

Wittgenstein and Brandom on Normativity and Sociality

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§ 1. Introduction

TO GRASP THE MEANING OF A WORD is to be able to use it in accordance with its meaning, that is, correctly, though it is also possible for one to misuse it. And in the case of at least some words, using the word correctly means using it in a (true) description of how things are —however I, or we, or anyone, takes things to be. One’s usage in such cases is answerable to what is objectively the case. And this, according to both Wittgenstein and Brandom, is unintelligible for an individual conceived independently of all others because in that case there can be no standard of correctness that is independent of what the individual takes to be correct. The account must be social. But in what way? Brandom argues that only what he calls I–Thou sociality can adequately account for the normativity of objective judgment and that I–We sociality is fatally flawed. But Brandom’s conception of I–We sociality is not the only conception available to us. Nor, we will see, does it seem to be Wittgenstein’s. And this matters because, we will see, Brandom’s conception of I–Thou sociality faces apparently insurmountable hurdles. Wittgenstein’s conception of I–We sociality is more promising. Wittgenstein and Brandom are right to focus on sociality to ground normativity, but in the final analysis, I will suggest, it is Wittgenstein’s I–We sociality, as contrasted both with Brandom’s I–Thou sociality and with Brandom’s understanding of I–We sociality, that can provide the basis for an adequate account of the normativity and objectivity of judgment.¹

¹ And it can be only a suggestion. Properly to defend the claim that the conception of I–We sociality to be developed here is both Wittgenstein’s and a conception that can do the work that is needed would require much more development and defence than is possible here. For a different take on Brandom’s I–Thou sociality as it contrasts with McDowell’s more Wittgensteinian conception of I–We sociality see

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§ 2. Brandom's I–Thou account of discursivity

As Brandom understands it, the task of an account of discursivity is to make explicit what one would have to be able to do in order to count as, for instance, judging that things are thus and so. It is to elaborate

the structure that communities of extraterrestrials or of digital computers, however unlike us they are in other respects, must exhibit if they are to qualify as potential interlocutors —as sapient knowers and agents, endorsers of claims and aims, makers and takers of reasons, seekers and speakers of truths. (Brandom 2010, p. 34)

At the core of this structure are six consequential relations among commitments and entitlements. These relations, as Brandom aims to show in *Making It Explicit* (1994), “are *sufficient* for a practice exhibiting them to qualify as *discursive*, that is, as a practice of giving and asking for *reasons*, hence as conferring *inferentially* articulated, and so genuinely *conceptual* content on the expressions, performances, and statuses that have the right kind of scorekeeping significance in those practices” (Brandom 2010, p. 33). Three of the six consequential relations are semantic: consequential commitment, consequential (*prima facie*) entitlement, and incompatibility entailment. Three are social pragmatic: language entries through observations, language exits in intentional action, and testimony with its characteristic structure of authority and responsibility. Together they articulate an essentially social I–Thou practice of scorekeeping that Brandom claims is sufficient for understanding what practitioners do in judging that things are thus and so.

The starting point of Brandom's project is Kant's distinction between behaviour in accordance with a rule and action according to one's conception of a rule, between causally determined behaviour such as that of the planets around the sun, and rationally necessitated action, as when one continues a mathematical series. Because even a chunk of iron rusting in the rain can be regarded as classifying its environment (as wet) in so rusting, the problem for Brandom is to specify “what else an organism must be able to do, what else must be true of it, for performances that it is differentially disposed to produce responsively to count as applications of concepts to the stimuli that evoke those responses” (Brandom 1994, p. 87). Given the Kantian starting point, a natural response is to say that such an organism must be able to *follow* the rule, act in accordance with a conception or understanding of the rule. But

Barber (2011) and Satne (2015).

this will not do, Brandom argues, because rules do not apply themselves; rules must be interpreted, applied. And this, he thinks, is just Wittgenstein's point: on pain of an infinite regress of rules for interpreting rules, we need, in addition to appealing to rules explicit in one's application of them, to consider also norms implicit in practice.

Norms explicit as rules presuppose norms implicit in practice because a rule specifying how something is correctly done (how a word ought to be used, how a piano ought to be tuned) must be applied to particular circumstances, and applying a rule in particular circumstances is itself essentially something that can be done correctly or incorrectly. A rule, principle, or command has normative significance for performance, only in the context of practices determining how it is correctly applied. (Brandom 1994, p. 20)

Because action according to a conception of a rule presupposes, Brandom thinks, both one's understanding of the rule and one's awareness of the circumstances in which the rule is to be applied, we need to recognize also action that is implicitly undertaken in accordance with a rule. It cannot be explicit rules all the way down because that presupposes rather than explains one's understanding of the rule. And it cannot be reliable differential responsive dispositions all the way up because although such dispositions can explain the responses we in fact have to things, they cannot provide a norm or standard of the correctness of those responses. As Brandom puts the point,

if anything is to be made of the Kantian insight that there is a fundamental normative dimension to the application of concepts (and hence to the significance of discursive or propositionally contentful intentional states and performances), an account is needed of what it is for norms to be implicit in practices. Such practices must be construed both as not having to involve explicit rules and as distinct from mere regularities. (Brandom 1994, p. 29)

The account must start with norms implicit in practice that do not involve conceptual content or any notion of truth and build up to properly discursive practices, judgment, and truth.

The task is to understand rule following, action according to a conception of a norm or rule. Because rules do not apply themselves, because they are in themselves mere noises or marks, thus normatively inert, they must be interpreted. And if the interpretation is conceived on the same model, as a case of action according to a conception of a rule, a vicious regress begins. So, Brandom argues, we need to turn instead to norms that are implicit in practice. And because behaviour in accordance with such norms must be distinguished from mere habits of response, things that one is merely disposed to do (what Brandom calls regularism), we need a social theory,

one in which there is a difference in principle between the actual performance and what it is correct to do in the circumstances. Otherwise, as Wittgenstein says in his discussion of the idea of a private language, “whatever is going to seem right to me is right. And that only means that here we cannot talk about right” (Wittgenstein *PI* § 258). But Brandom notes, sociality can take either of two forms, I–Thou sociality and I–We sociality. Only the former, he thinks, can do the work that is needed.

As Brandom understands it, an I–We account takes it that the distinction that is needed to ground the normativity of performances of practices is between the individual community member and the community as a whole: one goes wrong if one does not do as we do.

On this approach, the key to the importance of the social is taken to lie in the possibility that the performances individual community members produce are assessed, responded to, or treated in practice as appropriate or inappropriate by the community to which the individual belongs” (Brandom 1994, p. 37).

Brandom has two objections to such an I–We account. First, there is in fact no such thing as a communal performance, assessment, or verdict (Brandom 1994, p. 38); only individuals are capable of such acts. Nor can one begin with individual acts of assessment and build up to a notion of communal assessment without begging the question of whose acts are to count, whose acts are to have the normative significance of exhibiting how we do things. The second is that “the approach smuggles normative notions illicitly into what purports to be a reductive, non-normative regularity theory” (Brandom 1994, p. 38). The fact that some or even all members of a group perform and respond to performances in certain ways cannot by itself fund a notion of what it is *correct* to do—even according to us. How is it that one comes to be *bound* by this or that norm such that one can be described or assessed as performing correctly or incorrectly?

This second objection raises a further, quite general concern for Brandom: given that there are no norms in nature, how are we to explain the very existence of norms to which we are bound such that our behaviour is assessable in light of those norms? Brandom’s answer is that norms are “products of human activity”, of our “*attitudes* of taking, treating, or responding to someone in practice as committed or entitled” (Brandom 1994, p. xiv). “Authority is not found in nature. The laws of nature do not bind us by obligation, but only by compulsion. The attribution of authority is human work; we bind ourselves with norms” (Brandom 1994, p. 51). Indeed, Brandom claims, “our dignity as rational beings consists precisely in being bound only by rules we endorse, rules we have freely chosen . . . to bind ourselves with . . . If something

other than our own attitudes and activity could bind us, we would not be free. Autonomy consists, as the etymology demands, in setting up laws for ourselves” (Brandom 1994, p. 50). And because these norms are grounded in practices of assessment regarding one’s own and others commitments and entitlements —as such practices contrast with explicit rule following of the sort that requires an understanding of how the rule is to be applied— they can, Brandom claims, fund an adequate account not only of our capacity to act according to our conception of a rule, that is, to follow a rule, but also of discursivity, our capacity to judge in ways that are assessable in principle as objectively true or false. On Brandom’s account, “the distinction between claims or applications of concepts that are objectively correct and those that are merely taken to be correct is a structural feature of each scorekeeping perspective” (Brandom 1994, p. 595). As Brandom shows in Chapter 8 (Part VI Section 5) of *Making It Explicit*, its being true that p does not, on his I–Thou conception of sociality, collapse into communal commitment that p —something that is, he claims, inevitable on I–We construals of sociality.

§ 3. Problems for Brandom’s account

Brandom holds that his account of discursive practice, though perhaps not necessary, is sufficient for such a practice to count as a practice of properly rational beings engaged in the pursuit of objective truth. There are, however, a number of problems, three of which are relevant to our concerns here.

The first two problems arise in relation to Brandom’s starting point, normative attitudes. Because on Brandom’s account norms are no part of the natural world, the question of their origin is inevitable. Brandom’s answer, we have seen, is that ultimately norms are “products of our attitudes”, of our taking ourselves and others to be committed and entitled in various ways (Brandom 1994, p xiv). This is very puzzling. There are no norms in nature and yet we, somehow, are capable in our practice of normatively significant acts. Such attitudes have no naturalistic explanation; they are the unexplained, and inexplicable, explainers of Brandom’s account of normativity. We are thus left with a dualism of norms and nature, reasons and causes, that is deeply problematic in ineliminably supposing something non–natural, something radically opposed to nature, so much as to begin. As we will soon see, it is furthermore not clear that such attitudes, supposing there are any, can do the work required of them.

We have seen that for Brandom, “autonomy consists . . . in setting up laws for ourselves” (1994, p. 50). At least in the first instance, we are bound only by those norms we acknowledge. Rödl argues that this is incoherent.

If an act under a law contains an acknowledgement of this law, then the authority of the law does not derive from this acknowledgement. For, the acknowledgement, being contained in acts falling under the law, is subject to the law it acknowledges. But what is under a law is not its source. Conversely, if the authority of a law derives from its acknowledgement, then the acknowledgement is not internal to the acts that are governed by the law. Hence such acts are not performed according to a representation of this law (Rödl 2007, p. 116).

In the ordinary course of things, to acknowledge a law, or rule or norm, even if only implicitly in one's following it, is to recognize that it is binding, in which case its bindingness is independent of one's acknowledgement. But if it is one's acknowledgement, more exactly, one's taking or treating the law to be binding, that is the source of its bindingness, then the taking or treating is not so bound. The act of taking or treating cannot, as things have now been set up, be either correct or incorrect; it has no normative significance at all. If the source of the authority of the law is my recognition of it, if the law is instituted as law by my attitude, what I do cannot be bound by it. The idea that one acts according to a conception of a rule is incompatible with the idea that the rule is binding on one's acts only in virtue of one's attitudes.

Our first two concerns were addressed to Brandom's starting point, the idea that norms are grounded in attitudes. The last focuses on Brandom's end point, the claim that his account yields a notion of objective truth. As Brandom himself notes, his "objectivity proofs" in Chapter 8 "demonstrate only that a fairly weak necessary condition on a conception of objectivity has been satisfied —that the contents of ordinary claims . . . are not equivalent to those of any claims about who is committed to what" (Brandom 1994, p. 606). And yet he claims to have shown in the work overall how "objective conceptual norms can be made intelligible in terms of social-deontic scorekeeping practices governing attitudes of taking or treating oneself and others as having inferentially articulated commitments and entitlements" (Brandom 1994, p. 607). Objective correctness is, by Brandom's own lights, "a kind of correctness that answers to how things actually are, rather than how they are *taken* to be, by anyone (including oneself) or everyone" (Brandom 1994, p. 607). Unfortunately, as Haugeland (among others) has noted, Brandom's objectivity proofs "don't begin to show how '*p*' could 'answer to how things actually are' —which is just to say that they don't show how any of the moves could be *claim*-makings or *fact*-statings". (Haugeland 1998, p. 358, n.14). Judgment, as Brandom understands it, is not answerable to how things are. Nor could it be given that for him reasons and

causes belong to two wholly different and disjoint realms. Because nature, on his account, is merely causally efficacious, normatively inert, nature cannot rationally constrain the judgments we make about it. But if so then, as Haugeland notes, there is no reason to call them judgments at all.

Brandom argues, first, that I–Thou sociality can explain the normativity characteristic of judgments of objective truth and also that the constellation of undertakings and ascriptions of commitments and entitlements he describes in *Making It Explicit* is sufficient to provide such an explanation. What we have just seen is that this is far from clear. If there are no norms in nature, as Brandom thinks, if normativity is grounded instead in our attitudes, then, on the one hand, such attitudes must be seen as somehow, mysteriously, opposed to nature, and on the other, the idea that our judgments are answerable to how things are goes missing — to say nothing of the problem of understanding the bindingness of norms that are grounded in attitudes. We need another way.

§ 4. Forms of life

What is at issue is our capacity to follow rules where to follow a rule is, as Kant thinks of it, to act according to a conception, an understanding, of the rule. We have seen that for Brandom this idea cannot be self–standing because rules need to be applied. And because one’s application of the rule is itself correct or incorrect, one cannot, on pain of a vicious regress, understand the application as an instance of rule following in the same sense. Thus, Brandom thinks, norms explicit as rules presuppose norms that are implicit in practice. Brandom furthermore holds that this is precisely Wittgenstein’s point in his attempt to stop the regress of interpretations by appeal to practices. The only problem, Brandom thinks, is that Wittgenstein’s appeal to practices invokes I–We sociality rather than Brandom’s I–Thou sociality. In fact, as McDowell (2002, p. 111) argues, Brandom’s Wittgenstein is not Wittgenstein “but someone else — a philosopher... of Brandom’s own invention.” What we are in fact to learn from Wittgenstein’s regress argument is:

that it is disastrous to suppose that there is always a conceptual gap between an expression of a rule and performances that are up for assessment according to whether or not they conform to the rule, a gap that is made vivid by saying the rule stands there, on the construal I have suggested [that the rule “is normatively inert... a mere arrangement of matter”]. We must not acquiesce to the idea that an expression of a rule, considered in itself, does not sort behaviour into performances that follow the rule and performances that do not... If we let the gap open at all, it will be unbridgeable. (McDowell 2002, pp. 100–101)

As McDowell reads him, Wittgenstein's appeal to practices is not aimed at bridging a supposed gap between a rule and the performances that are to be assessed by appeal to it, but instead is to help us to see that there is no such gap at all. In other words, while it is indeed true *in a sense* that rules do not apply themselves, this does not show (as Brandom thinks) that they need to be interpreted or applied in a way that is subject to norms of assessment. Rather, to say that rules do not apply themselves is "a way of saying the idea of a rule telling someone what to do presupposes that the person can understand the rule, which requires familiarity with a practice" (McDowell 2002, p. 109). It is just as Wittgenstein says: "a person goes by a sign-post only insofar as there exists a regular use of sign-posts, a custom" (*PI* § 198). "Obeying a rule' is a practice." (*PI* § 202). The task before us is to begin, at least, to clarify what this might mean.²

As McDowell argues, Wittgenstein's regress argument aims to show that in at least some cases, bedrock cases, there is no gap between a rule and performances that are to be assessed by appeal to that rule, and also that understanding this requires reference to a practice. As Wittgenstein further indicates, the relevant notion of a practice —paradigmatically, the practice of speaking— is intimately connected to the notion of a form of life, a *Lebensform*.

To imagine a language is to imagine a form of life. (*PI* § 19)

The *speaking* of a language is part of an activity, or of a form of life. (*PI* § 12)

It is what human beings *say* that is true or false; and they agree in the *language* they use. This is not agreement in opinions but in form of life. (*PI* § 241)

What has to be accepted, the given, is —so one could say— *forms of life*. (*PI*, p. 226)

What exactly Wittgenstein means by a form of life is, unfortunately, not obvious. Nevertheless, it is quite natural to take him to mean that rule-following is an instance of a sort of activity manifest already in living beings generally, where to be alive is, constitutively, to be an instance of something more general, a form of life that applies also in other cases.³ We begin, then, with the notion of a form of life as it

² For further elaboration of McDowell's reading of Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* see his (1984), (1989), (1991), and (1993).

³ There is some textual support for such an "organic" account of the notion of a form of life. Wittgenstein says, for example, in *On Certainty* § 475, that he wants "to regard man here [in the course of his reflections on learning] as an animal; as a primitive being to which one grants instinct but not ratiocination. As a creature in a primitive state. Any logic good enough for a primitive means of

applies to living beings generally.

As Aristotle notes in *de Anima*, all living things nourish themselves, grow and develop in characteristic ways, and reproduce. But of course how they execute these functions varies enormously both between plants and animals generally and across different species. Within a species, the instances of that species nourish themselves, grow and develop, and reproduce in some one characteristic way. And this way is characteristic not in the sense of being most likely, a matter of what most instances of the kind do, but instead by providing a norm for those instances. The behaviour is pattern governed in Sellars' (1954) sense insofar as what one does exemplifies a pattern that is not only generally exemplified by things of that kind but also *explains* what one does —“*this* wiggle [in the bee's dance] occurred because of the complex dance to which it belongs” (Sellars 1954, p. 33)— *and* provides a standard by which to judge whether the individual performance is normal or in some way defective. Three aspects of the phenomenon of pattern-governed behaviour are relevant to our concerns here.

First, to say, for example, that the bee will wiggle in this or that particular way (in appropriate circumstances) is not to predict what it will do —and not only because the bee might in fact, for whatever reason, fail to wiggle as the dance pattern requires. It is not to predict what it will do because and insofar as what the bee actually does is properly described as correct or not in light of the pattern. But if so, then a point that Wittgenstein makes in *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics* in relation to the sort of rule following we exhibit in, for example, extending a series, applies already here: “It is not a prediction if the concept of *following* the rule is so determined, that the result is the criterion for whether the rule was followed” (*RFM*, VI § 15). If the bee does something different from what the pattern demands then the rule was not after all followed; and what that shows is that the original claim was not a prediction about what the bee would do but rather a norm governing what it is correct for the bee to do.

The second point is that there is a kind of narrative arc to the characteristic behaviours of living things, to the taking of nourishment, to an organism's growth and development (and eventual decay and death), and to its means of reproduction. One can ask, in such cases, ‘what happens next?’ —not if this or that other thing happens but, as Thompson (2008, p. 41) puts it, *san phrase*— a question that lacks

communication needs no apology from us. Language did not emerge from some kind of ratiocination.” See also *PI* § 25: “commanding, questioning, recounting, chatting, are as much a part of our natural history as walking, eating, drinking, playing”. For discussion of Wittgenstein's notion of a form of life see Hunter (1968), and Gier (1980).

any sense in the case of merely physical processes. There is a *characteristic* development in the life processes of instances of life forms, even if, as we will soon see, some or even most instances of the form fail so to develop.

The form of life of a living being provides a standard or norm of its development and behaviour, one that takes the form of a kind of a narrative. There is a temporally unfolding pattern to the life of such a being. The final point to be noted about such pattern-governed development and behaviour is that the relevant pattern can be statistically very unlikely; it is still the norm and characteristic of the kind. It is, for example, true that acorns grow into oaks despite the fact that most do not, and true that mayflies breed shortly before dying even though most in fact die before breeding.⁴ “A natural-historical judgment [such as that acorns grow into oaks or that mayflies breed shortly before dying] may be true though individuals falling under both the subject and predicate concepts are as rare as one likes, statistically speaking” (Thompson 2008, p. 68). The notion of a form of life is not, then, a generalization grounded in what is the case for all or most of the relevant individuals. As we will see, following Hegel, that living beings reproduce, each according to its kind, is not an empirical observation but a conceptual truth.

Living beings exhibit characteristic behaviours, characteristic activities of taking nourishment, of growth and development, and of reproduction. Insofar as they do, they seem as if designed. They and their parts have purposes just as the machines that we build do, but insofar as they are alive those purposes are not imposed from without, by a designer, but are instead internal. As Kant thinks of it, they are, or at least must be thought of as being, natural ends (or purposes), *Naturzweck*, where for something to be a natural end two constraints must be met. The first constraint, satisfied also by artifacts, is that “its parts (as far as their existence and their form is concerned) are possible only through their relation to the whole” (Kant 1790/2000, afterwards CJ, p. 244 – 245, 5:373). Just as a filter, say, or an on/off switch, is what it is only in relation to the whole machine in which it serves its function, so the parts of a natural end are what they are only in relation to the whole organism.⁵ As Aristotle remarks, “it is not a hand in any and every state that is a part of man, but only when

⁴ The first example is Ginsborg’s (2001, p. 273); the second is Thompson’s (2008, p. 68). It is worth pointing out that it is not accidental that both examples involve reproduction. If most living things of a certain species could not mostly recognize what is in fact nourishing for them or what is in fact harmful to them, the species would soon die out.

⁵ As we will see, Kant distinguishes between the notion of a living being, an organism, and that of a natural end, and he does so because he aims to show that we must think of a living being as a natural end even though we cannot know that it is such an end. Hegel will argue that we can so know it.

it can fulfill its work, and therefore only when it is alive; if it is not alive it is not a part” (1036b30–33). “A dead finger is a finger only in name” (1035b23–25). The second requirement, unique to natural ends, is “that its parts be combined into a whole by being reciprocally the cause and effect of their form” (Kant CJ p. 245, 5:373). A natural end, unlike an artifact, is “cause and effect of itself” (Kant CJ p. 243, 5:370).⁶

According to Kant, the notion of a natural end satisfying his two conditions is perfectly coherent; there is no contradiction in the idea of a purposiveness that is natural rather than designed. Nevertheless, he thinks, we finite beings cannot know that living beings are such natural ends. Hegel argues that we can know this because, as it is part of the concept of life, not only that the parts and whole of the organism are related as Kant describes, but also that one be capable of nourishing oneself, of taking sustenance from the environment for one’s preservation and growth, and that one seeks to reproduce oneself.⁷ Whereas Kant observes that living things have characteristic activities such as reproduction and growth, and argues on that basis that they must thereby be seen as natural ends, that is, as whole and part in a certain relation, Hegel (following Aristotle) takes those characteristic activities, both self-preservation through the taking of nourishment and reproduction, as constitutive moments in the very idea of life. Indeed, that it seeks to reproduce itself must be seen as the primary end of a living being according to Hegel (*LHP*, vol. 3, p. 185): “the end of the animal in itself as an individual is its own self-preservation; but its true end in itself is the species.” To be alive, for Hegel as for Aristotle, is (constitutively) to be an instance of something general, the species or form of life that is maintained in and through the reproduction of self-sustaining and reproducing individuals. A living being is in this way “mediated and generated” (Hegel *EL*, § 221). Such an account is a (primitive) instance of I–We sociality insofar as the instance, the particular, is intelligible only as an instance of something essentially general, the form of life that “mediates and generates” it.

According to Hegel, the concept of life involves, first, the distinctive relation of part and whole that is identified already by Kant as well as a certain relationship to the environment, namely, the capacity to assimilate what is other for sustenance and growth, and most importantly, the ability to reproduce another of its kind. The activities of such a being furthermore constitute a primitive form of rule following insofar as the kind, the form of life, is (1) essentially general, something that in

⁶ See Ginsborg (2001) and (2004) for discussion.

⁷ See Hegel *SL*, Vol. 2, Section 3, Chapter 1, and for discussion, Kreines (2008).

principle admits of an unlimited number of instances, (2) a norm or standard for instances, something relative to which they and their acts are assessable as normal or in some way defective, (3) a constitutive feature of any adequate understanding of the organism's parts and activities, and (4) explanatory of the organism's being and doings.⁸ Suppose, for example, it is asked why the wings of some particular bird have grown in the way they have. If the bird is an instance of a form of life the wings of which ought to have grown as they actually did then a good explanation would be that the bird is, say, an eagle, an instance of that form of life, and eagles need wings of that sort to hunt as they do. If instead the wings (although molecule for molecule identical with those in the first scenario) are deformed given the form of life of the bird, then the explanation must take a quite different form. In that case, the explanation will cite, for example, a genetic defect, or some trauma the bird has suffered. When things go as they ought, as scripted by the form of life of the organism, then it is the form that is explanatory. It is, in that case, the formal, efficient, and final cause of that which is to be explained —just as Aristotle says (415b9 – 28).

According to Hegel, certain collections of physical stuffs have the biological significance of being the body of some living thing through being the (viable) offspring of a living thing of some particular sort. The context provided by the self-reproducing species (which is, again, a primitive form of I–We sociality) is essential to making intelligible the idea of some bit of physical stuff as alive. But it is equally true that collections of other, inanimate physical stuffs in the environment of the organism can have the biological significance of being, say, nourishing. Consider, for example, water. Independent of the existence of any living beings, plants, say, water is just stuff. It has no significance; each bit of it is just what it is and not another thing. But insofar as there are plants that are nourished by water, water has the significance of being nourishing. Water now *means* something, is an instance of something general, in a way that it does not, is not, independent of there being living things for which it is nourishing. Of course, it is only relative to the particular form of life that it is intelligible that water nourishes. If the organism were an instance of a different life form, water could instead be poisonous to it, or simply have no significance at all. And, again, it is only relative to the form of life that it is intelligible that a given instance of the form is defective insofar as it cannot be nourished by water in the way that, given the form of life it is, it ought.

If Aristotle and Hegel are right, a living being is in its being an instance of a kind,

⁸ These are the first four features of normativity, rule following, that are listed in Haase (2011). See also Thompson (2004).

where the kind is in turn what it is because the instances are what they are. The individuals are, in other words, exemplary of the kind. The individual is assessed as normal or not relative to the norm provided by the species *and* the individual serves as exemplary of what it is to be that species of organism.⁹ Neither the instance, the particular, nor the kind, the universal, is prior to the other, or even so much as intelligible independent of it. It is on this basis that we can begin to understand as well how a living being might be thought of as autonomous, subject only to a law of its own.

Inanimate objects are governed by what Kant thinks of as laws of heteronomy. They are caused to do things by other things acting on them. The billiard ball is caused to move by something's hitting it; iron rusts if it gets wet. What a living being characteristically does, and has done to it, is instead what is natural to it, an expression of its nature. "We need not go beyond the laws of a life-form in order to account for the conditions of actualization of its characteristic powers" (Rödl 2007, p. 119). Indeed, it is for just this reason that, as Kant already saw, living things cannot be designed. The behaviours of what is designed are not expressive of the nature of the object but are instead a reflection of the designer's purposes, at least when things go as intended. Artifacts are arrangements of physical stuff that obey laws of (inanimate) nature. What the designer does is to arrange that physical stuff so that in obeying the laws of (inanimate) nature the artifact also serves the designer's purpose. Governed only by laws of (inanimate) nature, the mechanism does what it was designed to do. The case of a living being is very different. As an instance of a kind that is, or at least can be, exemplary of the kind, the living being has a nature that is expressed in its characteristic activities. It is, in its small way, autonomous. Its life processes are its own.

§ 5. Social life forms

We have seen that for Hegel the concept of life involves a distinctive relation of part and whole identified already by Kant as well as both a certain relationship to the environment, namely, the capacity to assimilate what is other for sustenance and growth, and the capacity to reproduce itself in another of its kind. Such a being is constitutively an instance of a kind that, when all goes well, is explanatory of these features of a living being. In such cases, the form provides a reason for things being as they are. But in living beings as so far discussed, the reason is not the individual's own reason. The living being and what it does are, or can be, exemplary of the form

⁹ See Ginsborg (1997, Part IV) for discussion of these two aspects of the purposiveness of living beings.

of life but in no sense does the individual know itself or its acts to be exemplary. Social life forms, we will see, are in this regard essentially different.

To characterize a form of life as social in the sense of concern here is to mark it as a form of life that is learned in the context of others who share that (social) life form. It is to grow up into the form of life through processes of acculturation rather than mere biological growth and development. Unlike the case of a mere living thing that by its nature, through the course of its biological growth and development, is an instance of the relevant kind, a social animal, in the sense intended here, becomes an instance of the relevant kind, one of us, only through a course of learning to be, and to do and to suffer, as *we* are, and do and suffer. And it is essential, at least in the first instance, that this not be *taught*, not in the way mere animals can be taught, that is to say, trained. We know how to train, for example, parrots to peck at green squares and bears to ride bicycles. But so trained, such an animal has the status of an artifact. It is like the machine that one designs and builds, and essentially unlike something capable of the sorts of rule-governed activities on display in the case of living beings as they contrast with artifacts.

In the *Investigations* and elsewhere, Wittgenstein often discusses training and teaching, for example, the (ostensive) teaching of words to children (*PI* § § 6 – 9), or teaching someone to write the natural numbers or some other series of numbers (*PI* § § 143 – 155). And as he emphasizes, there can be a normal and an abnormal response to such training. This is, of course, equally true in the case of the training of nonhuman animals. In both cases, the success of the training depends on the one being trained responding to *relevant* features, say the color of samples, or perhaps also the shape, but not the fact that all the samples (so far) are, say, inedible, or smaller than a breadbasket, or laid on a certain table. What Wittgenstein does not emphasize, at least to the same degree, is that learning to do as we do is, and must be, *natural* for human children in a way it is not for other animals. Again, other sorts of animals can be trained, but in order to train them one must take advantage of their natural biological dispositions, what they by nature pursue and avoid. Much as one constructs an artifact by arranging matter so that in obeying the laws of (inanimate) nature the system behaves as one wishes, so one trains a nonhuman animal by arranging the environment so that the animal will be rewarded, say with food, by doing what it is being trained to do, and/or punished in some way if it is not doing what it is being trained to do. And of course this can be done with children as well. But the result of such a course of training is not to become one of us. At best, it is to mimic being one of us. The training into a properly social form of life is, and must be, nothing more than a matter of providing exemplars of the relevant behaviours.

And in the most basic case, there need be no *training* at all. The child learns to behave as we do simply by being in our midst. It is and must be in the child's own nature to imitate and a part of the child's natural dispositions to strive to become one of us, to be as we are and to do as we do.

Here, then, is a crucial difference between the first nature of mere animals and the second nature of essentially social animals. In the case of mere animals it is the mature instance of the kind that strives to produce offspring, other instances of the kind. In the case of social animals, it is not the already initiated individual that seeks to produce another of its kind, say, by teaching or training, but instead the *uninitiated* individual that strives to be such a reproduction. For an essentially social being, it is and must be in one's *own* nature to become acculturated into the social form of life. Only so can one's second nature properly be one's own nature, a law of autonomy. And in fact, human children are distinctive in this regard. Unlike other primates, human children are instinctively capable of imitative learning and are highly motivated to do as we do.¹⁰ They need to learn to do as we do; they do not need to be taught.

In order that the young might learn from those already acculturated into the relevant practices, performances of those practices must be public, manifest in the (bodily) activities of those from whom one learns. And here again neither the individual instance nor the social form is prior to the other or independently intelligible. There is and can be a way we do things only because there are individuals who so do them as well as generations of others who can and will be acculturated into those ways. But equally, what instances of a social kind do is intelligible as, say, following a sign-post or greeting or making a certain sort of tool only insofar as there exists a custom, a practice of doing that, a form of life relative to which the performance is intelligible as an instance of the practice. To be such a social being is to be, as a living thing is, an instance of something more general, a form of life that is maintained through the reproduction of instances. A social being is also "mediated and generated".

The centrality of learning in Wittgenstein's later philosophy is not often emphasized.¹¹ Nevertheless, it is crucial. Wittgenstein writes, for example, in *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*:

But couldn't we imagine that someone without any training should see a sum that was set to do,

¹⁰ See Tomasello (1999) and (2008).

¹¹ An exception is Williams (1999), to which I am indebted in what follows.

and straightaway find himself in the mental state that in the normal course of things is only produced by training and practice? So that he knew he could calculate though he had never calculated? (One might, then, it seems, say; The training would merely be history, and merely as a matter of empirical fact would it be necessary for the production of knowledge.) —But suppose now he is in that state of certainty and he calculates wrong? What is he supposed to say himself? And suppose he then multiplied sometimes right, sometimes again quite wrong. —The training may of course be overlooked as mere history, if he now *always* calculates right. But that he *can* calculate he shews, to himself as well as to others only by this, that he *calculates* correctly.

What, in a complicated surrounding, we call “following a rule” we should certainly not call that if it stood in isolation. (*RFM* VI § 33)

Even one who naturally has just the dispositions that we in fact acquire through our acculturation into a social practice does not thereby have what is needed to be capable of performances of that practice. Such a being is nothing more than an animal that, as it happens, has a certain innate disposition to produce certain behaviours that for us constitute performances of practices. Such behaviours mimic performances of practices; they are not instances of such performances.

According to Wittgenstein, it is only through training —or at least learning from one already acculturated— that one comes to be capable of performances of essentially social practices, comes to be capable of doing as *we* do. As he sometimes puts the point, it is only in the context of training that an empirical proposition to the effect that a person will perform some particular action in certain circumstances is “hardened into a rule” (*RFM* VI § 23).

Now someone says that in the series of cardinal numbers that obeys the rule +1, the technique of which was taught to us in such-and-such a way, 450 succeeds 449. This is not an empirical proposition that we come from 449 to 450 when it strikes us that we have applied the operation +1 to 449. Rather it is a stipulation that only when the result is 450 have we applied this operation.

It is as if we had hardened the empirical proposition into a rule. And now we have, not an hypothesis that gets tested by experience, but a paradigm with which experience is compared and judged. And so a new kind of judgment. (*RFM* VI § 22)

The justification of the proposition $25 \times 25 = 625$ is, naturally, that if anyone has been trained in such-and-such a way, then under normal circumstances he gets 625 as the result of multiplying 25 by 25. But the arithmetic proposition does not assert *that*. It is so to speak an empirical proposition hardened into a rule. It stipulates that the rule has been followed only when that is the result of the multiplication. It is thus withdrawn from being checked by experience, but now serves as a paradigm for judging experience. (*RFM* VI § 23)

Our concern now is to understand this, the hardening of the empirical proposition — for instance, that we in fact get 450 when applying the +1 operation to 449— into the rule that one must or ought to get 450 in adding 1 to 449 (which can be a way of asserting the arithmetical proposition that $449 + 1 = 450$), through training into an essentially social form of life.

Obviously training, or even imitative learning, can and does give rise to reliable dispositions to respond in particular ways in particular circumstances. But it is equally obvious that this is not sufficient for rule following.

Let me ask this: what has the expression of a rule —say a sign-post— got to do with my actions? What sort of connexion is there here? —Well, perhaps this one: I have been trained to react to this sign in a particular way, and now I do so react to it.

But that is only to give a causal connexion, to tell how it has come about that we now go by the sign-post; not what this going-by-the-sign really consists in. (*PI* § 198)

Wittgenstein immediately continues: “on the contrary; I have further indicated that a person goes by a sign-post only insofar as there exists a regular use of sign-posts, a custom.” When one is trained into a practice or custom it is not only a causal connection that is set up. In the context of such a practice the training (learning) realizes a different and quite distinctive connection between the expression of the rule, the sign-post, and one’s performance in response to it. And what is critical here is, again, the reproduction, now social, of a certain form of life. Through the course of training, that is, one’s acculturation into a form of life that includes, say, going by sign-posts in a certain way, one does not only acquire particular dispositions as a mere animal might; one comes to be one of us, an instance of the essentially social form of life in question. It is because there are already instances of the form whose behaviours are exemplary of what is to be done in relevant circumstances that the uninitiated can learn to do as we do. It is the social reproduction of the species enabled by “a regular use of sign-posts, a custom” that ensures that the training realizes something more than a mere causal connection. This, however, is not yet to say what is the difference that is making the difference here.

To become acculturated into a social form of life is to become capable not merely of new behaviours but of a new sort of behaviour. The empirical proposition is hardened into a rule; one does what one does *because* that is what is required in the circumstances. And unlike a mere animal whose behaviour is explained by the form of life it is but does not have that form as its own reason, there is an important sense in which the reason is one’s own in the case of a social animal. The problem, as Williams notes (1999, p. 204), is that “the traditional way in which this change has

been described is as a shift from rule-conforming behaviour to rule obeying behaviour”, where “rule-obeying behaviour is acting with an intention to follow the rule, where this involves a recognition of the rule.” It is thus that one is led to think that in the course of learning one must come to *guess* the rule governing the relevant performance, the rule that is supposed to be in mind of the mature instance of the kind when she goes on as she does. As Wittgenstein’s interlocutor says: “But do you really explain to the other person what you yourself understand? Don’t you get him to *guess* the essential thing? You give him examples, —but he has to guess their drift, to guess your intention” (*PI* § 210). But this, Wittgenstein argues, is incoherent. In fact, when I teach “by means of *examples* and by *practice* . . . I do not communicate less to him than I know myself” (*PI* § 208). “You do not yourself understand any more of the rule than you can explain” (*RFM* VI § 23).

How can he *know* how he is to continue the pattern by himself —whatever instruction you give him? —Well, how do I know? —If that means “Have I reasons?” the answer is: my reasons will soon give out. And then I shall act, without reasons. (*PI* § 211)

“How am I able to obey a rule?” —if this is not a question about causes, then it is about the justification for my following the rule in the way I do.

If I have exhausted the justifications I have reached bedrock, and my spade is turned. Then I am inclined to say: “This is simply what I do.” (*PI* § 217)

To use a word without a justification does not mean to use it without right. (*PI* § 289)

In becoming acculturated into a social form of life one comes oneself to be exemplary of the kind, and, as we will see, unlike the mere animal growing to maturity, one thereby comes to recognize that this is so.

In “Primitive Normativity and Skepticism about Rules”, Ginsborg argues that we need to recognize a normative phenomenon —what she calls primitive normativity (and traces ultimately to Kant’s account of judgments of beauty)— that is different both from the sort of pattern governed behaviour mere animals exhibit and from the sort of normativity that depends on one’s grasp of an explicitly formulated rule. In such a case, although one cannot cite a reason for going on as one does, one can be confident nonetheless that one is right to do as one does. We have already seen that the course of one’s acculturation requires that one recognize the other as authoritative, as exemplifying what is to be done. The point now is that what the uninitiated wants is to become likewise authoritative. Only so can an essentially social form of life be reproduced in the next generation. What Ginsborg calls

primitive normativity is in this way constitutive of social life forms. It is not enough for the reproduction of a social form of life that the uninitiated be disposed to mimic others. She must, in imitating, recognize what is done, first by others and then by herself, as what is to be done, as what is appropriate or fitting in the circumstances. What is done must be, for her, exemplary of what *we* do if the social life form is to be reproduced. It is just this that is the bedrock. I simply do as I do, as I have learned through my acculturation to do. What I do is nonetheless not without right insofar as I am and know myself to be exemplary, one of us. If becoming acculturated into a social form of life is not merely a matter of becoming a trained animal but is instead to realize a new generation of that social form of life, the child must not only mimic others but at the same time recognize them as exemplary, and must so recognize herself in becoming one of us. She exhibits what Ginsborg calls primitive normativity.

But reproduction is only one of the three aspects of life that Hegel identifies. What of the other two, the relation of part to whole and the taking of nourishment? I will suggest that only the first of these is essential in the case of a social form of life.

The relation of part to whole, the fact, first, that the part is possible only through the whole, and also that the parts determine the organization of the whole, here would seem to apply less to the living being herself than to the practices that constitute this form of life. That it is a form of *life* requires that particular practices be embedded in a whole constellation of practices that transform thereby a mere animal life into one that is distinctively human. That *this* is following a sign-post, or a greeting, or eating, or dancing, or mating, is intelligible only through the whole social form of life. And equally, the whole is nothing over and above the particular integrated practices that are its parts. Wittgenstein makes the point for the case of mathematics in his *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics* VI 11, but it applies generally. Only within the form of life as a whole do the parts have the significance they do; and the parts are both cause and effect of the whole.

The third moment in the concept of life that Hegel identifies is the need to take in sustenance from the environment for one's preservation and growth, which means, we saw, that as the stuff that comprises the body of the living being has the significance of being alive through the mediation of the life form so stuff in the environment (such as water, say) that in itself has no significance also has significance as, say, nourishing, through the mediation of the life form. And certainly various stuffs and features of the environment can acquire (social) significance through the mediation of an essentially social form of life. But what is distinctive in this case is that such significance can be purely social in a way that the significance of being, say, nourishing is not purely a matter of what organisms of that sort take to be

nourishing. The environment of an animal is in this way *alien*, essentially other in a way that the environment of a social animal need not be. Although it is not merely a matter of how we treat or take things to be that a certain fruit is, say, edible, it *is* a purely social matter that that same fruit is, say, sacred, to be offered only in sacrifice, or that it is to be eaten using this rather than that utensil. As we will see, the environment of a rational animal is different again.

§ 6. Rational animals

A social animal is constitutively one of us, exemplary of a certain form of life not merely as any living being is but in the understanding that it is exemplary. Nonetheless, the life of such a social animal is not thereby that of a rational animal answerable to how things objectively are, however they are taken to be. A social practice, we saw, can be purely social in being answerable to nothing outside of itself. What is different in the case of a rational animal? Following Wittgenstein, we need to focus here on social practices that are distinctively verbal, what Sellars has taught us to think of as language entries, language exits, and language–language transitions, or inferences.

The verbal practices of a merely social animal are a species of purely social practices insofar as how things actually are in no way constrains the verbal behaviours of a social animal. That one learns the relevant verbal practices is essential, but what one learns could be anything you like. The verbal practices of a rational being are essentially different insofar as they are answerable not to the practice, what *we* do and say, but to how things are.

When we say, and *mean*, that such and such is the case, we —and our meaning— do not stop anywhere short of the fact; but we mean: *this-is-so*. But this paradox (which has the form of a truism) can also be expressed in this way: *Thought* can be of what is *not* the case. (*PI* § 95)

It is in just this way, I will suggest, that the rational animal must, in its way, take nourishment from outside, preserving itself and growing.

Do rational animals reproduce themselves as mere animals and also social animals do? A social animal, so it would seem, could be taught, trained to be rational, say on pain of exclusion from the community. But rationality so conceived is not rationality properly speaking insofar as it is externally imposed; in such a case one has something that merely mimics rationality. Actually to be rational one must adopt the

life of reason as one's own, not by way of a decision but in the same way one becomes a social being, by striving to be as the rational beings around one are, by striving to become the sort of being that is answerable to the norm of truth, by training and practice. Insofar as one succeeds, it is the language that one speaks that provides the life form mediating both oneself as rational and the world as the locus of the truth of one's claims. Much as both the living being and things in the environment in which it finds itself are articulated as having the significances they have through the form of life of that being, so both the rational animal and (now) the world as a whole in which it finds itself are articulated as having the significances they have through the language that is the form of life of that rational being.¹²

As both Wittgenstein and Sellars recognize, having a language, mastery of such a technique (*PI* § 199), essentially involves bedrock practices, the capacity simply to see and so to say how things are: "How do I know that this colour is red? —It would be an answer to say: 'I have learnt English'" (*PI* § 381). Sellars makes the same point in claiming, in "Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind", that observation reports contrast with other empirical claims insofar as their "being correctly made is a sufficient as well as necessary condition of their truth" (*EPM* § 33).¹³ Of course, not all reports, and certainly not all judgments, are like this. But what is more important, at least according to the picture Sellars presents, is that this capacity to make observation reports is not that in virtue of which empirical inquiry is rational. Inquiry is rational, Sellars thinks, not in virtue of its being grounded in observation reports in the above sense, in virtue of its having a foundation, but because it is constitutively self-correcting.¹⁴ Sellars writes:

If I reject the framework of traditional empiricism, it is not because I want to say that empirical knowledge has *no* foundation. For to put it this way is to suggest that it is really 'empirical knowledge so-called', and to put it in a box with rumors and hoaxes. There is clearly *some* point

¹² I discuss this at somewhat greater length in *Realizing Reason*, Chapter 1.

¹³ Sellars does not explicitly endorse the claim, saying rather that this "has been claimed, not without plausibility". I take it that he does endorse the claim, but does not wish at this point in the dialectic to defend it against skeptics.

¹⁴ McDowell (1994). *Mind and World*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press), agrees that knowledge is constitutively self-correcting but seems to deny that it is the capacity for self-correction that grounds the rationality of inquiry. (See, for example, pp. 158 and 186.) According to McDowell, so it seems, inquiry is rational because it answers to the tribunal of experience, because it is grounded in observation reports, instances of what he calls the innocuous given: "experience must constitute a tribunal, mediating the way our thinking is answerable to how things are, as it must be if we are to make sense of it as thinking at all" (p. xii).

to the picture of human knowledge as resting on a level of propositions —observation reports— which do not rest on other propositions in the same way as other propositions rest on them. On the other hand, I do wish to insist that the metaphor of ‘foundation’ is misleading in that it keeps us from seeing that if there is a logical dimension in which other empirical propositions rest on observation reports, there is another logic dimension in which the latter rest on the former.

Above all, the picture is misleading because of its static character. One seems forced to choose between the picture of an elephant which rests on a tortoise (What supports the tortoise?) and the picture of a great Hegelian serpent of knowledge with its tail in its mouth (Where does it begin?). Neither will do. For empirical knowledge, like its sophisticated extension, science, is rational, not because it has a foundation but because it is a self-correcting enterprise which can put any claim in jeopardy, though not all at once. (*EPM* § 38)

For Sellars, although it is true that correctly making an observation report is necessary and sufficient for its truth, it can happen nonetheless that we learn only over time what it is correctly to make such a report. Sellars’ familiar example of John in the tie shop illustrates the point.

At the beginning of Sellars’ story, John has the use of color words but as yet no conception of standard or nonstandard conditions; John has only ever looked at things in what are in fact standard conditions. Because in standard conditions things look (to standard observers) to have the colors they in fact have, John can tell the colors of things just by looking at them. Then electric lighting is installed in John’s shop, lighting in which blue ties appear green. Jim comes in to buy a tie, and the following exchange ensues.

“Here is a handsome green one”, says John.

“But it *isn’t* green”, says Jim, and takes John outside.

“Well”, says John, “it was green in there, but now it is blue”.

“No”, says Jim, “you know that neckties don’t change their color merely as a result of being taken from place to place”.

“But perhaps electricity changes their color and they change back again in daylight?”

“That would be a queer kind of change, wouldn’t it?” says Jim.

“I suppose so”, says bewildered John. “But we saw that it was green *in there*”.

“No we didn’t see that it was green in there, because it wasn’t green, and you can’t see what isn’t so!”

“Well, this is a pretty pickle”, says John. “*I just don’t know what to say*”. (*EPM* § 14)

Although John ought, as the rational animal he is, be able to tell the colors of ties by looking, he no longer can. He needs to learn that the standard conditions for observing the color of ties is daylight, and once he has learned this he will again be

capable of correctly making observation reports about the colors of the ties in his shop, by taking them out into the daylight and looking at them.

John at first suggests, reasonably enough given what he does and does not know, that perhaps the tie changed color on being taken out of the shop. Jim denies that this is possible. A necktie, Jim insists, is not the sort of thing to change color on being taken from place to place. Nor, Jim insists, can electric lighting cause such a thing to change color. So, something else will have to give. Of course, in other sorts of cases, for instance, those involving chameleons, the most reasonable response might well be to come to the conclusion that the thing has changed color as a result of being moved from one place to another, or even as a result of having an electric light shone on it. The point is that we know many and various things about what everyday objects are and how they work, and it is never settled in advance just what will need to be jettisoned in cases of conflict, nor when or where a conflict might arise. In principle, anything we think we know can turn out to have been mistaken, such as, for John, that the tie in the tie shop is green, and that he can see that it is green, or even, following Frege, a law of logic such as the law of identity, that $a = a$.¹⁵ The rationality of inquiry lies not in its having a foundation but in its constitutive powers of self-correction.

We have seen that an adequate understanding both of a living being as an instance of a (biological) form of life and of a social being as an instance of a (social) form of life requires considering the perpetuation of the species through reproduction across generations. Absent the temporally extended propagation of the species no sense can be made of the idea that the instance is—in itself and not merely for us, as Kant had thought—an instance of something more general that constitutes a norm for it and both renders intelligible and explains particular performances. In the case of a rational being temporality has a different role to play, but is again ineluctably involved in any adequate understanding insofar as self-correction is intelligible only over time. To replace dynamic, essentially temporal processes of self-correction with a static snapshot of beliefs at a time is to render the very idea of self-correction unintelligible. We are not in this case dealing with reproduction, however, but instead with something akin to the nourishment by which a living being sustains itself and grows. Knowledge, that is to say, is possible only if there is something *outside* the knower that can be taken up, something to which one's judgments are answerable. What is different in this case, as compared to the case of nourishment, is that the world to which our judgments are answerable is not alien as the environment is to a merely living being. The world is not alien, merely

¹⁵ See Frege (1893, p. 15), and for discussion, my (2005, pp. 153 – 154).

external to the knower; but it is also not simply internal, whatever we take it to be, as it is in the case of purely social practices. Following Haugeland, we can describe aspects of the world as they are the locus of the truth of the judgments of a rational being as neither alien nor merely internal, but as *independent*: “both accessible as normative criteria and literally *out of control*” (Haugeland 1998, p. 347). Through the medium of an essentially social and public language, the world is in view for a rational being but it is nonetheless independent: it is as it is however I, we, or anyone takes it to be. That inquiry is self-correcting, that it must, in its way, take nourishment from outside, preserving itself thereby and growing, just is for the world to be independent in Haugeland’s sense. They are sides of one coin.¹⁶

§ 7. Conclusion

Wittgenstein and Brandom are agreed that any adequate account of normativity, rule following, must be social. There is no making sense of the distinction between what I do do and what I ought to do for an individual taken in isolation. What they disagree about is the form such sociality must take, Brandom arguing that it must be I–Thou, Wittgenstein that it is I–We. But Wittgenstein’s I–We account is not the communitarian one that Brandom ascribes to him. Wittgenstein’s understanding of I–We sociality is at once more subtle and more interesting. It is also, I have tried to indicate, just what is needed if we are adequately to understand normativity, including the normativity involved in our judgments of objective truth.

¹⁶ That a rational animal is a natural end entails also that the language realizing such a being as rational exhibits the complex relation of part and whole that Kant elucidates. It would, however, take us much too far afield to clarify that and why this is (and must be) so. It is connected, I would argue, to Frege’s insight into language in terms of his technical notions of *Sinn* and *Bedeutung*.

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Wittgenstein and Brandom on Normativity and Sociality

In *Making It Explicit* Brandom distinguishes between, as he puts it, I–We and I–Thou sociality. Only I–Thou sociality, Brandom argues, is adequate to the task of instituting norms relevant to our self-understanding as rational beings because only I–Thou sociality can render intelligible the distinction between how norms *are* applied and how they *ought* to be applied —however anyone *thinks* they ought to be applied. In his *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein defends a version of I–We sociality, one that is not, I argue, subject to Brandom’s criticisms. Indeed, I suggest, it is just such a conception of I–We sociality as we find in Wittgenstein’s *Investigations* that is needed if we are fully to understand the respects in which we are, as the rational beings we are, answerable to the norm of truth.

Keywords: Form of Life · I-Thou Sociality · I-We Sociality · Objectivity · Rule Following.

Wittgenstein y Brandom sobre normatividad y socialidad

En *Making it Explicit* Brandom distingue entre, según él dice, socialidad yo–nosotros y yo–tú. Brandom arguye que sólo la socialidad yo–tú es adecuada para la tarea de instituir normas que son relevantes para nuestra auto–comprensión como seres racionales porque sólo yo–tú puede hacer que sea inteligible la distinción entre cómo normas *son* aplicadas y como *deberían* ser aplicadas —sea como sea que uno *piense* que deberían ser aplicadas. En sus *Investigaciones Filosóficas*, Wittgenstein defiende una versión de yo–nosotros socialidad, una versión que no es vulnerable a la crítica de Brandom, según arguyo. De hecho, sugiero, es justamente semejante concepción de socialidad yo–nosotros como la que encontramos en las *Investigaciones* de Wittgenstein que se requiere si queremos comprender plenamente en respecto a qué somos, como los seres racionales que somos, responsables a la norma de la verdad.

Palabras Clave: Forma de vida · Socialidad yo–tú · Socialidad yo–nosotros · Objetividad · Seguir una regla.

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