

In Memoriam – Saul Kripke (1940 – 2022)

While preparing to write my master's thesis on the issue of privacy in the *Philosophical Investigations*, I came across a plethora of books on the subject and was very pleased that my supervisor directed me to such a rich topic. Among the literature, one book stood out as different from many others regarding its approach. It was *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language: An Elementary Exposition*. Its author, Saul Kripke, was vaguely familiar to me, mostly because of his contributions to modal logic (though I failed to fully understand both modal logic and his contributions to it at the time). The book made a lasting impact on me, but I was not certain what he said about the issue was quite correct. This was especially the case because I found so many works disproving his views on the matter. Consequently, I decided to label his interpretation as something different from the usual interpretation. I took a break from that topic for some time, and in the meantime learned a lot more about Kripke, the different construals of the privacy issue in *Philosophical Investigations*, and Wittgenstein in general. However, a vague idea that Kripke was right and that rule-following should be, without a doubt, interpreted in a communitarian manner never quite left me, and it was emphasized even more through discussions with various colleagues and through reading subsequent literature. One pivotal point here is definitely Martin Kusch's great book, *A Sceptical Guide to Meaning and Rules: Defending Kripke's Wittgenstein*.

Putting aside the question of whether Kripke's interpretation is correct on its own (and to be clear, I think it is), here I want to stress the value of the book as an interpretation of Wittgenstein. Kripke does not try to analyze *PI* paragraph by paragraph. He instead offers us an interpretation of the book as a whole and his interpretation is truly fascinating. Even authors that strongly disagree with Kripke claim that his book is a worthwhile project. Paul Horwich says that he greatly admires "what Kripke aims to do, and succeeds in doing - which is to devise a line of thought that is inspired by Wittgenstein's writings and that, whether Wittgenstein's or not, and whether correct or not, deserves our attention" (Horwich, 2016: 96) and Mary McGinn (forthcoming) also admits that Kripke discovers an important strand in *PI* (namely naturalism) though he construes it in a wrong manner.

It would be far from true to say that this is the only engaging and important contribution of Kripke's, as he became famous as a teenager with his paper "A Completeness Theorem in Modal Logic" (1959). He continued to develop a semantic framework for modal logic in "Semantical Analysis of Modal Logic" (1963) and (1965) and later developed a full-fledged modal ontology in *Naming and Necessity* (1980). Other notable achievements most certainly include his ideas of a posteriori necessity and the causal-historic view of meaning and reference. Just like his construal of Wittgenstein's argument concerning privacy is controversial, these ideas are also certainly controversial, but they are most certainly well thought out.

Finally, a bit about the reason why I decided to write this short in memoriam. Although I unfortunately never had the honor to meet professor Kripke, I was most certainly very much influenced by his ideas and his ways of presenting them. Although I would not agree with him on many issues, as our aims and motivations were and are certainly different, his ideas will have a lasting influence on the way I see philosophy, an influence that is maybe only comparable with Wittgenstein and Davidson. It is much harder to construct a novel interpretation than to work on the fine points of an already worked-out theory, and this is most certainly an idea that can be inherited from Kripke, that choosing to walk on untrodden ground is bound to yield rich results.

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