstein’s intentions than the concept of therapy (and resoluteness), thus distancing himself from a rather common reading that also he himself has previously embraced. Read claims in many places that his notion of liberation is a new one, and one that has many advantages over earlier Wittgenstein-influenced ideas about philosophy as liberation (Waisman is mentioned as the granddaddy of Read’s own work). The central features of this supposedly new notion of liberation are according to Read its political dimension, its ethical dimension and a dimension Read calls second-person perspective. Indeed, the therapeutic interpretation is rejected because therapy is said to be “*politically* suspect” in that it involves an unequal relation between therapist and client. The ethical dimension and the second-person perspective are according to Read closely related and central to Wittgenstein’s thinking. In general, the emphasis on the second-person perspective seems to constitute most of the presumed importance and novelty of Read’s interpretation of Wittgenstein.

Read generously states that he has been inspired by my work on the second-person perspective and the way it is discernible in Wittgenstein’s philosophy. However, disappointingly I have to say that I cannot see many points of convergence with Read’s conception of the second-person perspective and my own, nor with the way in which he thinks it is present in Wittgenstein’s thought. I believe that the best way of sorting out the complexities here, is to address the criticism that Read directs at what he takes to be my individualism, which according to him restricts the philosophical relevance of my view. Read thinks, and believes that Wittgenstein does too, that collectivity constitutes the grounds for language and ethics in a sense “too basic” to be even described (p. 283)! I, by contrast, think that collectivity is constituted by a repression of conscience. I shall try to clarify our disagreement on this point and do this by relating the discussion to Wittgenstein’s philosophy.

In my view, Read has not managed to bring out what is important and radical in Wittgenstein's philosophy and what has by many philosophers come to be seen as Wittgenstein's anti-philosophy. Instead, Read's thinking remains typically philosophical: he devises arguments in defence of certain, metaphysical positions. In one regard, however, Read's thinking is atypical: he seems to think that Wittgenstein's anti-philosophical thinking frees him from the task of giving grounds and justifications for his thoughts. This is a misunderstanding. Wittgenstein is actually highly concerned with giving grounds for his thoughts, but these grounds are not metaphysical. They are efforts to illuminate to you, the reader, what he means. But unlike Read, Wittgenstein does not argue against metaphysical ideas; he does not *oppose* or *reject* them. He *dissolves* them. Unlike what Read thinks, this does not mean that one does not "need" to give grounds for one's thinking, nor that there is nothing to be said about truth and meaning. It means that these concepts are not (nor are of course any others) in need of a *philosophical* ground. Or rather: that there is no such a thing as an independent, objective point of reference which functions as a basis for language and truth. *Philosophical Investigations*, §241: "What is true or false is what human beings *say*." One could say that the fundamentality of "truth" is to be found in the way you and I go about it; what we say, how we judge what must and cannot be the case, and so on. Wittgenstein (1999, p. 169) states: "(When it has a meaning at all, the word 'fundamental' can also mean something that is not metalogical, or philosophical.)".

The Elusive Freedom

I have in many places criticised group-phenomena, discussing them as different aspects of an unfortunate moral phenomenon that I have called collectivity (which, I can only briefly mention here, should not be confused with "togetherness of many people" as such, for at stake is a certain moralising demand that subjects are individually and jointly investing in groupishness). Read does not appreciate these descriptions. In his view, communicated also in personal discussions, I address only the negative sides of collectivity and ignore the positive ones. He thinks that my misconception of collectivity has its source in what he takes to be my individualism. This criticism, stated in numerous places in his book and other work too, is so deeply confused that I find it difficult to decide how to reveal this fact. I will try to illuminate it by highlighting certain philosophical claims – yes: they are *claims* – in Read's book, claims that, without the author realising it, are typical of both collectivist and philosophical thinking.

Read gives a lot of space to his criticism of Saul Kripke's interpretation of Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*. According to Read, Kripke's misunderstanding of *Philosophical Investigations* is particularly pernicious because it gives "license" to "undisciplined" thought and misrepresents the philosophical role of the concept of community. Read characterises Kripke's position as a "pseudo-communitarianism" that is "actually an extreme individualism" (p. 285). In one place he goes even further: "[I]t's an illustration of the poverty of our intellectual culture – i.e. of the degree to which we tend to assume (are held captive by) a hegemonic dogmatic individualism -, that we ever allowed Kripke's Wittgenstein to masquerade as a representative of a *community* view!" (p. 321). Read also talks about a "fanatically individualist civilisation, one that fetishizes individual consumer choice and what it calls 'liberty' above anything else." (p. 316). Generalising labelling abounds here.

The role that individualism has in Read's book is no small one, for Wittgenstein's "liberatory" philosophy is supposed to liberate us precisely from individualism: "What we really need freedom from is dogmatic, atomising individualism" (p. 58). Remarks that go in this direction are to be found in many places in the book. Oddly enough, Read also seems to have a notion of individualism which is not pernicious, for according to him the "actually existing" individualism is not really individualism: "Liberal individualism in our age is, ironically, a form of herdthink" (p. 107). However, Read never clarifies how this should be understood. He does not give any account of the relationship between herdthink, which Read obviously takes to be a negative phenomenon, and social understanding, which in Read's view is the source of everything good. Given Read's collectivism, would it not be of highest urgency to clarify the difference between "bad" collectivity and the presumed "good" collectivity?

The opposition of community to individualism structures Read's whole book – a typical, metaphysical obsession. At the same time Read also says in many places that sociality and individuality are easy to mix up. How is it possible, considering his terms, that what is the *most enslaving* thing of all, dogmatic individualism, *can* masquerade itself as an instance of something that is the *most liberating thing* there is: a community view? Read gives us no answer. In fact, he does not even ask the question. There is nothing in the book that would indicate that Read finds it to be odd that the enslaver can so easily be disguised as the redeemer. Our whole culture has in his view been deceived by this masquerade. I do not think that Read's suggestion that a whole culture can be confused is questionable as such, even if the most usual forms of such a claim certainly are confused, namely claims where one's own religious, political or philosophical ideology is taken to constitute the salvation for a "degenerating" culture. Though there are features of this kind of partisanship in Read's book, this route *should*, on his own terms, not be open to him. This is because his stated aim is to present precisely an anti-theoretical liberation from every *Weltanschauung*. Of course, ideologies and philosophies typically want to present themselves as transcending the meaning and significance of their antagonists, but in Read's case we have a philosophy with the explicitly stated *main purpose* to reveal *precisely* the perils of ideology and obsession with theory.

There is, however, a curious dispensation that is left without any explanation:

Ideologies that are conscious and self-avowed are relatively harmless (and an ideology can be necessary/good if it is a consistent way of doing what is basically the right thing in its time). The kind of ideology that it turns out that Wittgenstein, like Marx or Gramsci, was in practice concerned about was, rather, ideology masquerading as common sense. (pp. 344-45)

(I will later on comment on Read's tendency to gesticulate with abstract notions that leave the philosophical issue completely untouched. Read's above use of "relatively harmless", "necessary/good", "right thing" and "masquerading as" tell us nothing about why some ideologies are harmless, necessary or deceptive.)

I will try to show how here Read unwittingly hints at the sense in which his own ideology is anything but harmless: it masquerades as anti-ideological philosophy that according to Read is supposed to be grounded in ordinary language (p. 28). He presents the reader with three different notions of ideology: (i) self-avowed and relatively harmless, (ii) self-avowed and necessary/good and (iii) pernicious. I *assume* that Read thinks (i) is harmless because people can choose whether they will support it or not, that (ii) is necessary/good because it is the right thing to do, and that (iii) is pernicious because it enters the mind secretly.

We have a curious field of tension here: three forms of ideology that vibrate along an axis of fundamental, philosophical obscurity, where what is judged to be the *worst* thing very easily can by whole cultures and astute critical thinkers be mistaken for the *best* thing. Furthermore, not only Wittgenstein but also Marx and Gramsci, are claimed to be thinkers who manage to think outside this treacherous field of tension. Read supposedly thinks that, like Wittgenstein, Marx and Gramsci too, are dissolving the whole field.^[2] In what sense is it that Marx and Gramsci manage to avoid this obscurity? And why is it that Stanley Cavell, one of the philosophers Read most strongly endorses as a philosopher who emphasises community and the "we" (pp. 128 and 305) and as an "expert mid-wifer of a genuine intellectual autonomy" (p. 285), is taken by Read to be "insufficiently political" and "sometimes too quick to consent to our failure to form community, i.e. too willing for us to remain apart from each other." (p. 344), Read gives no answer.

Even Read's biggest hero, Gordon Baker, fails to see the importance of community (p. 357):

[...] Baker is at times too content with a tacitly liberal individualist philosophy, in both political and constitutive terms; he is victim to a prejudice according to which my freedom is simply my freedom from constraint, and has no internal relation to your freedom, because the nature of our freedom is our separateness.

If such “expert mid-wifers” as Cavell and Baker can lose themselves in individualist ideology in their emphasis on the importance of community, how are we to know that this pernicious ideology has not also stealthily entered Read’s discourse? Read does not address this possibility seriously. In fact, he seems to actively avoid discussing it. His statements about my deplorable individualism and about the philosophical and ethical centrality of collectivity (“community”) are simply ideological statements of opinion: he nowhere shows in what sense collectivity is fundamental. Naturally, Read would deny what I say here. Whatever the case, I find no account of this problem. And if it is so difficult to discern between individualism and collectivism, would it not be of *primary importance* to clarify the differences? I do not understand why Read does not acknowledge this. Or, then again, I do.

There is a modern phenomenon that illustrates quite clearly how individuality and collectivity are two sides of the same coin. It has become quite common for certain people to try to prevent public events if they suspect that ideas repelling to them might come to expression at those events. These persons declare that the content in question makes them feel offended and insecure, and they expect that this is a reason for cancelling the event. To tell these persons that they can choose not to attend the event is useless, because what is intolerable to them is the thought that such “disturbing” content is made public at all. They cannot distinguish their own feelings from collectivity. They cannot, because those feelings *are* the feelings that constitute collectivity (And is not Read’s constant attack on suspected “superior positions” the hypersensitive, individualist other side of his collectivity?). In question is an extreme dependence on collectivity and an extreme individualism, a type of narcissism. But all investigations of such issues are ignored by Read. Now let us see how he involves Wittgenstein in his collectivism.

The Help of the Herd

Perhaps a suitable place for entering this seemingly complicated matter would be to discuss a remark by Wittgenstein. This remark is rarely discussed, but it does figure in Read’s book:

People are deeply embedded in philosophical, i.e., grammatical confusions. And to free them from these would presuppose pulling them out of the immensely manifold connections they are caught up in. One must so to speak regroup their entire language. (p. 358)

Read has emphasised the word free in order to highlight the liberatory aspect of the remark. Another thing too, should be brought to attention here: Read cuts off Wittgenstein’s remark at a certain place. The remark continues like this:

– But this language came about //developed// as it did because people had – and have – the inclination to think *in this way*. Therefore pulling them out only works with those who live in an instinctive state of rebellion against //dissatisfaction with// language. Not with those who following all of their instincts live within the herd that has created this language (Wittgenstein, 1999, p. 185) as its proper expression. (Wittgenstein, 1999, p. 185)

In his comment to the truncated version of the remark, Read says: “Under these circumstances, it would be delusive to pose philosophy as purely a first-personal activity. It’s hard; one needs all help one can get, of every kind, with and from everyone” (pp. 358-59). To me it seems questionable that Read uses the amputated remark to support his community-view, when he has just cut off a sequence of the remark where Wittgenstein notes that if you are stuck in herd-thinking, you cannot be freed from the “immensely manifold connections” of this thinking. Read simply ignores the very gist of Wittgenstein’s remark: he ignores what it is that people should according to Wittgenstein be freed from, namely to be bound up in herd-thinking. Read ignores this because *his* thesis is that collective unity is a fundamental, “paradise” thing (p. 301). He cuts out the passage because it causes troubles to him, and then goes on to claim something that is in direct opposition to the content of the cut out passage: that Wittgenstein emphasises the fundamentality of

community! In fact, Read *distorts* the meaning of Wittgenstein's remark. Wittgenstein does not have any thesis or claim. "Thinking for oneself" is part of the grammar of "thinking", so emphasising that does not amount to having any theses. Read is twisting and omitting remarks in order to make them comply with his own thesis on collectivity.

The reason why the above herd-remark is rarely discussed is that it is often assumed to be an odd remark, out of tune with Wittgenstein's thinking, and one he did not include into *Philosophical Investigations*. (I have heard this in personal discussions only, for even the dismissal of it is rarely to be found in written papers.). In my view, these claims are misleading. As to the assumed oddity: one can find many remarks that have points of contact with the herd-remark. The remark, though pertinent, is however, quite abstract and tells us very little about what Wittgenstein has in mind (This is a problem with many of Wittgenstein's remarks.). What are the expressions that the herd creates as proper to it? In "Remarks on Frazer's *Golden Bough*" we find a more substantial discussion that clearly connects to the herd-remark. I will try to outline what I take to be the relevance of these remarks – also with respect to *Philosophical Investigations*. Like the herd-remark, many remarks in the Frazer remarks are also found in the manuscript "Philosophy". Wittgenstein included some of these remarks in *Philosophical Investigations*.

Wittgenstein characterises James Frazer's tendency to explain magical rites as mistaken beliefs as superficial nonsense. Contrary to what Frazer thinks, magic is not a result of a mistake of any kind. What is of interest to us is the way Wittgenstein notes how modern man shares with the "primitive" man the kind of "Instinct-actions" that underlie magical thinking (Wittgenstein 1999, p. 157). Our understanding of, for instance, the sinister character of an ancient rite is based on our *own response* to what is sinister. We can thus make contact with what Wittgenstein calls the "inner nature" of a practice: "And one would then see that the sinister quality lies in the character of these people themselves" (Wittgenstein 1999, p. 145). Thus, our coming to perceive the sinister character of a rite is not based on historical evidence: "No, the deep and sinister do not become apparent merely by our coming to know the history of the external action, rather it is *we* who ascribe them from an inner experience." (Wittgenstein 1999, p. 147). Compare this with *Philosophical Investigations* §652: "If you want to understand the sentence, you have to imagine the psychological significance, the states of mind involved." This does not mean that some specific feeling constitutes the meaning of a sentence. It means that in understanding the psychological significance of a sentence, you understand *what is involved in saying the sentence to another person*. The character of a rite does not express random whims of a single person: "it corresponds to a general inclination of the people" (Wittgenstein 1999, p. 149). It is with an eye to this inclination in man that it makes sense to say: "An entire mythology is stored within our language" (Wittgenstein, 1999, p. 133) and to hold, that the philosopher's task is to "plow through the whole of language" (Wittgenstein, 1999, p. 131). That is why "the description of the use of a word is the description of a system, or of systems." (Wittgenstein, 1982, §294). The entire language must be "regrouped", but this is possible only for those who are in "rebellion against language", not for those "who following all of their instincts live within the herd" (Wittgenstein, 1999, p. 185).

Unfortunately Wittgenstein seldom made the kind of analysis that he performed in his manuscript on Frazer's *Golden Bough*, but I do not want to speculate about his reasons for this. As far as the rather abstract nature of many of his remarks in *Philosophical Investigations* is concerned, this is in part due to the fact that they are directed at logically minded philosophers. For this reason, the often criticised (see for instance Mulhall, 2004), and indeed very general and abstract remarks from §88 to §133, are quite in order. A philosopher who really cares about logic will be profoundly shaken by those remarks. But Wittgenstein makes it quite clear that our inclination to misunderstand things is not as such a matter of logic. He points out that our inclination to misunderstand things arise from our tendency to bewitch our understanding by way of language use (Wittgenstein, 2009, §109). Hence, attending to language use is not as such helpful at all. The point is rather, that when we do attend to the way language is used, we should have the courage to see what the meaning of different language uses really are; to see the whole mythology, sinisterness and herd-thinking that is laid down in our language. The logicians ignore all of this and instead create their own myth: the idea of the uniqueness of language with its "frictionless" super-order. This myth, like other ones, is not an intellectual mistake of some kind but has, like the cruel Beltane Festival, the character of depth

(Wittgenstein, 2009, §§110 and 111). Wittgenstein's talk of surveyability (Wittgenstein, 2009, §122) stirs Read's postmodern fears (see for instance Read p. 168), but it is just another way of talking about ploughing through the whole of language. And if we are to see our own bewitchedness, do we not have to, and *want* to, lay out all the different linguistic connections that characterise it? To think, as Read does, that Wittgenstein encourages us to just check how words are actually used in our ordinary language and look; our problems dissolve, is a gross misunderstanding.

Myths and rites are by definition collective creations. In the Frazer remarks Wittgenstein even points out that one person could not create a rite at random: "If I wanted to make up a festival, it would die out very quickly or be modified in such a manner that it corresponds to a general inclination of the people" (Wittgenstein, 1999, pp. 148-49). One could also say that it would be modified according to the habits of a form, of life. Moreover, Wittgenstein notes that rites (and it also concerns, I assume, myths) are developments of "Instinct-actions", such as beating the ground when one is angry (Wittgenstein, 1999, p. 137). This is why we can connect to the terribleness of an ancient rite. We know the terribleness from ourselves. Coming to know such a practice

is like seeing a man speaking harshly to someone else over a trivial matter, and noticing from his tone of voice and facial expression that this man can on occasion be terrible. This impression that I receive here can be very deep and extraordinarily serious. (Wittgenstein, 1999, p. 147)

What is it that one is offered to see here? Certainly not simply that a particular person can be terrible. Well, why is it that Wittgenstein makes the remark precisely in this connection and with this strong emphasis? He wants to show how it is from one's own experience, from one's Instinct reactions, that one understands for instance the terribleness of a rite. And to the extent one *could* invent such rites and ceremonies, this would be if one would do it from this "*common spirit*" that one oneself is in contact with (Wittgenstein, 1999, pp. 139-151). The terribleness we can perceive in a person's face is the common, collective ("devilish", *unheimlich*, ghastly) character of "the terrible" of a person who has become an impersonal instantiation of evil (a fact that horror movies utilise). Wittgenstein also mentions the notion of "scapegoat" in order to point out a common human tendency to blame others for one's own sins: "a false picture, similar to those that cause errors in philosophy" (Wittgenstein, 1999, p. 197). Like bullying, scapegoating is a social phenomenon, a herd-thinking, that acquires its affective intensity from a collective, sinister euphoria.

In *Philosophical Investigations* Wittgenstein treats the common myth of philosophers: in short, the idea of a super-order. This myth is just as much an instance of common spirit, of herd-thinking, as the Beltane Festival, even if it is different of a character. To the philosopher preoccupied with rational grounds, it may be illuminating; it could function as an object of comparison to point out that language does not need any rational foundation in order to work. Language and our words acquire their meaning from the way we live. Language and primitive rites with their source in Instinct-reactions (in many cases called "primitive reactions" by Wittgenstein) are not results of a confused rationality, for rationality is not at stake here and neither is it needed. But this does not mean that collectivity *grounds* language. It means that already by considering our common practices we will see that no super-order is *needed*.

Nevertheless, our collective, philosophical investments in the common, collective, lexical, meanings have their own problems. The lexical meanings of words can always be interpreted in yet another way than the one at hand. If it could not, *it would not be of any use*. However, the philosopher is troubled by this, for she demands a rational principle that ensures unambiguous meaning and truth of linguistic expressions. When she does not find it she becomes a sceptic – if scepticism is not the philosopher's hidden desire. For is not rationalism a scepticism too? Anyway, the lexical-collective "meaning", obviously, does not contain any intention to mean: "*it does not try to say anything*". Only a *person* can say something. There is a sense in which this is pointed out in *Philosophical Investigations* (§212): "When someone of whom I am afraid orders me to continue a series, I act quickly, with perfect assurance, and the lack of reasons does not trouble me". There are egg-shells in this remark but the point is clear – *if* one wants to understand Wittgenstein. Wittgenstein addresses the sceptic who pretends not to understand how a given mathematical series should

be continued, and who always manages to create yet another interpretation that is supposed to prove that it is impossible to give any rational specification of how the series should be continued. And, indeed, there is according to Wittgenstein no such *rational* specification. But if *you* understand what *I* mean, then you know how to go on. And if you do not, I will explain. But the sceptic pretends that she can never “really” know how to go on. She claims that she just must guess. In response to that, Wittgenstein points out that if someone one fears orders one to continue the series, one will know how to do it. This shows that you actually did know how to continue the series. And if you would not have known it, you would have asked and then the other would have explained. If you pretend not to understand, you can claim that there is some further logical possibility of following the rule. And of course there may be one. Wittgenstein’s example only shows that you can, if you want, or are pressured to, understand how the other meant the series. No imagined, unambiguous logical certainty is needed. The remark shows that the rational foundation that was supposedly lacking here is, actually, *not the reason needed for continuing the series* but, rather, the “reason” that was *imagined* to be the logical ground for the very possibility of the series.

A collective cannot mean anything or say anything. It can only lay down rules, agreements, standards and orders that specify certain ways of understanding meanings that have already been laid down – for instance how a sign-post functions. And to understand such specifications one must be part of a form of life. Two things emerge here: (i) no rational grounds are needed and (ii) understanding something *said* is not about interpretation (of possible, collective specifications of meaning) but about understanding a *person* and what she means.

Another aspect of *Philosophical Investigations* is Wittgenstein’s critique of subjectification of meaning. Here Wittgenstein in many ways points out that to say something, to think, to mean, etc. are not processes in the head. To say (think, mean) something is not founded by collective specifications, nor is it caused by processes or things in the brain. In short: to understand language-use is not about either collective, lexical “meanings” or empirical brain-events. It is about me understanding what you say. Or failing to do so.

The mythology that Wittgenstein is criticising involves, in general, the idea that there is something specifiable, which constitutes the mythical “meaning”: a super-order, logical rules, collective rules, or brain-states. The “meanings” that are imagined here, are of a kind that can run a computer. For what we have here is not really meaning, but a logical mechanism. The mechanism in question correlates to public, lexical, which is to say: standardised “meanings”. This mechanism with its lexical correlate is, further, supposed to correspond to brain states. A public meaning must have a specific enough “cue” so that it can in a specific way be incorporated into a mechanism/computer and/or so it can be identified by the assumed brain processes. In this logico-mechanistic perspective, the publicly determined specificity of a meaning is the other side of its actual, mechanical operation in particular cases – whether the operation in question is thought to occur in the brain or in a computer. Public meaning is, so to speak, *not something meant; something that someone means*, but a set of standardised suggestions about what someone *might mean*. But if there is no one there to say anything to someone else, these standardised suggestions are nothing, even if they would for some reason be going on in a computer. We see how objectivity and subjectivity, in the form of collectivity and individuality, collapse into each other here. The objective “meanings” have no significance apart from causing subjective “reactions” and, vice versa, subjective reactions have no significance beyond their reference to objective meanings. These are the implications of the myth. And these implications are there only in the sense that some human beings imagine them.

This myth is what Wittgenstein is dissolving. A human being does not, in his view, “have” a “Something” that “makes” her understand. She is, instead, someone whose understanding develops in relationship with other human beings. This means that a human being is someone who must, even in cases where it makes sense to speak about following a rule, apply these rules *without guidance*. A human being is *not* someone whose brain reads off meanings from facts (whether logical or empirical-social) but someone who is, for instance, filled with pity for another human being in pain (§§292, 287). This is not a matter of “intuition” if intuition is taken to be a Something; an objective-subjective inner voice that “tells” me how to understand something. If it were, we would, again, run into the problem created by the myth, for how am I supposed to

know *how* to follow; *how* to interpret, such an inner voice (§213)? A similar worry lies behind Wittgenstein's remark about the beetle in the box (§293). Here he shows that the *Something* that we are so inclined to presuppose as an explanation of the workings of language would not in fact have any role at all. I want to emphasise the point that a lexical-collective meaning or a rule or a practice does not determine how it is to be used. Only a human being "can" mean something by them. To follow a rule blindly (§219) is neither about *obeying* (what "we" say) or about inescapable, logical *mechanisms* (transcendental necessities) but about *understanding* a statement *as a rule*. The "understanding as", as an analogy to "seeing as", is of particular interest to Wittgenstein because only a human being "can" understand or see something as "something as".

The person who continues a mathematical series in a "different" way (§185) has followed the rule in *her* way. No *rule* can "correct" her. But if *you* explain to her "how you then *meant* it" (§186), the person might understand. Formulas determine the steps in the following way (§190): "If by 'x!2' you mean x^2 , then you get *this* value for y, if you mean $2x$, *that one*." – now ask yourself: how does one do it – *mean* the one thing or the other by 'x!2'? In *this* way, then, meaning something can determine the steps in advance.' It is neither some inner intuition or brain state or a common rule that determines meaning, but – and is this surprising? – that "you" explain to "me" what you meant. And to the extent there is understanding, it is simply because *I understand*. You.

Kripke, the Libertine, and the "Thou"

The word liberation leads my thoughts to becoming free of some external oppression. The oppressor has because of some historico-political events lost her power over me or "us". I or we may, or may not have been contributing to the liberating events in question. In fact, anyone with the power and the will – not forgetting *interest* – necessary to free me/us, can be my/our liberator. Read apparently uses the word in a different way. Here *I* am the one who have enslaved *myself*. It is also the case that *I* am the one who must liberate *myself*. It seems, as if also our culture, given its hyper-individualism, contributes to my enslavement. Yet, I also need, so Read claims, the help of community in order to free myself. But who or what, "actually", are those forces that enslave me, whether from within or without? And what are those forces that are supposed to free me? For yes: Read frequently speaks about *power*. The meaning that Read is putting forth seems obscure. Let us see whether it turns out that Read after all uses the word liberation in its quite ordinary meaning. For what other meaning can he, on his own terms, even intend?

Let us now try to find out why Read sacrifices more than a chapter in order to criticise Kripke's interpretation of Wittgenstein. His reasons for doing this may seem surprising, especially since he says: "Kripkean scepticism need not trouble us, because 'it' fails even to exist" (p. 31). However, there actually is a very good reason for Read's interest in Kripke; a reason that Read does not acknowledge: Kripke's interpretation, commonly taken as a community-orientated view, threatens to expose how collective thinking and subjectivism collapse into each other.

When Read announces that he approaches the crux of the problem with Kripke, I find nothing else but an entirely abstract, repeated, argument that Kripke's scepticism "cannot actually be meant." (pp. 273-74) Why is Read so heavily involved in a typical, philosophical argument in the midst of a professed project of interpreting a philosopher, Wittgenstein, who famously did not argue against, but dissolved philosophical theses? How is it possible that Read does not realise that he acts like a typical, argument-oriented philosopher? There is a reason for this, let us say, forgetfulness. Kripke is according to Read not only an "extreme" or "hyper" individualist (whatever such specifications might mean in philosophical terms), but also a "pseudo-communitarian" (p. 107) because "community" is "distorted by the likes of Kripke into a chaos of individual felt licences" (p. 143). But, one wants to ask here, is not Kripke rather an extreme collectivist? Here one central remark of Kripke:

A deviant individual whose responses do not accord with those of the community in enough cases will not be judged, by the community, to be following its rules; he may even be judged to be a madman, following no coherent rule at all. (Kripke, 1995, 93)

Why does Read not discuss this remark? What, according to *him*, is wrong with it? Moreover, Kripke says that “if we consider a single person in isolation” (“if!”), *then* “our ordinary practice licenses him to apply the rule in the way it strikes him” (Kripke, 1995, p. 88). This license is what appears to stir Read’s mind, so that he puts forth the confused claim that Kripke’s scepticism cannot even be meant. Why has Read not said anything about what follows (Kripke, 1995, p. 89)?:

The situation is very different if we widen our gaze from consideration of the rule follower alone and allow ourselves to consider him as interacting with a wider community. Others will then have justification conditions for attributing correct or incorrect rule following to the subject, and these will *not* be simply that the subject’s own authority is unconditionally to be accepted.

How can Read claim that Kripke’s position involves denying that we actually have a language in which you can state things? Kripke quite obviously thinks that we have, *in fact*, a language. A quite *ordinary* assumption. What is the problem with Read’s view? Is it this, that Kripke’s account of Wittgenstein makes nonsense of the idea of any *logical grounds* for language? Well, in fact Kripke denies, or takes Wittgenstein to deny, that language could be grounded in any kind of facts, whether neural or logical, that take place in the brain or mind of the individual. All we have is the collectively determined meanings and rules. Concluding his sceptical example where he shows in what sense it cannot be determined what it is to do addition, Kripke says:

Wittgenstein’s sceptical solution concedes to the sceptic that no ‘truth conditions’ or ‘corresponding facts’ in the world exist that make a statement like “Jones, like many of us, means addition by ‘+’” true. Rather we should look at how such assertions are *used*. (Kripke, 1995, p. 86)

There are according to Kripke no rational grounds for language. What *we* say is true, *is* true. This *is* indeed scepticism, because if truth is simply what we say is true, then there really is no truth. I do not know how much this bothers Kripke, but Read’s problem lies here, I think. He demands – for the sake of “right” politics? – truth, *collective* truth, and Kripke destroys it by allowing that truth is merely the opinion of a “we”. Read does not seem to notice that, when it comes to truth, Kripke’s licentiousness also concerns collectivity – not only the individual!

Read solves the problem he has run into by making an astonishing conjuring trick: he claims that Kripke’s view is a hyper-individualism! “Truth is what *we* say is true” – this is supposed to be hyper-individualism! Read’s philosophical strategy involves amputating Wittgenstein and turning Kripke inside out. How can such remarkable tricks have any chance of passing without notice? Well, as Read himself says, it is because hyper-individualism can *so easily* masquerade as a community view (p. 321). For this of course also means that a community view can easily be made to masquerade as hyper-individualism. This, in my view, is because they are two sides of the same coin. Read, by contrast does not seem to be interested in this state of affairs, which in his view is a paradox. But then again, paradoxes do not seem to disturb him (See Read, 2012)

The main philosophical symptom of Read’s confusion is that he thoroughly misunderstands both Wittgenstein’s and Kripke’s intentions (and they are not identical) with the sceptical problem. He repeats again and again that in order to formulate his problem, Kripke needs the very language that he undermines; the problem that Kripke takes himself to have located cannot according to Read be “formulated at all” (p. 263). Further, Read says that he cannot understand how one can doubt whether one means plus or something else when calculating. But all this is completely beside the point. Kripke is not questioning *whether* there is a language with which one can state things. He asks, and rightly takes Wittgenstein to ask, *how* it is possible to state things in language, *how* language can make contact with reality – *not whether it can*. Kripke takes,

rightly, Wittgenstein to say that there is no external “something” in my brain or in the logic of rules that explains how meaning is possible.^[3] Kripke then, falsely, takes Wittgenstein to mean that there is *no* basis for “understanding”: meaning is simply what a community of language users determines it to be. It should be clear that Wittgenstein did not hold any such collectivist idea. But Kripke does, and this collectivism is what Read has baptised “hyper-individualism”! Given his collectivist theses, he simply cannot admit that “common meaning” could end up being relativistic. So he blames the relativism on “hyper-individualism”.

On top of this, Read’s “arguments” against Kripke are confused, in that he thinks that facts of language-use can prove Kripke wrong. This is a confusion concerning Wittgenstein too: “One can defend common sense against the attacks of philosophers only by solving their puzzles, i.e., by curing them of the temptation to attack common sense; not by restating the views of common sense” (Wittgenstein, 1965, p. 59).

The problem that Kripke is dealing with runs deep in philosophy; there is nothing particularly astonishing in his interpretation. And as he himself notes, there are many analogies to what he takes to be the Wittgensteinian sceptical paradox (Hume, Quine, Davidson). At stake is simply to understand the basic problem of philosophy. Let me here quote one distinguished Wittgensteinian philosopher, Lars Hertzberg, who in stating this basic problem notes that a “community of speakers is, in fact, in no better position to fix the meaning of an expression than the solitary individual is”, which is because “it makes no difference whether the examples are provided by one individual or have several sources [...]” (Hertzberg 1994, p. 22). This leads Hertzberg to a drastic remark: “It seems as if we had to end by saying that there can be no such things as language and meaning [...]” (Hertzberg 1994, p. 23^[4]). It is completely confused to respond to this problem concerning the nature of philosophical reasoning by saying, like Read does, that he cannot understand how one can doubt whether one means plus or something else (p. 273).

What seems to completely escape Read, though he is by no means alone here, is the *sense* in which Wittgenstein’s solution to the sceptical problem is – its dissolution. The “problem” is that we are inclined to think that there must be a Something that accounts for meaning, for otherwise it seems “there can be no such things as language and meaning”. Like Hertzberg and many others, Read *does* address this “problem”. And like most philosophers, he *does* claim that it is the community of language-users who gives sense to “meaning”. The disagreement concerns how this should be understood only, Read performs a curious move here. He *does* address the “problem”, being a typical philosopher in this sense, and he does think, typically again, that “community” is the answer, but he denies that there is any question! For if Kripke’s view is “unstatable”, so is everybody else’s – including Wittgenstein’s. In effect, Read says that there is no question but that “community” is the answer! What then is this “answer” according to him?

Well, Read formulates quite typical philosophical problems, criticising the “coherence” of Kripke’s position (p. 263). Obviously he thinks that the *coherence* of a position is central, but he does not seem to think that his own position needs to be coherent. Anyway, despite recognising that Wittgenstein is not arguing for any philosophical position, Read involves himself in an argument concerning the coherence of Kripke’s position. Typical philosophy. Read also asks, entering another typical philosophical problem, whether doubts applied to the past can be – coherently – used to doubt the present and the future (p. 263). That is what Kripke is doing and Read argues against it. Moreover, Read also makes typical, philosophical statements. Here one that reveals his fondness of ordinary language philosophy: “Quusification without end is pure possibility only [...], *not* the actual meaning of anything at all” (p. 266), (quusification being Read’s name for Kripke’s sceptical strategy). Here Read is confusingly just “restating the views of common sense”. Also his indignant questions about how language could ever have been taken to be “a matter for oneself alone” (p. 301), is confused. No one ever thought that it was.^[5] Nor was Kant’s talk of the scandal of philosophy – that the existence of external objects cannot be proven – an expression of scepticism concerning the existence of these objects (Kant, 1979, p. 22). The *whole* point here is about *how* these things could be *shown* and *proven*. To just assert that we in fact do speak to each other, is completely irrelevant. Read thus has misunderstood the whole problem here.

There is one feature in Read's discourse that is not typically philosophical: as indicated above, he does not really analyse Kripke's view, and his arguments against it are questionable. Moreover, he does not philosophically justify his own position either.^[6] He simply launches negative statements about Kripke's view and affirmative statements about his own. In the different sections where he deals with Kripke, I find only one central statement that is in different ways repeated in every section: Kripke cannot so much as formulate his own position because he throws "into doubt *all* meaning" (p. 265). In fact, Read repeats some version of this statement on almost every page of the whole chapter! Apart from that, he uses all kinds of derogatory labelling of Kripke: licentious, faux-freedom, extreme individualism, pseudo-individualism, fetishised individualism, hyper-individualism and pseudo-communitarianism.

(I will not have the space to comment very much on Read's tendency to generalise. The striking thing here is that he himself makes huge, and confused, generalisations in the midst of a discourse where he constantly criticises generalisation as such. This critique is based on a – common – misreading of Wittgenstein to be sure, but that aside one wonders why Read thinks *he* can do what he criticises others for. For instance: "Our time is one of fetishised individualism" (p. 267) (see also p. 316). A huge and confused generalisation delivered with no good explanation.)

What is going on here? And how can Read make the claim that Kripke's, or indeed any, sceptical position is unstatable; that Kripke's doubts "do not get as far as actually being doubts at all"? (p. 273). Despite assurances to the contrary, Read misses the whole issue here. The issue is not only statable but, as correctly seen by Hertzberg, of acute importance. At stake is really not a position, but rather a problematic outcome of philosophical reasoning. Wittgenstein's thinking in *Philosophical Investigations* has actually sharpened this problem. The problem looks roughly like this:

Suppose it is the case that private languages are impossible; that a solitary person could not create language despite her intelligence. If this is the case then "many" persons together obviously must be capable of creating language. Somehow, then, a collectivity of people is "able" to create language. But how do they, we, do it? More in particular, how should one conceive of the concept of "relations between people in a collective" in order to explain how collective processes can "make" linguistic communication possible?

In fact, this is a perplexing problem, and most philosophers satisfy themselves with the explanation "somehow". The problem here is not just to reveal that peculiar character of relations between many people that is supposed to enable creation of language. The problem is also to show how "truth" can be, not only part, but the basis of the creation of language. Earlier on, eternal essences or, later, god-given or, today, mother nature given, intelligence have been suggested as explanations. What Wittgenstein showed, among other things with the private language considerations, is that *no* thing inside or outside the head of a human being can explain the "creation" of language. This includes collective rules, values, norms, etc. To think that such a thing exists constitutes the mythology of philosophers. For, and this is what Read does not seem to understand, *if* a collectively established Something would be the explanation, then it would have to be both a Something *in the head of the subject* and a Something that is; like Hegelian spirit (this problem is the background to Hegel's dialectics between individual conscience and abstract morality), or the more secretive Mother Nature (the role of whom is mostly denied by its worshippers), *hovering above collectivity*. Does anyone hold such a view today?

On an assumption that constitutes the meaning of "modern philosophy", meanings (rules, norms, etc.) "exist", *only* in the head of the individual. No matter how transcendental some of the explanations of the way collectivity is assumed to create meaning and language are, almost no one wants to accept any kind of Hegelian spirit.^[7] This is the contemporary naturalist spirit. Even if one is not prepared to delude oneself with the notion of a hovering spirit, the question remains: How does collectivity create language? (And as will become obvious, the question concerning the hovering spirit too, remains). This is the question that Wittgenstein dissolved, and this dissolution forms the gist of his anti-philosophy. But it is hard to see this, because it is hard to *take*. Wittgenstein's pupil Rush Rhees seems to have struggled all his life with this issue, without getting anywhere. But in his book *Wittgenstein and the Possibility of Discourse* he does make

a number of interesting observations. The following two remarks are of particular interest here. Rhee says (1998, p. 249): “I find the difficulty in saying what language is or what speaking is or what propositions are, very queer; I find it hard to grasp just what the difficulty is. And I do not know why”. This is an honest remark but then I wonder why he thought he could, a little earlier, say (p. 210):

There cannot be a private language. I should not think there could be a language of only two people either. And it is somewhat similar to that if we say that there could not be a language which was confined to the practice of a particular technique in which perhaps only two people were engaged.

We see how Rhee has, in this curious *philosophy of numbers*, the same inclination as Read to dismiss I-you understanding. In Rhee’s case this is more astonishing for he notes in many places that to speak a language is based on understanding *each* other. He even says specifically that the “background of common understanding” lies in “understanding each other” (p. 62) and that language “depends on friendship”, though he immediately withdraws this as “absurd” (p. 72). In a meticulous discourse, in a critical discourse with Wittgenstein, Rhee tries to find out *how* collectivity grounds language, but he gets nowhere. However, he does reject a whole bunch of social explanations: language is not an institution or custom, not rules and grammar, not reducible to common ways of living, etc. Rhee is looking for *something* that would be the explanation but does not find it.

The problem with Kripke’s view is that he, frivolously and sceptically, accepts that there is no truth beyond what “we” say (which, by the way, Richard Rorty also does (2000, p. 125)). This is his scepticism. Given his ideological aims with collectivism, Read of course cannot accept that the thesis that collectivity establishes meaning and truth ends up in relativism. This is why he makes his conjuring trick. The first step is to not even mention that the collectivity-thesis suffers from relativism. The second step is that he tries to make it seem as if the relativism that he is mentioning and combatting has its source in Kripkean “individualism”. Read focuses exclusively on Kripke’s argument about the reason why it is not possible to unambiguously determine meaning. In a particular case, a subject can always give a further interpretation of a given meaning. Read tries to make it seem that it is here, in this individualist license, that relativism has its source. He tries, without mentioning it, to save “collective truth” by making us stare us blind at the impossibility of subjectivism. But the other side of subjectivism is objectivism. And the other side of individualism is collectivism, and it should be obvious, according to a logic that I take also Hertzberg to hint at, that from the point of view of meaning and truth it is irrelevant whether a given content has one or many sources.

To be sure, “content” seems to suffer from multiple meaning disorder (an altogether postmodern condition), but this is only an illusion created by philosophical logic. In this confused perspective it might seem as if an “original”, a true meaning, is badly needed but missing. (Here we touch upon the sense in which postmodernism is not in opposition to “logo-centrism” but, rather, a completion of it). However, a dictionary does not suffer from anything. But if a human being perceives no difference relevant to her life between all the possible meanings of words, then she suffers seriously and, in a sense, precisely because of this indifference. Human beings tend to be trapped by the individual-collective problem. Some people are more drawn to individualism while others are drawn to collectivism, but both poles are equally empty. Metaphysics with its polarity is a confused, repressive response to a certain difficulty (between I and you) (I have discussed this issue elsewhere).

Wittgenstein, by contrast, shows how this whole “problem” is a fiction and misunderstanding (2009, §201). Read is aware of this but ignores completely that Wittgenstein dissolves the problem. There is no answer to it, because there is no question. In Wittgenstein’s view, “collectivity” cannot be an answer to anything at all (though his herd-remark indicates that he took our temptation to think that it is, seriously). Read, however, goes on to claim that Wittgenstein was a proponent of the philosophical view called ordinary language philosophy – and a vulgar version of it at that. A version that goes something like this: Philosophers have their abstract crazy notions of a super-logic, and so it might appear as if our common words ‘could not’ have the meaning we take them to have. But that is not true at all! Just consider these examples of mine...(beetles in the box and so forth), and you will see that our common words make perfect sense. There is no problem

here. Just listen to comrade Mao, he knows how we think – and should think. Though these two are – really – the same, as already Rousseau knew. There is no meaning, truth or freedom beyond what *we* determine, and what we decide to be ordinary, is ordinary. This is real freedom. – Read would do well to read and reflect thoroughly on how Rhees goes about the “non-statable” problem of the grounds of language.

How does Wittgenstein dissolve the problem in question? Is there a straight-forward answer? Yes and no. He shows that there is nothing specifiable that constitutes the condition of possibility of meaning and understanding, not “intuition” (2009, §213) nor even “meanings” (2009, §329). Any such “something” is by definition a dead thing, like a picture, which can always be interpreted any way a human being wants to. This is exemplified for instance by the picture of the old man seen as either walking up or sliding down the hill (2009, §139). Why does this not deteriorate to relativism? Because in Wittgenstein’s view there is no *specimen* of meaning inside my head, a specimen that would have to have some objective counterpart (whether natural or social) in order to be “able” to be a meaning at all. In Wittgenstein’s view there is nothing more to meaning than what I can mean when talking to you. And can I not interpret a word or a picture in all sorts of ways? And could it not be the case that you understand me? Meaning occurs between me and you; things do not mean anything. Consider *Philosophical Investigations* §457: “Yes, meaning something is like going towards someone”. Apart from what takes place between me and you, there is nothing to be said about meaning something and speaking a language. “Meaning” does not need to be backed up by truth, for “meaning” is something I and you do when we talk. If you say something strange or untrue, I will ask you about it. And if you do not understand what I say, I will try so say it differently – or perhaps I draw a picture. For human beings to understand each other, no collectivity is needed – not even language, in the sense of linguistic expression, is needed (2009, §491; 1992, p. 67); certainly not ordinary language – for there is nothing to be explained here. *This* is the “ordinariness” that I believe Wittgenstein is mostly referring to. A rather in-ordinary ordinariness for the ordinary mind.

“But does not I-you understanding also presuppose certain brain states in order to be possible?” – Such a question can be formulated, but the *philosophical* question concerning the *logical* foundations of language is dissolved, when one realises that “meaning” and “truth”, and so language, have their “bedrock” in you and me understanding each other. To ask a neurological question concerning brain states is *not* confused if it is assumed that those states *accompany* understanding, while it *is confused* if “understanding” is taken to *consist* in such states.

As I have said elsewhere (Nykänen, 2019), Wittgenstein does give a quite lucid description of the “non-statable” problem I have dealt with. Discussing pain and being a human being he notes (2009, §288): “if I assume the abrogation of the normal language-game with the expression of a sensation, I need a criterion of identity for the sensation; and then the possibility of error also exists.” That is, if I ignore your reactions, *you*, and instead try to determine your reactions by way of *our common criteria*, by way of *language-use*, then there is a possibility of error. Our *language* does not deliver understanding; it is the words that *you and I* use in communication that constitutes understanding. Hence, Wittgenstein’s remark (2009, §303): “Just try – in a real case – to doubt someone else’s fear or pain”, is *not* a remark that asserts the reliability of ordinary language-use. It is a remark that asks me to reflect at the implications of relating to a *you*. It is possible for you and me to talk truly, honestly or – more to the point – openly with each other. The language-game where expression of sensation (and feeling) is part of the “game”, is not one determined by criteria (that is: a collective, third-person perspective), but by the “way” you and I understand each other. If I deny your expression, your invitation to openness, I am not denying a sentence in our common language; I am not denying anything common like duty, honesty, decency, etc. I am denying *you*. If I need to, I will try to legitimate my closedness by common meanings, by words that seem useful for the task (and “duty” and “decency” might be useful here). Given that *I deny you*, the words I use cannot be *shown* to be false, for only you, or another you: a *you*, can appreciate truth and uncover untruth. Truth occurs only in the openness between you and me. *You* know that my words are false. It is I who, in my denial, pretend not to see any falsity. With this pretence I become collective, for collectivity is about hiding behind, among other things, words. Concerning my denial, there is in the collective perspective no piece of knowledge to be registered in our common natural history.

However, you, you, you, and you...can, if you have witnessed what took place, know that my words are false. This is because each and everyone of you can perceive my closedness. Wittgenstein has a remark that is relevant here:

This is important: I might know from certain signs and from my knowledge of a person that he is glad, etc. But I cannot describe my observations to a third person and – even if he trusts them – thereby convince him of the genuineness of that gladness. (Wittgenstein, 2004, p. 86).

Wittgenstein's talk of "signs", "knowledge", "observation" and "conviction" shows that he is describing his observation from a typical philosophical perspective but it is also clear, in my view, that he is noticing a feature of I-you understanding.

My denying you is perceivable only to (a) you. But then there is the "fact" – and here is the pain of it all – that I very well know and understand that you know and understand that I have made it all up. Whether or not I am taken to be morally right or wrong on common terms, it is a considerable relief for my feeling of guilt to conceive of the issue in common terms and criteria, rather than allowing you to experience how I deny you and, thereby, my conscience. Collectivity is a creation that creates the illusion that this fearsome, even if also longed for, openness can be erased. This is the deep "charm" of collectivity. This is why we must plough through the whole of language.

What is it that is morally questionable about Kripke's view of collectivity? I cannot here discuss this matter, but Read is fully aware of the way I distinguish between "conscience" (an I-you matter) and collective pressure (a socially shared repression of conscience), and I have presented many aspects of this repression. I have, in other words criticised the kind of collectivism that Kripke thinks Wittgenstein is speaking for. Yet, Read has never come up with any criticism of either my critique of collectivism or of my distinction between conscience and collective pressure; a distinction that lies at the heart of what I mean by the I-you perspective and that, secondly, makes it clear in what sense the I-you perspective is through and through moral. Shortly put, I show how conscience is an inescapable (not a willed or intended) perceiving-understanding of how one has wronged a particular person. Conscience is about "me" realising that I am about to do, or that I have already done, something terrible to you, while "collective pressure" is a distorting repression and collectivisation of conscience: in this repressed form one takes oneself to be placed before a *public, judgemental gaze*, a "court of law" as Kant says, and this view is shared by the judging public. It is precisely this collectivisation which is designed to help one escape from conscience. It corrupts morality, and makes it seem as if there would be uncertainty about what is "morally right". Kripke unwittingly reveals this corruption.

How can my account be taken to be individualism? Is not the very grammar of the collective view of conscience a case of the lonely individual placed before a common gaze? That cannot be anything but collective. And individual. What Read is doing, is to simply label, without even an effort of justification, my view as individualism and then dismiss it on that ground. Read does not seem to understand that there is a kind of logic of the 2nd-person which lies at the heart of our language: you can see and learn to respond to a smile only in a person's face. You cannot learn it by looking at pictures. Nor can you learn to see a smile by looking at a group of people, for there is no such thing as a smile of a group. There is only the smile of you. And you. And you...Being part of a group is neither here nor there when it comes to seeing the smile as a smile. In this sense, language and ethics is specifically 2nd-personal, and there is nothing romantic about it.

In fact, Peter Winch and many other Wittgensteinian moral philosophers that Read seems to value highly, have unwittingly demonstrated precisely the kind of point that Kripke is making. In his much-quoted paper "The Universalizability of Moral Judgement" (Winch, 1972), Winch claims that the gruesome hanging of an innocent man need not, given the circumstances, necessarily prevent it from being a morally respectable action. Since the decision of this hanging was an outcome of "moral seriousness" of the agent (a certain captain Vere in a novel by Herman Melville), the decision must according to Winch be deemed to be morally respectable, even if many people would have come to the contrary decision. What we have here is

an instance of so called “internal moral conflicts” (a notion I have criticised in Nykänen, 2015). Captain Vere “did not think that whatever he thought would be the right thing would in fact be so” (Winch, 1972, p. 165). Rather, “it is quite clear that Vere is to be taken as appealing to a well-established and agreed system of ideas” (Winch 1972, p. 162). The *same* arguments that led Vere to hanging the man, may lead someone else to free him (Winch, 1972, p. 169). This all has, Winch thinks, no “universal” validity, rather: “what one finds out is something about oneself” (Winch, 1972, p. 168). Well, one certainly did not “find out” anything at all about the innocent man one hanged. Instead we are offered to think that we have here inscrutable subjectivity at “decent” moral work! Winch seems to think that he is discussing a particularly “puzzling” “class of expressions” but, as I have showed in many places, this undecidability is a feature of collective discourse. When it comes to my relation to a particular person in the sense of a “you”, it is senseless to even ask if I can “know” whether I have been mean to that person. I will risk a simplification here and say that I-you ethics is about the sense in which my and your conscience-relation to each other makes all talk of uncertainty of what is evil ludicrous. There can be no uncertainty about evil. On top of that, evil acting is in part *constituted* by appeals to a presumed uncertainty about what is right and wrong. In collective ethics right and wrong are not matters of conscience but about the agreement between my action and common norms. This means that in collective terms you *can only interpret* the meaning of actions. And just as Kripke has revealed, there is always a further interpretation. Winch differs from Kripke only in the sense that he qualifies the personal, completely subjective judgement with “moral seriousness” – and let us not here ask how that notion should be determined. If a person is morally serious according to common standards, then her subjective decision can be “morally respectable” even when it goes (or seems to go?) against common standards. Trying to relate those two forms of common standard would be a treasure box for philosophers looking for “rational challenges”.

Since Read makes no effort whatsoever to elucidate the concepts he himself uses, he completely misses the sense in which one speaks of an individual and the sense in which one speaks of a person. When an ordinary person stands before, say, the queen, both of them are quite obviously individuals. But the queen is not a person in the usual sense. Her personality has, through formalisation or, in other words, depersonalisation— a collective procedure -, been subordinated to her collective role. Depersonalisation is omnipresent and chameleonic. On the one hand it seems inappropriate to imagine the queen even without a hat; on the other hand the whole court has at times been witnessing the birth of a royal baby. We see this web of depersonalisation everywhere in society, for instance in the use of the polite form “you”, and the “humble” form “we” about oneself, in different languages. The philologist Otto Jespersen has some interesting things to say here (1951, p. 193):

When a person speaks of himself as “we” instead of “I” it may in some cases be due to a modest reluctance to obtrude his own person on his hearers or readers; he hides his own opinion or action behind that of others. But the practice may even more frequently be due to a sense of superiority, as in the “plural of majesty.” This was particularly influential in the case of the Roman emperors who spoke of themselves as *nos* and required to be addressed as *vos*. This in course of time led to the French way of addressing all superiors (and later through courtesy also equals, especially strangers) with the plural pronoun *vous*. In the Middle Ages this fashion spread to many countries; in English it eventually led to the old singular *thou* being practically superseded by *you*, which is now the sole pronoun of the second person and no longer a sign of deference or respect.

The basic theme here is hiding one’s personality, whether out of modesty or superiority. Formalisation is the “method”, through and through a grammatical method, of achieving this. We see here one of countless ways in which formalisation and depersonalisation occur in collectivity. This mythologisation, together with the myths of a super-logic which goes with it, is what Wittgenstein is uncovering in his particular way: “We must plow through the whole of language” (1999, p. 195). I have been discussing this mythologisation in many papers, focusing especially on the sense in which it is the personal; the humanity in human being, which addresses the you, in the sense of thou, in another human being. To speak about individuals and the political meaning of individualism is an altogether different matter. But Read does nothing in order to clarify such matters. He never involves himself in a substantial discussion about the things I say in those papers.

Instead he only gesticulates with different political labels that are branded according to his personal political preferences. Moreover, it appears as if Read would think that two persons addressing each other stand in a “romanticising” relationship, alleging that my account of I-you understanding is romantic (p. 15). But romanticism is in my view one particular, collective-cultural way of repressing I-you understanding: a collective obsession with a certain idea of “love”. Read’s belief that a relationship of two persons is inescapably romantic is simply a collectivist misconception, which he uses just to give a questionable label to my account.

Kripke’s frivolous suggestion is that truth is just what we say it is. This threatens to expose not only the relativity and vagueness of those very words which are, in repression, assumed to give us relief from the worst of all pains: the one “caused” by you. It also threatens to expose the aggressively repressive character of collectivity. For it now becomes obvious that the holy norms and values of our culture are just tyrannical devices that impose themselves on us by “virtue” of the power(s) that back(s) them up.

Read’s “no-account-thesis”

Professor Read’s view on collectivity and of the way Wittgenstein supposedly speaks for it, is not easy to capture. This is because Read mostly just opposes collectivity to individuality and then claims that “individuality” involves that we become isolated from each other while “collectivity” is fundamental unity and togetherness. No account of why or in what sense individuality is so tempting and why, if collectivity is so wonderful, people do not systematically prefer collectivity and opt for it as being self-evidently preferable to the miserable atomism of individualism. To merely state that subjectivism exerts a “deep attraction”, to say that it is “easy to deny” the reality of pain, to say that we have a “desire for the fantasy (of ‘privacy’) that keeps us apart” that we are “inherently able” to see another person and thus to “set aside” the inner object, which involves “realising the ineradicability of our community, of our public [!] inter-personal lives”, and to merely say that we should “allow [!] space for a realer, realistically-apprehended and -expressed inner life” (pp. 307-308), does not help us understand the problems and possibilities mentioned. It is not that I am inclined to say that all these statements, and similar ones are to be found everywhere, are meaningless or always false. They are, at best, just completely abstract. Content could be given to them if only Read would do that. What is the deep attraction? The easy denial? The desire for privacy (I assume; not for the fantasy)? How does Wittgenstein’s remarks dissolve these urges? Still further, Read makes no real effort to clarify what he means by ethics, politics or even liberation, nor what the relationships of these concepts are, nor of the sense in which they are 2nd personal and the sense in which they are not. Ethics and liberation are sometimes said to be distinct (p. 109), to “bleed into each other”, to be “one and the same” and sometimes “partially identical” (pp. 310-315). To me this all seems like a mess. The central concepts and their relations are left unclarified at the same time as this “politico-ethico-liberatory reading” is claimed to constitute a new, and even radical, reading (p. 117, p. 317).

Read says that seeing-as in Wittgenstein’s sense “should” be “richly understood” and that it “should itself be seen as *already ethical*” (p. 310). I find this puzzling. Wittgenstein’s extended discussion of “seeing as” is undoubtedly focused on the way understanding enters seeing, but I cannot see how any “should” could enter the picture. Why *should* seeing-as be understood “richly”? *Should* one be able to see a picture of a duck as a rabbit as well? And *should* one hear a given sound as a ...? Someone might think that I am pressing the issue here, but Read explicitly says that “seeing as” is “already ethical”, even characterising this as an “ethical truism” (p. 310). Read then performs his conjuring trick by making it seem *as if* the only way of justifying these claims would be by way of typical, philosophical argument. And since Wittgenstein and Wittgensteinians have found that philosophical arguing is confused, Read obviously thinks that it would consequently be confused to justify his claims. He probably does not even think that he makes any claims here but, perhaps, rather grammatical remarks, “truisms”. (Read does not seem to recognise how much he despite everything he says, is, when it suites him, arguing. Not very good arguing, though). Read conveniently escapes the need to clarify the meaning of his claims. Inconveniently however, his claims

remain for this reason completely empty. More importantly however, justification and argument are just two concepts that we use when we try to make our thoughts intelligible to one another. Apart from the obsession of philosophers with argumentation, we need all the resources of language. What is at stake in Wittgenstein's philosophy is not formal argument but trying to make oneself understood to the other, by whatever means including argument. This is what Read has given up.

I find Read's quantifications of different perspectives perplexing. What does it mean to say that pain is "primarily 2nd personal and secondarily 1st personal" (p. 312)? And how is it with pain when it has "little or nothing to do with the 2nd person" (p. 311)? As I see it, talk about the 2nd person has sense only as a way of dissolving the subject-object dichotomy – dissolving philosophy. It is not a Something that can be partly such and partly such. Apart from this philosophical issue, when I attend to your pain, it is – of course! – your pain that I attend to. What *I feel sorry for* is *your pain*. There are no "parts" or perspectives here.

Read speaks about individuality in a very confusing way. He speaks about it as if it would be quite clear what it is that we are talking about: there is no philosophical problem concerning its meaning, it is only that the existence of individual persons "can be a *problem* as well as a good thing", it can "reflect *badly* on society" that "individual persons exist as much as they do..." (p. 316). As "*much*"? "It" can be a problem! "It" can reflect badly! And yet "it" is merely an illusion and a fantasy! Read says: "I do not accept the model of the primacy of 'the individual' which liberal individualism generally presupposes." (p. 98). Here, Read is moving completely on a politically moralising ground, giving us recommendations about how much and in what regards a certain, political individualism is and is not "good", etc. These are not remarks that can illuminate anything.

On top of that, Read also misconceives the role that philosophy has in Wittgenstein's thinking. Read seems to think that once we manage to free ourselves from the enslaving and warmongering individualism that "keeps us apart from another" (p. 308), we will become "marvellously" and even "paradisiacally" open to each other. This all is supposed to depend on the way one construes the language of "object" and "designation" (p. 301)! This is certainly not the way Wittgenstein saw it. "Philosophy" is in Wittgenstein's view, I take it, an escape from the real, moral, problems. Freeing yourself from the chimera of "philosophy" does not solve these moral problems but places you in front of them the way they are – in their "terrible difficulty". Whether and how far Wittgenstein thought so, the sense of moral problems are partly ignored and partly distorted by (both ordinary and academic) philosophical thinking. But this does not mean that you can as it were bypass the moral problems, and fix the moral problems only by "dissolving" philosophical doctrines. You must also dare to see moral problems the way they are. If, on the other hand you dare to see moral problems as they are – that is: as no *problems* at all – you will also dissolve philosophical problems – and see that they are no *problems* at all. What emerges in *that* dissolution are "problems" of conscience. And here it is important to describe both the content and the repressive function of the accounts that one was tempted to indulge in. Such as the lure of groupishness.

Moreover, Read often without explanation just claims that this or that point by Wittgenstein shows that Wittgenstein spoke for the kind of collectivity that Read does; a view where collectivity figures as a label for the goodness of all shared things. As "evidence" for his view Read points to all the places where Wittgenstein, in *Philosophical Investigations*, refers to common practices, rules, and forms of life, without considering at all what kind of philosophical hang-up Wittgenstein is in each case trying to dissolve. Read's postmodern tendencies create similar problems. For instance, Read's claims about the meaning of §217 (about the "bedrock" and the end of justifications) go badly wrong. He thinks that what Wittgenstein says here is "no more than a transitional move in a dialectic" because "we are not in the possession of *truths*" (p. 292). So, because there are no metaphysical grounds for truth, there are no truths! But that is the typical philosophical outlook that Wittgenstein aimed to *dissolve*. What he means is, I think, something else with §217, something illuminated by §485: "Justification by experience comes to an end. If it did not, it would not be justification". The issue in these cases is not about the metaphysical notion of truth but about what is meant by "justification".

Read seems in general to think that any kind of surveyability, overview, account, system, rigour, etc., is reprehensible because he assumes that it, necessarily, involves putting up a philosophical thesis that grounds “surveyability”, “overview”, etc., and that it therefore amounts to having a world-view (p. 177). He does not seem to understand that uncovering repressed forms of thinking – philosophical thinking – presupposes these and other similar concepts. Lack of overview is according to Wittgenstein a “main source of our failure to understand [...]” (2009, §122). In short: you badly need a systematic overview over the philosophical systems that you, often unwittingly (and as a consequence of collective indoctrination), created for yourself. This indispensable, anti-philosophical, Wittgensteinian tool is actively rejected by Read. He even talks about the “tyranny of the ideal of clarity”! (p. 195) Read’s message seems to be, “Don’t become too clear about your philosophical self-deceptions...” and he does practice what he preaches.

Apart from not addressing the abundant and different forms of philosophical criticism of collectivity, Read also ignores commonly known forms of problems with group-think. In Finnish there is this saying that “in the herd, stupidity thickens”. Everyone knows also, how in work in groups, bullies and narcissists often manage to take over the power – and they can act in “all kindness”. One strategy of bullies is to create the impression that what the bully says represents “our” view. If someone expresses a deviant view, the bully tries, for instance by throwing significant glances on the others, to make it seem as if these views go against “our” view. There is a whole swarm of different power tools in order to create a group-feeling and to take over the control of a group – a through and through (im)moral event. Despite their own temptation to group-think, people are usually acutely aware of the power-laden aggression that, mostly stealthily, brews in a group. For instance, many persons feel terrified by even having to say only their name in front of a group – not to talk about the nervousness that most performing artists feel. Read appears completely ignorant of all this. And to respond to such things, as Read might, by saying that there is no reason to be afraid of groups; that groups are wonderful, would be to just ignore the issue.

Still another issue that Read would have to address is the morality of clan-cultures. Here, the individual’s “responsibility” is spread out into the collective. You screw up, and uncles so and so pay you a visit and say with a serious voice that you’d better not do it again. And then we have all those, truly sinister, habits with honour. How do collective moralities like these, relate to Read’s view of “community”? There is no discussion of that. Given that Read’s thesis is based on the idea of liberatory power of community, this lack is a serious one.

Still more, Read’s declared emphasis on ethics and the 2nd-person perspective remains empty because he does not show in what sense Wittgenstein’s remarks can be understood against an ethical background. There is no account of any ethical background at all. Is the ethical background Read is hypothesising leaning in a Kantian (like in the *Tractatus* it did), utilitarian or virtue-ethical direction? Or none? Or second-personal? But then this second-personal background would have to be outlined in a way which makes it clear why Wittgenstein’s philosophy is closer to this rather than other ethical views – and also explain why in question is perhaps not a view at all – at least in the usual sense of the word. When 2nd personal ethics is said to be “very different” from traditional ethics (p. 318), some account of this difference, that also harbours Read’s claims of novelty, would have been in place.

Read’s tendency to twist the meaning of words and use these twisted meanings to support his account at the same time as he says that what he says is no account at all, is striking. All the while collectivity is emphasised throughout the book, his account of it is presented as some kind of fact, which one cannot “really” question but which is even “too basic to be said” (p. 316). Still, Cavell, Baker and myself are criticised for not having understood the full significance of “it”. Read also says that we, human beings, often fail to form community (p. 344) and, as we have seen, that individualism can masquerade as a community view. How is all this possible, given that we are dealing with a thing so fundamental that it cannot even be said? Read even specifies that his no-account account says nothing, “has no *content*”, beyond what can emerge in a “dialogical/conversational investigation”; he cannot “impose” content on the other (pp. 116-117). How should one understand the notion of a community view that has no content and is no account of anything? As to imposing content, Read tries from the beginning to the end to impose his view of

collectivity on the reader. For what he says about collectivity would not be, and has not been, said by me in any conversation with Read.

The chapter (section 10.8) that is supposed to show in what sense there is a substantial ethics in *Philosophical Investigations* does nothing of the sort. It merely points to earlier chapters and then goes on simply stating that “Wittgenstein situates us in our radical inter-involvedness. And that relates us *internally*” (p. 318). Then Read goes on saying that “[o]nce we see this” his coupling of ethics and liberation does not appear paradoxical. This was what the chapter in question was supposed to *show*, but instead Read merely states these things! Then, Read says “decency” “must be freely embraced”, “can’t be forced”, though it cannot be, on pain of contradiction, “individualistical”. And so (p. 318): “And *that* thought reinforces the thought that we ought to conceive of philosophy itself as in the first instance a collective *and* fundamentally 2nd-person enterprise”. That is: when Read sets himself to show what his supposedly new interpretation of a substantial ethics in *Philosophical Investigations* is all about, he just puts forth a bunch of claims and then points to chapter 3, where he claims he has explained this. But in chapter 3, based on a remark of Wittgenstein that in my view is not helpful, he performs a conjuring trick in order to escape having to explain what he means. He makes it appear as if an explanation of what he means would have to be a merely definitory stipulation (p. 116) “from a stance of objective independence and would-be superiority” (p. 117). (Read appears to be really worried about the possibility that someone could have something to teach him). Read seems to confuse the concept of “having a philosophical thesis” with the concept of explaining with words what one means. (A confusion analogical to his confusion concerning surveyability). He seems to think that any coherent account of the way one thinks involves policing from a superior position. But this is nonsense. The point with I-you understanding is not that one can have nothing of philosophical importance to say to anyone. The point is that what one says is directed to the other. What one says does not start from some “irrefutable” ground in order to build up a system of logically related, deductively true, claims. Rather, one says how one thinks and why one thinks this way – and the reader is here no holy redeemer of what one says. The reader could make a mess of it. That there is no sense in the notion of an objective, timeless system of philosophy, does not imply that what an “I” thinks “must” be provisional, fleeting, relative, etc. *Metaphysical misconceptions do not determine what I “can” say to you*. Read, however, seems to think that Wittgenstein’s philosophy frees him, Read, from explaining what he means. So Read just goes on stating things, while he at the same time says he has nothing to say. He polices away the polices while at the same time telling us what The Wittgensteinian’s task is (p. 129., p. 301).

The aim of chapter 3, which was supposed to explain the claim that there is a substantive ethics in *Philosophical Investigations*, seems rather to be to free Read from giving any explanation. Is what Read says about *Philosophical Investigations* and ethics not a claim? Is it some kind of grammatical fact? Whatever the case, Read gives no account of it. Yet, he says without further ado that his empty claims constitute a “radical development in the history of philosophy” (p. 117).

So, returning to chapter 10.8, we still have no idea how Read justifies his claims – and his claims that they are not claims. The paragraph where chapter 3 is referred to ends with an obscure claim of novelty where the newness of Read’s interpretation is supposed to show that Wittgenstein’s ethical “re-empowering” is no longer an “elite matter” but something for all of us (p. 317). Was “it” earlier “ethical re-empowering” – even if only for the elite? And is “it”, “now” for all of us? Is “power” the word for it? I would say that we here witness a politician’s populism.

One wonders why Read says that decency cannot be forced. But then one also wonders what it means to say “language necessarily involves us in common with each other” (p. 314). Is it *language* that does something here? (Compare “wrestling necessarily involves...”). Read seems to think that, for he says, referring to §253 in the *Philosophical Investigations*, that language “opens the door back to our sharing our pain, our grief, our determination” (p. 315) (This sounds like Heidegger). *Language* enables us to share (“again”?) what we otherwise could not! How did we manage as much as *exist* in a world at all, since philosophical scepticism prevented (if that is the tense) the existence of the external world as such? – We here see another side of the confusion that showed itself in connection to the “stability” of Kripke’s argument. Still further, Read often

seems to think that any actual relationship is inescapably moral in a good sense: “Liberation for ourselves will not come without others being thus liberated” (p. 314). “Will not”? Ethically speaking, you cannot want to be free without wanting the other to be free too. But this insight has its source in moral (that is: loving) understanding. In actuality however, the other might not want to be free. This does not in any sense prevent me from becoming free.

From a second-personal perspective, the whole focus on what is important in *Philosophical Investigations* is different from the focus that goes with a typical, philosophical outlook. In the latter case the interest lies in the first half of the *Philosophical Investigations*, particularly with the abstract, philosophical remarks in §§88-134; the remarks on rule-following, the remarks on private language, language-game, and the questions of foundations (“bedrock”). These are also the issues that Read focuses on. Read even claims that the private language remarks in §§243-315 form “what is often (and reasonably) considered the apex of the book” (p. 297). He declares that reflecting on these remarks also constitutes the background to the apex of his own book (p. 297). Nothing new here, to be sure. And of course the motive for it is to prove his thesis on collectivity.

It is often extremely hard, often too hard, for a person to admit even to herself certain troubles of conscience. Suppose I were a politician and that I managed to further my aims by slandering an opponent. Suppose this gives me a distant, anguish. No one can even in principle help me unless I admit my ruthlessness to myself. Now, *if* I would dare to admit to myself that “perhaps something went wrong there”, how according to Read, could the community help me? Which community? My political friends? Or my opponents? Other friends? What should they say? *How* honestly have I revealed my worries to them? Or to myself? – A loving person could, if I would listen to her, play a role here but I have no idea how a “community” could be of any help. Rather the contrary. And then a loving person’s appeal to my conscience might be the last thing I want to hear.

It is the indistinctness of individuality and collectivity that creates the impression that a collectivity is something more than a sum of persons. The conscience related anguish of the individual person is projected onto collectivity and becomes the aggression laden, sinister, euphoria of collectivity. In this euphoria one thinks that one “feels” the “we”; one’s sinister feeling as it were echoes into the we, and acquires thereby a legitimate appearance. This is why a discord within the we can hurt so much. The we *must* be an echo of and for *me*. We must be all *similar* – to *me*.

In the End

From the I-you perspective (the way I see it), the first half of *Philosophical Investigations* is a preparation for what is to come. In this preparation, Wittgenstein portrays certain fundamental problems in philosophy. He points out some general problems with philosophy (how it ignores our real needs). Then he shows how our philosophical demands do not even work the way we would want (the beetle in the box would have no function). After that, he demystifies our ideas about thinking and consciousness, and shows how the meaning of our words come alive in connection to living beings (the wriggling fly) and human beings (instead of automatons). In the later remarks and in the second part, which have a more perceptible I-you character, Wittgenstein discusses lots of different cases where philosophical puzzles are dissolved by exemplifying how one person might conceivably talk to another person, for instance noting how words can be hard to utter (§546), how understanding another person includes the ability to fill in her interrupted utterances (§637), how feelings can give words meaning (§545), how speaking to another person can be about wanting to reveal oneself to another person (§659), how calling another person to mind does not consist in any processes taking place in one’s mind (§691), etc.

An expression of love, the “source” of all ethics, is something that is *entirely free*. This means that an expression of love expresses nothing else but your understanding of the person to whom it is addressed. *Your*

. *Understanding*. It also means that there is no Something with an eye to which you act. No one has told you or persuaded you to do what you do, and there is no motive for it, no matter how good. Only you – and I – can be open. And you can be open only to another human being. There can be no “ethical demand” here, contrary to what Read, with a nod towards Løgstrup, claims (p. 324). “Demand”, that collective notion, enters the picture only to the extent that love and openness do *not* prevail. It as it were states, without wanting to understand its own motivation, that whether or not you are willing to love someone, that person can still, according to *our* norms, morally speaking expect you to respect her in such and such ways.

Love is something else. Wittgenstein had some insight into this. He says, and I ignore the egg-shells (2001, p. 42): “If you already have a person’s love no sacrifice can be too much to give for it; but any sacrifice is too great to buy it for you”. There is a kind of method in Wittgenstein’s working process which is very sound and which keeps his philosophy on the tracks (2001, p. 77): “Nearly all my writings are private conversations with myself. Things that I say to myself tête-à- tête.”. Only, the translator, Peter Winch, has missed the fact that *Selbgspräche mit mir selbst* does not translate to “private”. At stake are not thoughts that are “not meant to be known by the general populace” (Merriam-Webster) – after all these thoughts are published – but thoughts that can be properly understood only by placing oneself into in the same perspective as Wittgenstein did.

Read says he does not have an account; that it is only in a discussion that words acquire their meaning. Yes. These then are my words. And they arise from my failure to capture the meaning that professor Read proposes to give his words.

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Notes:

[1] Read, Rupert (2021). *Wittgenstein's Liberatory Philosophy – Thinking Through His Philosophical Investigations*. Routledge.

[2] Marx's critique of capitalism is without doubt pertinent, but his ideas of historical materialism and communism are thoroughly flawed particularly because, as opposed to Hegel, he did not seem to understand the importance of ethical issues at all. How Read can appreciate a view so hostile to all ethics is a riddle to me – or then again not.

[3] However, I am perplexed by some of Wittgenstein's remarks concerning rules. In §202 he says that "it's not possible to follow a rule 'privately'; otherwise, thinking one was following a rule would be the same thing as following it". But was not the issue whether a single, isolated subject *could have* a concept of rule at all? And if one *thinks* that one follows a rule, then one obviously has the concept of it. If one's acting does not *comply* with the rule at stake, then one is mistaken about the meaning of the rule – which is irrelevant to the problem under discussion.

[4] Even if Hertzberg says that it is not the job of philosophers to establish meaning and truth, he still goes on claiming that collectivity creates a space where there can be agreement and disagreement "because there can be confrontation of reactions." (Hertzberg, 1994, pp. 24-25) So "disagreement" grounds meaning! But Hertzberg seems for some reason to think that only views that aim at settling disagreements, at determining meaning, count as attempting to give a philosophical account of the grounds of meaning.

[5] However, philosophers and scientists do have a tendency to make outrageous claims ("Reality does not exist!"). Such madness in a person is generated in the individualist-collectivist space of madness. The solitary subject puts forth a mad claim which reverberates more or less in the collective. Vladimir Putin's version is: "There is no war in Ukraine!" One does not want to question one's claim; one rather questions reality! Collectivity consists of infinitely many discourses of madness. If madness is absent somewhere, it is where an I talks to a you in the openness of love. In this openness it is unthinkable to fall into believing the mad claims circulating in collectivity.

[6] There is a chapter (number 9) that seems to be intended to justify Read's habit of throwing around entirely abstract labels and generalising statements. In this chapter Read's intention is to "resist" the "danger" that the terms Wittgenstein uses are taken to be technical terms in a new philosophical jargon (pp. 281-82). The chapter does not make anything clearer, but it becomes clear that Read thinks that the centrality of community is of a kind "too basic for it to make sense" to have any alternative (p. 283) or even "too basic to be said" (p. 316). I will address this astonishing claim later. Before that, I will continue with the Kripke case (which by the way figures prominently also in chapter 9).

[7] Stephen Turner shows in his *Explaining the Normative* (2010) how social explanations of norms have an inherent tendency to transcendentalise sociality by transcendentalising normativity and the logic of language. On the last pages he comes with the claim that "[e]mpathy, in the sense of following the thought of another, explains what is necessary to explain" (p. 204). Turner clearly notices something, but he does not see that what we have here is not just an empirical fact. – Aside from Turner, Read ignores the whole question of collectivity the way it has been accounted for and/or criticised by Kierkegaard, Nietzsche (who notes how a man in collectivity is "able" to do a "host of [terrible] things that the individual would never countenance" Nietzsche, 1968, §717), Gustave le Bon, Freud, Jung, Rollo May, Erich Fromm, Emil Durkheim, Max Weber, Norbert Elias, Martin Heidegger, Jacques Lacan and Jonathan Haidt, just to mention a few that come to mind. Read ignores criticism and fails to ask himself whether there might be positive accounts of collectivity that are of a kind that he would not *want* to endorse. Take Heidegger's account. (See Heidegger 1996 and 2009.) It is a criticism of Cartesian subject with its *isolation from the world* and from *others*. We live according to Heidegger in a world of significance with one another. We also live in a superficial sociality (*das Man*), translated as the "One", or the "They" (why not speak about "us" one might wonder). This superficial collectivity becomes a *genuine* "we", which in Heidegger's case means "sharing the destiny of a *Volk*", only through a conscientious, *personal*, affirmation of responsibility and *common* guilt (now we have "we"). Is it this kind of view, with its somewhat troubling implications, that Read is speaking for?

Bio:

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